Those interested in an adequate understanding of Vyacheslav Ivanov’s statements concerning the Jewish theme should first of all consider a peculiar nature of his discourse. Vyacheslav Ivanov’s discourse was built in a supra-personal way—as a speech devoted to the eternal, divine and transpersonal Truth. However, the Truth for Ivanov was not a rational concept but rather a myth contained in ancient religious traditions. Therefore, his statements about the Truth were built as an articulation of messages, which seem to be transmitted not by the speaker himself but by some impersonal mythological tradition obediently expressed by the speaker. As Lev Shestov profoundly and fairly noted, Ivanov aspired to express not his personal thoughts and feelings, but whatever the Truth had ordered him to think and feel.¹

Ivanov intentionally used to highlight the statements that were especially important for him, thus emphasizing their particular, supra-personally true nature. “I proclaim the dogma of the orthodoxy of art,” he once (in his article “On Sect and Dogma”) said (2, 613).² In fact, he could have said something like this about almost every text he had written, for he put the very presentation of the text—at least ideally—on the same footing as proclaiming the dogma in the name of some or other authoritative collective tradition—be it the Church, Christianity, Art, Symbolism, or the Russian Soul, etc. It should be also noted that Ivanov usually interpreted the term “dogma” not as a specific, rationally formulated proposition (as does the Church’s tradition), but as a mythological narrative. Ivanov’s attitude

¹ L. Shestov. Viacheslav Velikolepnyi (K kharakteristike russkogo upadochnichestva), Potestas Clavium (Vlast’ kluchei), Moscow, 2007, p. 279.
we are describing here clearly reflects the traits of a traditional Russian imposture (though, definitely, not a petty one of Gogol’s Khlestakov, but an exalted, pathetic and culturally respectable one). Besides, such an attitude had its objective grounds. Ivanov’s text-generation process was not only aimed at creation of new texts within the established discourse space of the Russian literature, but also at inducement of new, external discourses as well. The significance of Ivanov’s Hymns to Dionysus, or his stylization of a Greek tragedy (“Tantalus”), or his mystical meditations (namely and specifically in his poem “Man”), or his translations of Novalis’ works is not restricted to the introduction of some new thematic and stylistic elements into the Russian culture. They have also enriched the Russian culture with comprehensive discourse complexes, which made multilingual voices of Hellenism, Dionysism, Renaissance Hermeticism, German Romanticism, and etc. sound in Russian.

The impersonalistic tendency to “displace a system-defined and psychological person” and thus promote an impersonalistic “objective artistic structure,” to replace the author as an individual creator of an individual textual structure with the herald of supra-personal discourse is known to be one of the leading tendencies of the Modernism-epoch literature. Vyacheslav Ivanov imagined himself to be, and really was such a Modernist author—a herald of discourse. So he envisaged himself and was in his whole creative work, just as he envisaged himself and was in his declarations devoted to the Jewish theme.

Ivanov’s article “On the ideology of the Jewish question” (1915) was his main and the only full-scale public declaration devoted to the Jewish theme. This article was thoroughly commented by S. Markish in the context of the general theme: Ivanov and Jewry. Nevertheless, I consider his commentary to be far from exhaustive; besides, Ivanov’s article itself, though small, is so extremely intense and complex in its content, full of ambiguities and mythological allusions, that it is immensely significant. Therefore, I believe it would be useful to analyze it in detail.

The key point of Ivanov’s article “On the ideology of the Jewish question” is the restoration of the “forgotten” “holy and true Tradition” of Christianity

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