Victory over the Sun: a Russian avant-garde's vision of the wisdom of the skies

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Abstract. This paper examines the aesthetic views of Russian avant-garde artists, implemented in the main declaration and manifesto - the futurist opera *Victory over the Sun* - and their connection to the ideas of the Russian cosmist philosopher Nikolai Fedorov. The avant-garde artists' search for a new earth and a new sky, expressed in the temporal and utopian metaphors of the opera, compared with Fedorov's views on solving the prophecies of the apocalypse and his thoughts on the fate of the apocalypse Earth. Fedorov's aesthetic system, formulated as a contrast between the principles of Ptolemaic and Copernican art, combines with the avant-garde artistic pathos of overcoming gravity and entering the open, infinite space of the universe.

Introduction

On 16 December 1913, the premiere of the futuristic performance *Victory over the Sun* (*Pobeda nad Solntsem*) took place at the Luna Park Theater in St. Petersburg: 'an illogical dreamlike spectacle, a grandiose theatrical metaphor...' [1] The performance was a declaration and manifesto of Russian Cubofuturists, who proclaimed new principles of art. The authors of the performance were the leaders of the Russian literary, musical and artistic avant-garde: Mikhail Matyushin, artist, musician and art theorist, Alexei Kruchenykh, futurist poet, artist, publisher, collector, poetry theorist, critic, journalist and Kazimir Malevich, artist, art theorist, teacher and philosopher. The poet, artist, mathematician and experimental linguist Velimir Khlebnikov wrote a prologue to the opera. In reality, almost all avant-garde artistic circles were involved in the creation of this performance.

[1] Galina Gubanova, 'Teatr russkih futuristov: Pobeda nad Solntsem, kompleksny analiz' ('Theater of Russian Futurists: Victory over the Sun, a Comprehensive Analysis'), PhD thesis, State Institute of Art History, Moscow, 2000, p. 11.

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Pioneering art principles evident in the opera included the innovative linguistic and poetic structure of the text, named '*zaum'* by the writers – a word derived from the Russian '*um*' – 'mind', but in an abstruse sense. The cacophonous consonants, the disruptive and dissonant rendition of the chorus formed the innovative musical content, while the newly invented forms of artistic thought found expression in cubist costumes and lighting designs by Kazimir Malevich. The scenery paved the way for the concept of *suprematism* – characterized by decomposition into elements and complete disintegration in the pictorial space.[2] Malevich's *Black Square* appeared here for the first time, primarily as a stage backdrop and as part of the costume of the undertaker who buried the Sun.

This paper explores the cosmological and philosophical context of the opera through the ideas and motifs of Russian cosmism, as presented in the works of Nikolai Fedorov, the forerunner of Russian cosmism: his central idea, as expressed in the *Philosophy of the Common Cause*, is regarded as a benchmark that highlights some key characteristics of all Russian cosmism.[3] Fedorov was perhaps the first to interpret the end of the world promised by the apocalypse as a phenomenon that can and should be combated with the help of science, rather than dutifully accepting it as a predetermined fate. He wrote that 'The question of the fate of the Earth leads us to the conviction that human activity should not be limited to the terrestrial planet. We must ask ourselves: does knowledge about the fate awaiting the earth, about its inevitable end, oblige us to anything or not?'[4]

Although there is extensive research literature on avant-garde art, few studies have shown the connections between avant-garde art and the concepts of cosmism advocated by Nikolai Fedorov. At the same time, the common problem of these studies is that they focus primarily on such links in a general and broad sense and mainly reflect the relationships associated with later creative periods (mostly after 1917). They lack an in-depth analysis of Fedorov's aesthetic views and their impact on futurist artists of the early period of 1913. It was in this year that the opera, deemed the

[2] Benedikt Livshits, *The One and a Half-Eyed Archer,* ed. and trans. John E. Bowlt (Newtonville, Mass.: Oriental Research Partners, 1976) p. 164.

[3] Anna Parfenova, 'Vlijanie filosofii kosmizma na russkuju kul'turu konca XIX - nachala XX veka' ('The Influence of the Philosophy of Cosmism on Russian Culture in the Late 20th - Early 20th Century') (Dissertation for the degree of candidate of Cultural Studies, Saint Petersburg State University of Culture and Arts, 2001) pp.16, 20.

[4] Nikolai Fedorov, *Philosophy of the Common Cause (Philosophiya Obschego Dela)* in *Sochineniya (Essays)*, (Moscow: Eksmo, 2008), p. 27.

pinnacle of the development of the entire Russian avant-garde, was first seen and performed to the public.[5] The article attempts to fill this gap and analyzes Fedorov's aesthetic concepts expressed through cosmological systems defined as *Ptolemaic* and *Copernican* art, as well as his apocalyptic symbolism as origins for temporary and utopian metaphors of *Victory over the Sun.*

Avant-garde art as social practice and form of consciousness

Avant-garde is a special phenomenon in art and human activity: it belongs not only to art, but is a type of social practice and has its own internal logic of development, determined by the desire to create a new world and a new person, M. Chistyakova notes.[6] It reaches through specific innovative activity that removes the boundaries between art and the world of matter, placing a person into the focus of the energy forces of nature, its potential.[7] The solution of this problem involves the transformation of consciousness - its 'purification' of logical schemes and stereotypes, from the cultural heritage of the past, from value orientations, from objectivity, etc. Among the various ways to achieving this goal, E. Ustyugova highlights one and designates it as 'artistic-metaphysical', she names Kazimir Malevich one of the authors of this approach.[8] In the heart of it lays the idea of art, which creates a new world, outwardly unrelated to existing reality, but subject to the general laws of the living spirit of the 'cosmic world'.[9] Malevich declared this concept in his essay *On the Question of Fine Art*:

> Today the man who shouts to the whole world and calls all humanity to unity has awakened. His being needs our unity... so that... our being can move towards a single unity and integrity of the way of

[5] V. Baidin, 'Okkul'tnaya misteriya russkogo avangarda' in *Arhetipy i simvoly russkoj kul'tury: ot arhaiki do sovremennosti* ('Occult mystery of the Russian avant-garde' in *Archetypes and Symbols of Russian Culture: from Archaic to Modern*), (SPb: Aletheia, 2021), pp. 197-236, p. 235.

[6] M.G. Chistjakova, 'Utopija "chistogo soznanija" v iskusstve avangarda'(Utopia of "pure consciousness" in avant-garde art), (Dissertation for the degree of candidate of philosophical sciences, Tumen State University:1999), p. 8.

[7] M.G. Chistjakova, 'Utopija, p. 9.

[8] E.N. Ustjugova, 'Russkij avangard 1920-h gg.: dva puti shozhdenija zhizni i iskusstva' ('Russian avant-garde of the 1920s: two paths of convergence of life and art') in *Izvestija Ural'skogo federal'nogo universiteta,* Vol. 14. N. 2 (188) 2019), pp. 177-185, p. 178.

[9] E.N. Ustjugova, 'Russkij avangard 1920-h gg', p. 178.

> universal movement as our only and most important goal. The unity of all humanity is necessary because it takes a single man of action. We want to build ourselves... in a new way, so that all elements of nature unite with man and form a single all-powerful face that unites isolated individuals.[10]

Chistyakova summarizes that avant-garde, which has many similarities with occult and cosmist ideas, is a special form of utopian anthropological consciousness - a utopia of achieving absolute freedom through a transformed art.[11]

Apocalyptic visions of 'Victory over the Sun'

The very title of the opera challenges the old classical doctrine of *Sol Invictus*. The doctrine encompasses meanings and experiences metamorphosis from the pagan festival of the winter solstice to solar monotheism, supposedly brought from Syria in 274 AD by Emperor Aurelian. He exalted the eastern *Sol Invictus* to the rate of dominant solar cult *dominus imperii romani*, the Invincible Sun that is the Ruler of the Roman Empire, which later established in the triumph of Christianity.[12] The view of unity between destruction and creation was at the heart of the year-end festival, celebrated on the day of the winter solstice, when the sacraments of destruction and symbolic renewal of the world were realized. Therefore, V. Baidin argues, the literary text, stage design, costumes and even acting of the futurist spectacle had a common goal: the reproduction of the mystery of the destruction of the old world in the name of the creation of a new world.[13] The very genre of the performance - opera, Baidin emphasizes - alludes to the original meaning of Latin 'opera' – 'a work', 'an operation', thus this newly established world, created as a result of this work, was *budetlyan* (futuristic), cosmic and later described as *suprematist* and revolutionary.[14]

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[10] K.S. Malevich, *On the issue of fine art*, (Smolensk: State Publishing House, 1921), p. 4.
[11] M.G. Chistjakova, 'Utopija, p. 9.
[12] Steven Hijmans, 'Usener's Christmas: A Contribution to the Modern Construct Philosophy of Late Antique Solar Syncretism', in M. Espagne & P. Rabault-Feuerhahn (edd.), *Hermann Usener und die Metamorphosen der Philologie*, (Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz, 2011), pp. 139-152, p. 141.
[13] V. Baidin, 'Okkul'tnaya misteriya', p. 219.
[14] V. Baidin, 'Okkul'tnaya misteriya', p. 219.

The capture of the Sun and the victory over it as the general idea of the opera becomes a symbolic designation of the victory of the futurists over the old world.

As the libretto of the opera declares:

> … One: - We must establish a holiday: the Day of Victory over the Sun.
> Singing: (Chorus).
> - We are free
> Broken sun...
> Hello darkness![15]

The opera consisted of two *deims* (acts), as the *budetlyans* (futurists) – named them: the first *deim* performed a campaign against the Sun, and the second about the *Budetlyans'* land after the death of the sun.

Both Christian motifs and apocalyptic visions were transformed into a 'modified, futuristically reimagined apocalypse' in *Victory over the Sun*.[16] As Galina Gubanova points out: 'It is the Apocalypse that plays the role of a cipher text or the main coding text for the plot of *Victory over the Sun*.[17]

> The performance starts:
> First *deim*, first picture:
> White and black - the walls are white, the floor is black.
> Two *Budetlyanian* strongmen tear the curtain.
> First strongman: All's well that starts well!
> Second strongman: And does it end?
> First. There will be no end![18]

This fragment relates to the key episodes of the gospel story. The first thing described in the Gospel of Matthew is the tearing of the veil in the temple at the time of Christ's crucifixion: And the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.[19] The other key code, 'There will be no end,' alludes to the expression *I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end* from the Revelation of the theologian John,

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[15] Alexei Kruchenykh, Mikhail Matyushin, *Pobeda nad Solntsem* (*Victory Over the Sun)*, (Saint Petersburg: Typography "Svet", 1913), p. 15.
[16] Galina Gubanova, 'Teatr russkih futuristov', p. 40.
[17] Galina Gubanova, 'Teatr russkih futuristov', p. 40.
[18] Alexey Kruchenykh, Kazimir Malevich, *Pobeda nad Solntsem* (*Victory over the Sun),* p. 4.
[19] Matthew, 27:54.

which confirmed the end of human history.[20] Kazimir Malevich addresses the meaning of these metaphors in his article *Theater.* While talking about the performance *Victory over the Sun*, he operates freely with gospel images: 'The curtain is torn, tearing at the same time the cry of the consciousness of the old brain, revealed before the eyes of a wild crowd roads sticking out into both the ground and the sky. We have opened a new path for the theater...' There, reflecting on the new theater: stage, sound, artists and actors, he uses the expression 'descent of the spirit' (however, later crossed out and replaced by the word 'intuition'), nevertheless, he demonstrates that, rejecting the 'old' gospel message, the authors looked for a new one.[21]

In an interview for the St. Petersburg newspaper *Day*, on 1 December, 1913 Malevich and Matiushin postulated their manifesto as an overthrow one of the greatest artistic values

> …the sun, in the present instance. Futurists want to break free from this regulated world... to plunge the world into chaos... to smash established values into fragments... create new values out of these fragments... discovering new, unexpected and unseen links. So then, the sun – that former authority – cramps their style and they feel like overthrowing it... It is, in fact, the plot of the opera. The cast of the opera should express this in both language and sound.[22]

The authors of *Victory over the Sun* found these new, unexpected, and unseen links in a complex of ideas related to the philosophy of Russian cosmism as presented by Nikolai Fedorov.

'Russian cosmism': the term and concept

V. Rimsky, V. Troshikhin and L. Filenko point out the diversity of modern opinions regarding the phenomenon of Russian cosmism 'which has been observed for the last thirty to forty years in Russian literature and tends

[20] Revelation, 22:13.

[21] Kazimir Malevich, *Sobranie sochinenij v pjati tomah. Tom 5. Proizvedenija raznyh let: Stat'i. Traktaty. Manifesty i deklaracii. Proekty. Lekcii. Zapisi i zametki. Pojezija. (Collected works in five volumes. Volume 5. Works of different years: Articles. Treatises. Manifestos and declarations. Projects. Lectures. Records and notes. Poetry).* (Moscow: Gileya, 2004), p 79.

[22] *Den'* (*Day*), 1 December 1913, pp. 5–6.

towards antinomianism.'[23] The earliest mention of the term *Russian cosmism* can be found in the Philosophical Encyclopedia published in 1970, in an article by Renata Galtseva about Vladimir Vernadsky (1863–1945). Galtseva coins the term, denoting this philosophical direction as 'the ideas of the so-called Russian cosmism, which considers the Universe and Man as an integral system with its regulation (homeostasis) and containing a reasonable transformation of space' and lists the most significant names associated with it: Tsiolkovsky, Chizhevsky, partly Fedorov and Florensky.[24] Svetlana Semenova was the first to formulate the philosophical concept of Russian cosmism. She wrote in the late 1970s about a special, 'cosmic-utopian' branch of Russian philosophy and characterized it as 'the idea of active evolution, that is, the need for a new conscious stage in the development of the world, when humanity… takes, so to speak, the helm of evolution into its own hands. Therefore, perhaps it would be more correct to define this trend not as cosmic, but as actively evolutionary'.[25] She points out towards Russian religious philosopher Nikolai Fedorov and calls him the 'founder' of Russian cosmism.[26] Anna Parfenova emphasizes that his major work *The Philosophy of the 'Common Cause'* is considered a gold standard that highlights some essential features of Russian cosmism as a whole.[27]

[23] V. Rimskij, V. Troshihin, L. Filenko, 'Russkij kosmizm mezhdu kul'turno-ideologicheskim konstruirovaniem i filosofsko-teoreticheskoj rekonstrukciej' ('Russian cosmism between cultural and ideological construction and philosophical and theoretical reconstruction'), *Nauchnye vedomosti Belgorodskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta Serija Filosofija. Sociologija. Pravo,* № 14 (133). Vypusk 21, (2012), pp.16-30, p. 16.
[24] Renata Gal'ceva, 'Vernadskij V.I.' Filosofskaja jenciklopedija (Philosophical Encyclopedia), p. 624, http://philosophy.niv.ru/doc/encyclopedia/philosophy/fc/slovar-194-3.htm#zag-541 [accessed 1 September 2023]
[25] Svetlana Semenova, *Russkij kosmizm: Antologija filosofskoj mysli* (*Russian cosmism: An anthology of philosophical thought*), (Moscow: M.: Pedagogika-press, 1993), p. 4.
[26] Semenova, *Russkij kosmizm,* p. 8.
[27] Anna Parfenova, *Vlijanie filosofii kosmizma*, pp.16, 20.

Nikolai Fedorov: 'mysterious thinker'

The Mysterious Thinker is the title of Sergius Bulgakov's essay on Nikolai Fedorov (1829 -1903). Bulgakov calls Fedorov *Moscow Socrates*.[28] Nikolai Berdyaev speaks of Fedorov as a genius, albeit an original and eccentric one:

> *This is a characteristically Russian man, a Russian seeker of universal salvation, who knows the way to save the whole world and all people… in the person of Fedorov this Russian type found its brilliant expression. After all, this is truly a characteristic feature of the Russian spirit – to seek universal salvation, to bear responsibility for everyone.*[29]

The illegitimate son of Prince Pavel Gagarin, he received the surname of his godfather. In 1849, after graduating from the gymnasium in Tambov, he entered the law faculty of the Richelieu Lyceum in Odessa, where he completed three courses and began working as a teacher of history and geography in the Central Russia. In 1869, he got a job as an assistant librarian at the Chertkovsky Library and worked as a librarian most of his life. Fedorov was the first to compile a systematic book catalog in the Rumyantsev Museum and, in general, formed the foundations of librarianship. Usually after three o'clock in the afternoon - the museum's closing time - and on Sundays, a discussion club gathered there, which did attend many outstanding contemporaries, such as Leo Tolstoy, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Sergius Bulgakov and many others.

***Philosophy of 'Common Cause'*: resurrection of the fathers and rethinking of the Apocalypse**

Fedorov dreamed of resurrecting people, not wanting to come to terms with the death of even one person. He intended to use science to collect scattered molecules and atoms and to put them into the bodies of the fathers. Fedorov gave science a place next to art and religion in the common cause of uniting humanity, including the dead, who in the future will reunite with the living.

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[28] Sergii Bulgakov *Dva grada. Izslrѣdovanija o prirode obshhestvennyh idealov* (*Two hail. Studies on the nature of social ideals*),in 2 vol. vol II, Moscow:1911, pp. 260-261.

[29] Nikolay Berdyaev, 'Religija voskreshenija' («Filosofija obshhego dela» N. F. Fedorova) *Grjozy o Zemle i nebe*, (Religion of Resurrection "Philosophy of the Common Cause" by N. F. Fedorov, *Dreams of Earth and Heaven*), SPb: Khudozh. lit. St. Petersburg department, 1995), p. 178.

The concept of the 'resurrection of the fathers' was formulated by him in the *Philosophy of the Common Cause*, which Berdyaev calls 'the philosophy of action', with its central idea based on a peculiar doctrine of kinship.[30] This teaching, Berdyaev emphasizes, without which a common cause is impossible, is 'the most consistent and radical patriarchal theory of social, world and divine life'. Not only at the basis of human life and world life, but also at the basis of the life of God himself lies the principle of kinship - paternity, sonship, brotherhood. 'The Triune God of Christianity is the perfect example of kinship' – underlines Berdyaev – 'the relationship of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit is a family relationship; this is a family united by kindred love'.[31]

Fedorov's 'philosophy of action' could not ignore the question of the future of the Earth and its cosmic perspective: he held that human endeavor should not be constrained to the confines of the terrestrial planet and that it is crucial to take into account what the Earth's future may hold. He argued that people have a responsibility to act now and in the future as they aware of the fate the earth is experiencing and its impending demise.[32] The thinker interprets the 'end of the world' promised by the Apocalypse as a phenomenon that can and should be fought with the help of true art, as in 'the project of the world as it should be, that is, a new earth and a new sky, filled with non-destructive and killing power, but re-creating.'[33] At the very basis of Fedorov's project lies, according to S. Semenova, 'the most daring dream of complete mastery of the secrets of life, of victory over death, of man achieving god-like power in a transformed universe,' that is, of a complete rethinking of 'the end of the world'.[34] Fedorov claimed that:

> There will be either the end of the world as a catastrophe, or a peaceful transition. Transition without wars, without natural disasters - it depends on whether people will remain opponents of the will of God and will remain in a state of eternal enmity, or,

[30] Nikolay Berdyaev, 'Religija voskreshenija, p. 178.
[31] Nikolay Berdyaev, 'Religija voskreshenija, p. 178.
[32] Nikolai Fedorov, *Sochinenija. Filosofskoe nasledie* (*Essays. Philosophical heritage*), vol. 85, ed. A. V. Gulyga, (Moscow: Mysl', 1982), p. 360.
[33] Nikolai Fedorov, *Sochinenija,* p. 573.
[34] S.G. Semenova, 'Fedorov i ego filosofskoe nasledie' in Nikolai Fedorov, *Sochnenija*, p. 17.

> uniting, they will become an instrument of the will of God in the conversion of destructive power into a re-creative one.[35]

Fedorov's aesthetic system – Ptolemaic and Copernican art

In the course of the 'resurrection of the fathers' project, Fedorov develops his own aesthetic system, contending that art originates with man on Earth and ends in heaven.[36] He proclaims aesthetics to be the science 'of recreating all the intelligent beings who were on the tiny Earth (this droplet, which reflected itself in the entire Universe and in itself reflected the entire Universe) for the spiritualization (and control) of all the huge heavenly worlds'.[37] The philosopher declares that the Earth will become the first star in the sky, driven 'not by the blind force of fall, but by reason, restoring and preventing fall and death'.[38] One of the main features of Fedorov's aesthetic system is the formulation and contradistinction of the principles of the 'art of likenesses' (imaginary artistic restoration) and the 'art of reality' (real resurrection).[39] He claims that the 'art of similarities' reproduces the world as it appears to external senses, 'not as an expression of the Divine will, but as the action of blind forces of nature, not only uncontrolled intelligent beings, but also recognized by them as gods' and connects it with the closed, limited, Ptolemaic celestial picture of the Universe.[40] Genuine art is *Copernican*, the art of an open, unlimited, boundless cosmos, or the art of reality. Only such kind of art, points out Fedorov, will be able to save and resurrect the world, 'to transform it from the chaos towards which it is heading into space, that is, into the splendor of incorruptibility and indestructibility'.[41] The philosopher emphasizes that the Copernican system turns a person from a contemplator into a doer and his task is to become the owner of the entire Universe, so that its blind power would be controlled by reason and in the future man would become not only its inhabitant, but also its ruler.

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[35] N.F. Fedorov, *Sobranie sochinenij* (*Collected works*) in 4 vols., volume II (Moscow: Progress, 1995) p. 50.
[36] N.F. Fedorov, *Sobranie sochinenij,* p. 553.
[37] N.F.Fedorov, *Sobranie sochinenij*, p.565.
[38] N.F. Fedorov, *Sobranie sochinenij, p.* 529
[39] Nikolai Fedorov, *Sochinenija,* p. 563.
[40] Nikolai Fedorov, *Sochinenija*, p. 563.
[41] N.F. Fedorov, *Sobranie sochinenij*, p. 565.

Avant-garde aesthetics and philosophy of Nikolai Fedorov

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the ideas of cosmism were widespread among Russian artists, writers and musicians of various aesthetic trends, states V. Chinaev in his article 'Russian cosmism in search of the absolute: parallels and intersections in musical, poetic and visual creativity of the 1910–1920s'.[42] V. Baidin assumes that very likely in the summer of 1913 Velimir Khlebnikov introduced the group of futurists to the ideas of the 'scientific resurrection of the dead' and the settlement of humanity in outer space, set forth by Nikolai Fedorov in *Philosophy of the Common Cause*, published in 1906 and 1913.[43] N. Burliuk in the *First Journal of Russian Futurists* mentions Fedorov and his artistic views.[44] The familiarity of the authors of *Victory over the Sun* with the concepts of the philosopher is also evidenced by the idea expressed by Matyushin in the preface to the collection of works entitled *Three.* There he writes about new philosophy, psychology, music and painting, all of which are united, explain and complement each other:

> ...encounters are only so sweet for those who have burned everything behind them. However, all these victories are only means, and the end is the upcoming new, amazing world in which even things will be resurrected. And some conquer it... - others already see it as if in a revelation, almost living in it.[45]

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[42] *V.P. Chinaev, Russkij kosmizm v poiskah absoljuta: paralleli i peresechenija v muzykal'nom, pojeticheskom i izobrazitel'nom tvorchestve 1910–1920 h godov (*Russian cosmism in search of the absolute: parallels and intersections in musical, poetic and visual creativity of the 1910–1920s) in Scientific Bulletin of the Moscow Conservatory. Volume. 9. Issue 4 (December 2019). pp. 70–97, p.70.

[43] V. Baidin, 'Okkul'tnaya misteriya russkogo avangarda' ('Occult mystery of the Russian avant-garde') in *Arhetipy i simvoly russkoj kul'tury: ot arhaiki do sovremennosti* (*Archetypes and symbols of Russian culture: from archaic to modern*), (SPb.: Aletheia, 2021), pp. 197-236, p. 201.

[44] N. Burliuk, 'Poeticheskie nachala' in *Perviy journal russkih futuristov* ('Poetic beginnings' in *First magazine of Russian futurists)* № 1-2, (Moscow: 1914), pp. 81-85, p. 82.

[45] M. Matjushin,'Vstuplenie' in *Troe* ('Introduction' in *Three*), https://traumlibrary.ru/book/futuristy-troe/futuristy-troe.html?ysclid=lmdt6h8g6s131623979) SPb: Zhuravl', 1913 URL https://traumlibrary.ru/book/futuristy-troe/futuristy-troe.html?ysclid=lmdt6h8g6s131623979 accessed 1 September 2023.

And although Matyushin doesn't specifically mention Nikolai Fedorov, but his words almost read like a passage from the philosopher's writings.

The development of a work on the principles of collective creativity as a single text in which word, music, and a single image merge, paving the way for the New Theater and the New art as apocalyptic prophecy and action, combines the philosophical ideas of Nikolai Fedorov with those of avant-garde artists. This search for *a new earth and a new sky* as the absolute. The program that the authors set out is a fundamentally new art, the result of which will be a different world and a different man. The power of the word, which, of course, was 'in the beginning...' becomes the main component of avant-garde art. Alexey Kruchenykh in the collection of articles *Apocalypse in Russian Literature* quotes *Revelation* and points to the signs of the end of the world, demands 'to expand the axis of space'.[46] He creates a new language, calls into being 'the Word, as such'.[47] In *New Ways of the Word*, Kruchenykh declares:

> We do not need an intermediary - a symbol, a thought, we give our own new truth, and do not serve as a reflection of some Sun...
> We have cut through the object!
> We began to see through the world
> We have learned to follow the world from the end, we are pleased with this reverse movement (regarding the word, we noticed that it can often be read from the end and then it receives a deeper meaning!)
> We can change the gravity of objects (this is eternal gravity),
> We see hanging buildings and the heaviness of sounds.
> Thus, we give the world with new content...[48]

New earth and new sky: overcoming gravity and human verticality

Overcoming the force of gravity became important feature of the creativity of the authors of *Victory over the Sun*. In *Victory*, after the overthrow of the old Sun, the world is settled without 'top and bottom', turned inside

[46] A. Kruchenykh, 'Chort i rechetvorcy' in *Apokalipsis v russkoj literature*. ('The Devil and the Speech Makers' in *Apocalypses in Russian Culture*), (SPb.: Svet, 1913), pp. 3-16, p. 3.

[47] A. Kruchenykh, *Slovo kak takovoe (Word as Such)* M.: EUY, Ja. Dankin i Ja. Homutov, 1913.

[48] A. Kruchenyh, 'Novye puti slova...' *in Manifesty i programmy russkih futuristov* ('New ways of word…' in *Manifestos and programs of Russian futurists),* (Munich: Fink, 1967), p.71.

out, without a past, without memories and mistakes. This is how the space and time of the Tenth Countries are described - a place where new inhabitants live, but without the Sun:

> Reader:
> let's remember and compare with the present... so joyfully:
> freed from the weight of universal gravity, we whimsically arrange our belongings
> as if rich kingdom moves
> I want to say - remember the past...[49]

Malevich constantly addresses the theme of art going beyond the earth, abandoning the usual coordinates of physical space, but also the everyday coordinates of consciousness: 'I don't know whether the earth has shrunk or the consciousness of our creativity has increased. However, I know that the scope of art has expanded beyond the earth. All those through whose consciousness living currents that expand consciousness pass must emerge from the horizon into space and, forever descending along the scattered dome of points, affirm themselves'.[50] A quote from Malevich that says: 'New painting does not belong exclusively to the earth. The earth is abandoned, like a house eaten away by wood-beetles. And in fact, in a person, in his consciousness, lies the aspiration to space, the gravitation of separation from the globe of the earth',[51] emphasizes the aspiration to overcome earthly gravity. However, Nikolai Fedorov the first person in the history of aesthetic teachings to consider the essence of artistic creativity from the point of view of the fight against the force of gravity. According to E. Kovtun, Fedorov formulates the idea that 'the integral organism of a work expresses resistance to gravity. This point of view of the philosopher followed from his general picture of the world, in which the creative forces of "uprising" oppose the forces of fall (entropy)'.[52] In the *Philosophy of the Common Cause* Fedorov discusses the horizontal and vertical position

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[49] Alexey Kruchenykh, Kazimir Malevich, *Pobeda,* p. 18.
[50] Malevich, *Sobranie sochinenij* (2004) p. 33.
[51] K.S. Malevich, 'Pis'ma k M. V.Matjushinu', *Ezhegodnik Rukopisnogo otdela na 1974 god* ('Letters to M. V. Matyushin',Yearbook of the Manuscript Department for 1974), Academy of Sciences of the USSR, IRL (Pushkin House), ed. K. D. Muratova, (Leningrad: Science. Leningrad branch, 1976), pp. 177–195, p. 192.
[52] E. Kovtun, 'Pobeda nad Solncem – nachalo suprematizma' in *Nashe nasledie*, ('Victory over the Sun - the beginning of Suprematism' in *Our Legacy*) № 2, 1989, pp. 121-124, p. 123.

of living beings and argues that it is the vertical position of man that distinguishes him from the animal, since it gave man an understanding of death, 'therefore in uprising, in the gaze turned to the sky expressed a search for means of revitalization', says Fedorov.[53] This is not a one-sided aesthetic interpretation of existence, declares the philosopher, but also an ethical one: 'The vertical position, or the uprising of sons caused by the death of fathers, is a tragic position. Actually, the vertical position gave man the opportunity to break through the boundaries of the universe. This pose... was the first... artistic work of man, the subject of which was already some kind of victory over the fall, in general - over earthly gravity or pressure'.[54] This concept, Kovtun emphasizes, coincided with the vision of the avant-garde artists, who were not satisfied with the fact that despite the discoveries of Galileo, Copernicus and Giordano Bruno, the universe in artistic creativity nevertheless remained geocentric, and creativity was 'tethered' to earthly gravity with the concepts of 'top' and 'bottom', the presence of perspective and horizon. The new artistic method was to 'look at the earth from the outside, from the position of the internal "spiritual" universe, and then the unshakable canons of space construction immediately collapsed'.[55]

Conclusion

An analysis of the ideas of the cosmist philosopher Nikolai Fedorov, formulated in his work *Philosophy of the Common Cause*, demonstrates that they formed the underpinnings for the views of representatives of the Russian avant-garde, set out in the declaration-manifesto of the opera *Victory over the Sun.* The cosmological context of the opera connects to Fedorov's aesthetic teachings, expressed in the concepts of *Ptolemaic* and *Copernican* art, where the second being the principle of an open, infinite universe. The view of *Copernican* art brings to life a new artistic method that makes it possible to look at the Earth from the perspective of the inner spiritual universe, destroying the generally accepted rules of space construction. This was one of the most important tasks of the Cubofututists, whose goal was to destroy the old values of art and create new ones. The search for *a new earth and a new sky* leads avant-garde artists to rethink and reject the end of the world - the concept similar to Nikolai Fedorov's idea associated with the creation of a new world as a means of overcoming

[53] N.F. Fedorov, *Sochinenija,* pp. 508-509.
[54] N.F. Fedorov, *Sochinenija,* p. 517.
[55] E. Kovtun. 'Pobeda nad Solncem', p. 123.

the prophecies of the apocalypse. This line of Fedorov's philosophy is reflected in the opera's plot, its symbolism and imagery, with the Revelation of the theologian John being one of the main sources of temporal and utopian metaphors of *Victory over the Sun*. Fedorov's idea of human verticality brings forth the futuristic vision of a spiritual universe that originates in an independent artistic world, has its own interconnected gravity field, and correlates as an equal with the universal world harmony. Thus this revolutionary, post-theatrical action *Victory over the Sun* became the climax in the development of the Russian avant-garde. However, in 1913, at the time of the performance, even the creators of the spectacle did not yet understand its entire meaning. Two years later, in 1915, in his letter to Matushin, in which he talks about the opera, Malevich mentions that what was done unconsciously is now producing extraordinary results.[56] And in fact, according to Kovtun, *Victory over the Sun* was the final step towards a new artistic idea called s*uprematism*. This concept, revolutionary in spirit, was based on the great artistic task of cosmization of consciousness, rooted in the cosmic philosophy of Nikolai Fedorov.

[56] K.S. Malevich, 'Pis'ma, p.186.