

Anton Vidokle and Irmgard Emmelhainz

God-Building as a Work of Art: Cosmist Aesthetics

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The following text is an edited transcription of a conversation that took place within the context of the Art and Science Aleph Festival hosted by the National Autonomous University of Mexico in May 2020 via Zoom because we were unable to gather publicly due to the Covid-19 pandemic. As part of the festival's program, Anton Vidokle's trilogy of films about Russian cosmism was translated to Spanish and screened for the Mexican audience.

Carlos Prieto: I think it's best to start this conversation by speaking about the role that Russian cosmism could have at this moment of crisis created by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Anton Vidokle: Yes, a conversation about immortality acquires a lot more meaning when we are in the middle of a pandemic and so many people are sick and dying. I think this present moment is a bit similar to the original context that triggered cosmism: all the epidemics, droughts, and famines in nineteenth-century Russia. But now there is also the fear of planetary ecological collapse and extinction, and in this context the idea of resurrection becomes much more urgent. There is also a certain hopelessness produced by the decline of reason and social progress, both of which have been encountering countless setbacks in recent decades. All of this makes the delirious optimism of cosmism meaningful and moving, in my opinion.

Irmgard Emmelhainz: Here is another question to start from: What is Russian cosmism?

AV: I am starting to think that there may be no such thing as a unified intellectual movement that can be called "Russian cosmism." What exists is a particular tradition comprising numerous works by a diverse group of people – philosophers, scientists, artists, filmmakers, political activists – whose ideas overlap because all of them were interested in defeating illness and death, as well as exploring possibilities of living and traveling in the cosmos. But many of these people had contradictory views and ideas.

The name "Russian cosmism" is something that was coined very late, in the 1970s. When these ideas were first developed a century earlier, nobody used such a name. These two words first appear together in a Soviet encyclopedia of philosophy. Somebody wrote an entry for "Russian cosmism" and the name stuck. But it's actually a misnomer because it gives cosmism a nationalist reading, while the ideas of cosmism are probably the most universal ideas I have ever come across. Cosmism has bigger ambitions than nationalism: when it speaks of resurrection, it's for everyone who has ever lived on earth. In a sense resurrection is meant not only for humans, but for all living organisms: all life deserves to be

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Film still from Andrei Tarkovsky's 1972 movie *Solaris*.

eternal. You cannot get much broader than that.

IE: What would be some examples of diverging visions within what is considered to be Russian cosmist thinking?

AV: Nikolai Fedorov, who first developed these ideas, was a deeply religious Orthodox Christian. For him, resurrection and immortality are the most central aspect of cosmism, its “common task.”¹ The other main theorist of cosmism is Konstantin Tsiolkovsky, the self-taught scientist who first developed the mathematic formulas necessary for a spaceship to leave the orbit of this planet.² Tsiolkovsky’s view on death was totally opposite to Fedorov’s. For him death was an ecstatic, euphoric event: he thought that death/entropy is the moment when the atoms that make up our bodies are liberated from a finite form, and that they are happy in this moment of emancipation. Following Aristotle, Tsiolkovsky believed that atoms can experience happiness and sadness. This is related to panpsychism, a very ancient, animistic worldview which holds that all matter is capable of feeling and thinking.³ This kind of thinking also appears to contradict Tsiolkovsky’s own fervent belief in science and rationalism. In any case, death for Tsiolkovsky is a joyous event for atoms, whereas for Fedorov death is the greatest

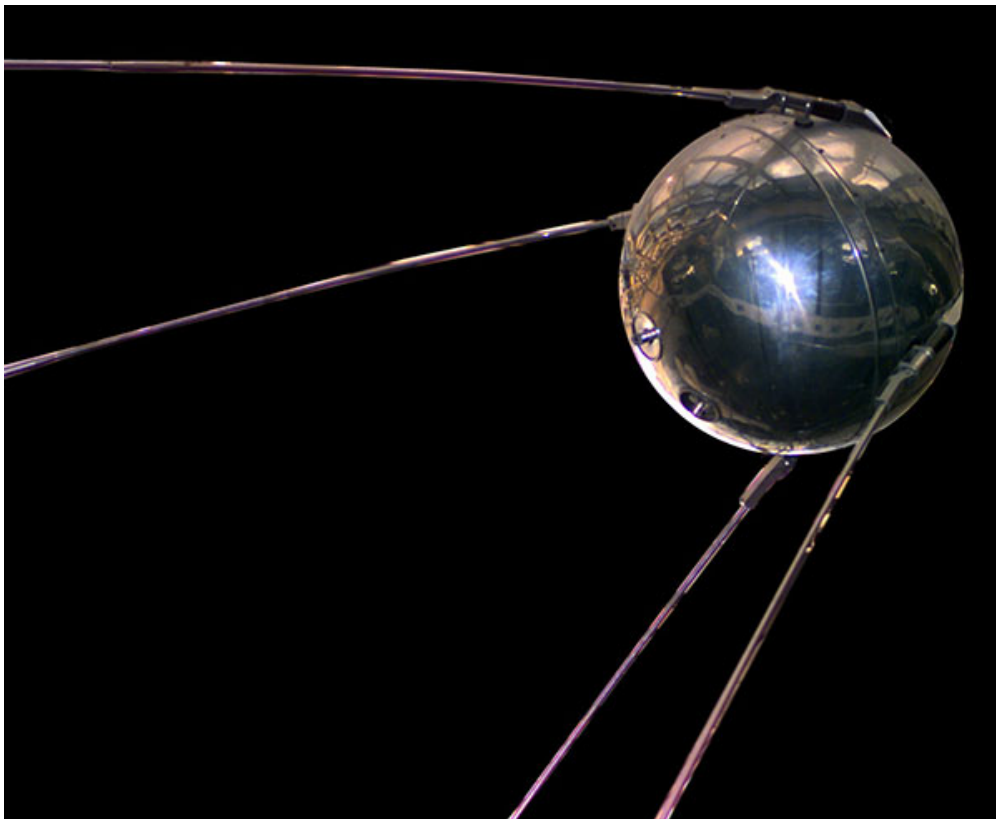
tragedy and evil in the world, and it needs to be defeated and eradicated by all means possible.

IE: Cosmist ideas and socialism are utopias that overlapped in time, and maybe it can be said that they converged in the Russian avant-garde. If we consider “cosmist aesthetics” to propose a synthesis between art and science, knowledge and creativity, how can we reinterpret the Russian avant-garde? How could art advance the goals of cosmism, be it space travel or immortality?

AV: Sometimes I think that cosmism would not be so interesting if it had not happened against the background of the revolution. The nineteenth century was notorious for numerous utopian movements. Some were based on religion or the occult, and others on socialist utopias. There were many such groups and ideologies in almost every country in the world at the time. Had it not been for the revolution in Russia and the total radicalization of society, cosmism would likely remain a kind of peculiar but insignificant development. But the mixture of cosmism and communism, and the acceleration that occurred in Russia just before and after the revolution, were like pouring fuel on a fire.

Unlike most philosophical, political, or social theories, which tend to give art relatively

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A replica of Sputnik 1, the first artificial satellite in the world to be put into outer space: the replica is stored in the National Air and Space Museum. Photo: Wikipedia Commons/Public Domain.

little significance other than something decorative or propagandistic (like artists designing T-shirts and posters for the revolution), in cosmism art is equal to science, technology, medicine, and social organization: its transformative capacity is valued on par with all other key fields that shape humanity. In fact, Fedorov writes about immortality and resurrection as a work of art, and space travel becomes a tool to be used towards a spiritualization of the universe, which he also calls an art project. This seems to have resonated with artists, and it generated quite a response – first in poetry and literature, in works of avant-garde, futurist poets such as Velimir Khlebnikov, Aleksei Kruchyonykh, Alexander Svyatogor, Nikolai Zabolotsky, Alexander Yaroslavsky, and others.⁴

IE: Malevich's *Black Square* is interpreted in canonical modern art history as an emblem for abstraction via suprematism. How could we reinterpret it through the lens of cosmism?

AV: *Black Square* is a peculiar painting. On the one hand it has become synonymous with a kind of a nonobjective, reductivist, geometric abstraction. However, there is another way to see this painting: simply as a mimetic representation of the black sky at night.⁵ In this sense it's not an

abstraction at all. In fact there were many black squares that followed Malevich's iconic painting.⁶ There is a black square painting by Alexander Rodchenko, which includes small, colorful circles that look like planets and stars.⁷ There is also a whole series of black squares by Solomon Nikritin in which a pill-shaped object – perhaps a spaceship or a satellite – gradually enters the black space.⁸

I suspect there can also be a cosmist reading of the futurist opera *Victory over the Sun*, where Malevich's *Black Square* first appears as part of the stage set.⁹ What is implied by this work, if not literally spelled out, is that a victory over the order of nature represented by the sun also heralds a future victory over death.

Tatlin's famous *Monument to the Third International* is angled parallel to the planetary tilt of earth.¹⁰ Various Soviet architects from this period used new proportions for the design of buildings, which were based on distances from the earth to the moon and to other planets in the solar system, as an attempt to bring terrestrial structures into a greater harmony with the cosmos. By the way, the word "cosmos" means "harmony," not "space." It also means "beauty."

There is a passage in Malevich's writing where he speaks of suprematist compositions as



The Caracol Tower, Chichen Itza, Mexico. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.

satellites, anticipating the *Sputnik*, which was launched in 1957:

The suprematist machine, if it can be put that way, will be single-purposed and have no attachments. A bar alloyed with all the elements, like the earthly sphere, will bear the life of perfections, so that each constructed suprematist body will be included in nature's natural organization and will form a new sputnik; it is merely a matter of finding the relationship between the two bodies racing in space. A new sputnik can be built between earth and the moon, a suprematist sputnik equipped with all the elements, that moves in an orbit, forming its own new path.¹¹

Malevich's *Architectons*, the sculptural works he was making around 1923, are supposed to be designs or prototypes for space stations that would orbit earth containing bodies of the dead, preserved at zero gravity in the coldness of outer space for eventual resurrection.

IE: How is this history of art linked to your trilogy?

AV: What attracted me to cosmism initially and motivated me to make these films is that while I have always admired and have been influenced by the legacy of the avant-garde, there was always something very oblique about it: a certain limit beyond which I could not make sense of these works. What is the strange energy that animates them? How did they come into being? What do they actually represent? The conventional art historical explanations were never quite satisfying, and to understand these works only in terms of Marxism did not account for much of the strangeness that I was sensitive to. Reading Fedorov and other cosmist authors clarified a lot of things about these works for me.

Because so few people know about cosmism, I felt that I needed to do something to share these ideas. At first I thought about curating a show, publishing a book, or organizing symposia. But I was worried that an academic, historicist approach would flatten all this incredibly imaginative content. So I tried to present some of these ideas in a short play, which was not very good, but the script worked much better for an essay film. Curiously, I didn't focus much on art and the avant-garde in the trilogy – only a little in the third film, which was partly shot at the Tretyakov Gallery. I also did not focus very much on the space program either. I think what really touched me once I got more familiar with cosmism were the ideas themselves, so the films are more about ideas than objects or artifacts.

IE: In cosmist aesthetics, art and science

are linked in order to act directly in society. Can you elaborate?

AV: Cosmist aesthetics are really peculiar. For one thing, in Fedorov's writings there are many different definitions of art. He writes about art all the time. It's unusual. As I mentioned above, for Fedorov immortality is art and the labor of resurrection is a work of art. There is an overlap with Marxism: the belief in the transformative, nearly alchemical power of human labor to produce something that is greater than the sum of its parts, in this case a return of life.

At the same time, Fedorov speaks of temples as works of art, because they are inherently interdisciplinary and combine architecture, painted representations, sculpture, music, and words of the liturgy – like a Gesamtkunstwerk. According to his thinking, temples are linked with museums and observatories, because these are all places where memories are preserved. This is because documents, manuscripts, and images – memories – were kept in temples and monasteries, as were the remains of ancestors. Museums also preserve human and animal remains, so temples and museums are also cemeteries. Ancient temples often contained astronomical observatories, for example in Mesopotamia or in Mesoamerica. So for Fedorov all of these are one institution that is also a work of art, which should be radicalized so as to produce art in the form of a returning of life.

Astronomical observatories are also important because the horizon of cosmism does not stop with achieving immortality; it also calls for the totality of the universe to become one, unified, interconnected, immortal, and conscious organism. Like the sapient ocean in Stanisław Lem's *Solaris*, but much bigger: an organism which includes all that exists.¹² This is to be constructed by the labor of immortal humans, who will have all eternity, the resources of the cosmos, and the technology of space travel to teach all the dead matter that comprises the bulk of the universe to become conscious, to feel, and to think. Knowledge of astronomy is essential not only for space travel and navigation, but also in the sense that the act of looking at the stars should not be merely passive gazing, but should produce regulation (harmonization) of the universe, like a manifestation of the "spooky action at a distance" which is a phenomenon by which one particle can effectively "know" something about another particle instantaneously, even if those two particles are separated by a great distance.

"There is no substance which cannot take the form of a living being. The simplest being is the atom. Therefore the whole universe is alive

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An Alibaba LED facial mask promoting "skin rejuvenation therapy" and "anti-aging wrinkle removal." See <https://www.aliexpress.com/item/32618827583.html>.

and there is nothing in it but life,” writes Tsiolkovsky in a monograph entitled *The Monism of the Universe* (1931).¹³ Despite their profound difference in their relationship to death, both Tsiolkovsky and Fedorov imagine a living, sentient cosmos. While this is largely a scientifically inspired insight for Tsiolkovsky, for Fedorov it is an art project.

IE: If we can thus relate cosmist aesthetics to the task of bringing about immortality (and resurrection for all), can you elaborate on how in the first part of your film trilogy, *Immortality for All*, there is a section in the film that claims to have agency on the viewer’s mental and physical health while we see red flashes on the screen?

AV: When I was working on the first film in the trilogy, I came across a discovery made by NASA scientists in the 1990s that a certain type of red light produces a healing effect on living tissue.¹⁴ NASA had a specific problem: in the condition of zero gravity, tissue heals very slowly. So if you’re on the space station or a spaceship, even a minor paper cut takes a long time to heal. Red light in a frequency of 680 NM, emitted by LED diodes, expedites the healing of skin. Irradiation by this red light makes wounds heal much faster. Following NASA, the cosmetics industry adapted this technology for skin rejuvenation therapy. The military also adopted red light therapy for special forces soldiers, because there is a similar need to heal wounds quickly in combat.

Film is essentially sound, light, and color, so I thought it might be possible to use these healing properties to suggest a kind of a therapeutic or prophylactic effect. Now, I don’t want to claim that my films have healing powers; they are not going to cure Covid-19 or cancer. It’s more of a suggestion or a desire that an artwork could also incorporate a healing, therapeutic function, which is in keeping with cosmist aesthetics.

IE: You shot *Immortality And Resurrection For All* in museums in Moscow and elsewhere in Russia. And in the context of cosmism, the main enemies are death, decay, and entropy. For Fedorov, death needs to be reversed. Can you talk about how resurrection and conservation, and imagination and memory, relate in this film and in your interpretation of the role of the cosmist museum? Bearing in mind that in the West museums mean precisely death and petrification.

AV: Museum ethics are a really important territory to consider, particularly in light of all the plunder that passed for archeology, the killing of animals, the murder of indigenous people, whose remains ended up in museum displays, and many other unconscionable, unacceptable things done in the name of “science” and “progress.”

Museums, as we understand them now, came into being during a very violent time: the French Revolution and all the subsequent wars, colonial expeditions, and so forth. Undoubtedly our contemporary museums embody this violence, and this urgently needs to change.

However, Fedorov is not glorifying that side of a museum as an institution. In fact, he clearly says that a museum should not take, but should preserve and return life. I do think that the cosmist museum he writes about is something substantially different than the museums we have now. First, his museum is a museum of everything. The curators of the cosmist museum would not be concerned with the question of selection or what kind of history to write, but would be more like the medical staff in a hospital who, at least theoretically, have to make an effort to save the life of every single patient, everyone in need of help.

IE: Can you explain the role of the dog and the mummy in the film? What are they doing, wandering around the museum in the film? The apparition of the dog running around the museum is very moving because it’s like he comes from the afterworld to announce everyone else’s resurrection. The mummy, too, is coming back to life.

AV: Both the dog and the mummy are references to Ancient Egypt. The dog is a Pharaoh Hound, one of the oldest breeds that still exists. They are like living artifacts – they have been around for nearly five thousand years. They look exactly like the head of the Egyptian god Anubis, the god of the dead. He invented embalming and mummification. The reason I wanted to have this dog in the film is to have a living animal run through a zoological museum, filled with taxidermy animals. It’s also a reference to the dog of an artist whose work I admire: Andrei Monastyrski.¹⁵ He is a conceptual artist who pioneered performance art in Moscow in the 1970s. I used a text passage from one of his key works in one of the films.

The mummy is a reference to Ancient Egypt, where concern with eternal afterlife radically dominated the social and economic organization of their civilization. Everything in life was subordinated to eternal life after death. It is also a reference to Lazarus. In Russian icons, Lazarus is often represented as a mummy. There is a strange detail in these paintings: other people who are present at this resurrection scene are trying to stay away from him or hold their nose because he stinks. His body has been rotting.

IE: Cosmism has been heralded as a sort of alternative modernity in a sense that it’s different from Western modernity because it’s not grounded in eliminating or overcoming the past in the teleological march toward progress.

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A Russian icon from the Novgorod school *The Raising of Lazarus*, 15th century. 72 x 60 cm. The Russian Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia. Photo: Wikimedia Commons/Public Domain.

But for cosmism, progress means resurrecting the dead and bringing them into the present so they can live literally in the future. And that's true democracy and equality in terms of what it means to preserve the past. In the tradition of Western modern thought, to compensate for the loss of the past we invent ideological or historical grand narratives and memorializing mechanisms. In a critical reading of Western modernism, this destruction of the past means the destruction of humanity's link to the world, that is, the meaning of human life in the world. What is also destroyed is the link to the sacred. Cosmism has in common with Western modernity the elimination of God, the sacred, and any spiritual meaning of humanity's link to the world. But differently than in Western modernity, the meaning of human life is the eternal preservation of human life. That is to say, in cosmism, what gives life meaning is to want to live forever; comfort is not located in past traditions (as in memorializing mechanisms in Western modernism). What truly matters is eradicating disease, increasing human life spans, space exploration, human enhancement, attaining immortality by whatever means is most accessible. In sum, the meaning of cosmist life is to transcend. This leads us to space travel, which materially means transcending our dependence on the earth (our bodily needs) to survive. But this sort of overcoming of life or the material aspects of life corresponds with some dystopian materializations of cosmism, like cryogenics or transhumanism or downloading our brains into machines, which are all phenomena and ideologies linked to the dream of overcoming biological barriers toward immortality and against entropy through technology. Yet, from a feminist point of view, we cannot transcend our reproductive needs (proof of that is that in outer space we need to recreate an earthly environment in order to survive); from an anti-capitalist point of view, transcendence is a war against life which we can link to the neoliberal destruction of healthcare. Is there a twist in cosmism towards rethinking these dystopian outcomes of negating life itself in the search for transcendence? I think it was Fedorov who said we need to self-energize and not depend on our environment to transcend. The modernist human miracle of transcendence via technology and science has been achieved at a heavy cost – not only eugenics and social Darwinism but also climate change, deforestation, soil erosion, water depletion, pollution, mass extinction, slavery, and diet-related diseases, just to name a few of the side effects. We have reached the point where care of the human body has become a geopolitical drama, as public health infrastructure has been decimated and corporate

pharmaceutical interests have become class interests. If cosmism's goal is to maintain life, what would be its way out of biopolitics, transhumanism, and genetic engineering?

AV: Healthcare and medicine are a very central preoccupation in cosmism. In fact, many of the people involved were either medical doctors or scientists working on research that has biomedical implications, like Alexander Bogdanov and his experimental blood transfusions, or Alexander Chizhevsky and his research into the ionization of air.¹⁶ Interestingly, the plasma treatment that is the only successful treatment for Covid-19 right now is something very close to what Bogdanov was working on in 1926, and the ionizers that Chizhevsky invented can be very useful in disinfecting public spaces from the virus, while we are still waiting for a vaccine. For all its imagination and grand ideas, cosmism is also deeply concerned with practical interventions in daily life.

I think for me cosmism is first and foremost a project of God-building (богостроительство).¹⁷ In this sense immortality, resurrection, and space travel are not ends in and of themselves, but are means towards a greater goal. God-building was a very important idea in Russia at the turn of the century that some of the key communist leaders also embraced before and after the revolution. For example, Anatoly Lunacharsky, the first People's Commissar for education in the Soviet Union, who so empowered the avant-garde after the revolution, supported and wrote extensively on this idea.¹⁸ God-building was inspired by Ludwig Feuerbach's "religion of humanity," which, in turn, is probably inspired by the strange secular religion Robespierre invented to replace Catholicism, following the revolution in France.¹⁹

"For the sake of the great struggle for life ... it is necessary for humanity to almost organically merge into an integral unity. Not a mechanical or chemical ... but a psychic, consciously emotional linking-together ... is in fact a religious emotion," writes Lunacharsky in *Religion and Socialism* in 1908. By the early 1920s, the anarchist, poet, and founder of biocosmism Alexander Svyatogor organized the Church of Free Labor in Moscow, with the support of the government as an attempt to create a new secular religion that would help build communism and cosmism.

I think what Fedorov proposed a few decades earlier is exactly the same project, albeit on a universal scale: when the entirety of the cosmos will be made sapient, united, and capable of thought and emotion, it will effectively be the same as God. However, this is fundamentally different from any kind of transcendence: cosmists aimed to transform

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rather than transcend. For Fedorov, the force that enables this transformation is love, and perhaps this is the twist. He also referred to this as a work of art.

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Thanks to Hallie Ayres for transcribing the conversation and annotating it, and to Carlos Prieto for organizing the Zoom conversation as well as translating Anton Vidokle's films to Spanish.

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Irmgard Emmelhainz is an independent translator, writer, researcher, and lecturer based in Mexico City. Her writings on film, the Palestine Question, art, cinema, culture, and neoliberalism have been translated into several languages and presented at an array of international venues, including the Graduate School of Design at Harvard (2014); the Walter Benjamin in Palestine Conference (2015); the New School and the Americas Society (2016); SBC Gallery, Montreal (2016); the Curatorial Summit at the School of Visual Arts, New York (2017); and the Munch Museum, Oslo (2018). Her book *Jean-Luc Godard's Political Filmmaking* was published by Palgrave MacMillan in 2019.

Anton Vidokle is an artist and an editor of *e-flux journal*.

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1
Fedorov (1829–1903) worked as a librarian at the Rumiantsev Museum (now the Russian State Library). A collection of his essays was published posthumously by his followers in 1904 under a name *The Philosophy of the Common Task*. This book outlined the basic tenets of cosmism, underscoring the imperative to work toward resurrection and immortality for all.

2
Cited as the grandfather of the Soviet space program, Tsiolkovsky's (1857–1935) plethora of scientific research and philosophical musings laid the groundwork for astronautic theory and modern rocketry. Tsiolkovsky studied under Fedorov for three years at the Rumiantsev Museum.

3
Panpsychism rests between dualism, which distinguishes between the mind and matter but presents a fractured understanding of how the two interact, and physicalism, which offers a unified conception of the world but lacks an explanation for the emergence of consciousness. Panpsychism advocates for a vision of the world in which mentality and consciousness are innate and ubiquitous.

4
A key member of the Russian Futurist movement, Khlebnikov's (1885–1922) poems and plays are characterized by experiments with linguistics and translogical language. Together with Khlebnikov, Kruchyonykh (1886–1968) is credited with inventing zaum, a transnational language rooted in linguistic deconstruction and sound symbolism. The founder of biocosmism, Svyatogor (Alexander Agienko) (1886–1937) championed the belief that death was the source of social injustices and global antagonisms. Zabolotsky (1903–1958) cofounded the avant-garde group Oberiu, a collective dedicated to absurdist, futurist, and modernist art and aesthetics. A proponent of biocosmism, Yaroslavsky's (1896–1930) writings extended the definition to include immortality for all living beings. Highly critical of the Bolsheviks, he was eventually executed in the Solovki prison camp.

5
This argument stems from Boris Groys's writing on the subject, elaborated in the 2017 exhibition "Art Without Death: Russian Cosmism" at HKW in Berlin. See https://www.hkw.de/en/programm/projekte/2017/art_without_death_russian_cosmism/start.php.

6
Kazimir Malevich (1879–1935) founded the avant-garde art movement suprematism, which

made use of basic geometric forms to convey spiritual and artistic feeling.

7
Affiliated with the constructivist movement, Rodchenko (1891–1956) worked in graphic design, photomontage, and photography as a means of social commentary after the Russian Revolution.

8
A painter and exhibition designer, Nikritin (1898–1965) founded and lead multiple research initiatives focused on the biomechanics of movement within the theatrical arts.

9
Written by Kruchyonykh in zaum, *Victory over the Sun* illustrates an endeavor to eradicate reason and time by deposing the sun. The opera was met with violent criticism when it premiered at Saint Petersburg's Luna Park in 1913.

10
Associated with the constructivist movement, Vladimir Tatlin (1885–1953) worked at the intersection of architecture and sculpture, guided by a utopian belief in the synthesis of art and technology. Conceived as the headquarters for the Communist International, the *Monument* (commonly known as "Tatlin's tower") was envisioned as a spiral iron framework surrounding a glass cube, cone, and cylinder stacked atop each other and rotating at different speeds. Though a model of the tower was exhibited at the Congress of the Soviets in 1920, the Soviet government's disdain for nonfigurative art impeded the structure from ever being realized.

11
Kazimir Malevich, "Suprematism: 34 Drawings," published on December 15, 1920.

12
The Polish science fiction writer and philosopher Stanisław Lem (1921–2006) published *Solaris* in 1961. The novel concerns a group of scientists and their failure to understand the inner machinations of the sentient planet Solaris.

13
Contrary to the theory of dualism, monism posits that reality and all its phenomena are reducible to one unit or principle with no independent parts.

14
See Harry T. Whelan, "The Use of NASA Light-Emitting Diode Near-Infrared Technology for Biostimulation," [ntrs.nasa.gov](https://ntrs.nasa.gov/search.jsp?R=20030001599) <https://ntrs.nasa.gov/search.jsp?R=20030001599>.

15
Credited with cofounding Moscow conceptualism, alongside Ilya Kabakov,

Monastyrski (born 1949) founded the performance art group Collective Actions to experiment with modes of spatiotemporal practice.

16
A writer, philosopher, and revolutionary, Bogdanov (1873–1928) cofounded (with Lenin) the Bolshevik party. He also founded the Institute for Hematology and Blood Transfusions in 1925–26 to research and experiment the biological potential of blood transfusions to aid in eternal youth and rejuvenation. He died after injecting himself with the blood of a student infected with malaria and tuberculosis. Alexander Chizhevsky (1897–1964) studied the effects of the sun and ionization on biology. Through research with electrically charged chandeliers, Chizhevsky discovered the beneficial effects on living beings of negatively charged ions in the air.

17
Developed by the Bolshevik sector of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party, God-building was an enterprise that proposed appropriating the religious mechanisms of symbolism, ritual, and myth and repurposing them as vehicles for pro-communist propaganda that aggrandized science over the supernatural.

18
A Marxist revolutionary, Lunacharsky (1875–1933) occupied the role of People's Commissariat for Education from 1917 to 1929, during which time he oversaw an outpouring of avant-garde artistic production.

19
Ludwig Feuerbach (1804–1872) expanded on theories of historical materialism and atheism by offering a critique of religion as the outward projection of human nature.