

# Toumanian and the Universe

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## Abstract

Toumanian's poetic intelligence indeed ignited the universe, ensuring the continuous flow of creation on Earth and into the hearts and minds of people. The rapprochement with the universe represents a cultural endeavor in life organization, aimed at not only rectifying past and present mistakes but also guiding pathways to harmony with the universe and God. His lyrical hero embodies the ultimate human, seamlessly integrated into the universe, reverting to their inherent creator nature and origin. Through this, Toumanian established space as an essential element of identity, a perpetual value. The article explores the connection between Toumanian and space.

**Keywords:** *universe, sky, self-awareness, Sirius, Venus, existential area, eternity, psychological identification, soul-transmission.*

Terms such as sky, sun, star, cloud, light, universe, God, eternity, Sirius, Venus, and other cosmic concepts are frequently present in Toumanian's works, spanning various periods of his creativity. The issue of self-awareness brought the All Armenian Poet into contact with the universe. Psychological identification and rapprochement, sensory and emotional empathize with the universe, psychological attributions and projections, introspection, whose path flows into the universe, eternity and boundlessness.

"I gazed upon the magnificence of the universe, immersing myself in its vastness... I comprehended the life of the stars and the insignificance of humanity. I observed nature and all its creatures. And what does a person boast of? Merely being one among them, unknown to them. I observed all people, from princes to commoners, from the poor to the rich. The happiest person is the strongest, lacking nothing, unafraid, serene, and healthy. I observed a person from birth to death... in every circumstance; the only upright are those who stand firmly on their own feet, the only radiant are those who shine with their own light, illuminated by their inner brilliance (Toumanian (1999b))." Essentially, the purity and greatness of the universe is contrasted with the smallness and sinfulness of mortal man. The universe becomes the context of regulation of life, although Toumanian's "how to live" mentality does not become the culture of life.

The quatrain with the beginning "AT my baptism the sky was a church; the sun, a holy lantern", which is, in fact, the "birth certificate" of the poet, is a multi-meaningful and multi-colored canvas that contains the symbolic system of the life and mission of the All-Armenian poet.

AT my baptism the sky was a church; the sun, a holy lantern;

The rainbow, a braided laurel; everyone's love, a font.

The mountain was my godfather; the dew, vital myrrh;

And my Baptist was He who consecrated me a Poet (Toumanian (2004c)).

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Over time, existentialism has undergone dynamic development across various genres of literature, yet the urge for existential rebellion has been most pronounced.

MY soul is a celestial traveler in the Universe,

A passenger from Earth, indifferent to earthly glories,

My soul has left and diffused among the distant stars,

A stranger to anyone who stayed below (Toumanian (2004b)).

The works related to the universe serve as dominant reflections of the transcendental whole, where the universe acts as the most significant concept in assigning meaning. Approaching the universe becomes a tendency to align one's spiritual and physical qualities, thoughts, and ambitions, primarily embodying existential impulses and messages.

The universe becomes the area of existential certainty of the value-based system of living, and the concept of limit only acquires the meaning of perfection. In all the poems and quatrains related to space, Toumanian existentially transcends himself and the world, reigning over the vastness of the secret universe. In the poem "Exploring the Universe" not only is the phenomenon of existential aesthetics evident, but also spiritual dynamics. It is not merely a description of a life lived. In the text and the context, the inertia of semantics gives different dimensions and limits to what Toumanian received and possessed from the universe.

A gaze you gave me upward

To sink into the upper bounds of the sun,

A thought you gave me celestial and bright

To fathom the vast expanse of the horizon,

A tie you used to own my soul

To give my soul infinite joy,

A ray you used to grace my brow

To burn, adorn with sunny toy...

And these self-overcoming are not ends in it. He not only preaches but also affirms the existence of the highest values with the "infinite joy of the soul", preferring them to human willfulness and evil.

My cheerful soul is up till end

No near or far, above, below,

The whole space – a house and land

A distant, free Lord – myself alone (Toumanian (1985b)).

The sky, as an existential space, fascinated Hovhannes Toumanian since childhood. Perhaps it was also due to his frequent encounters with the sky that he remained so crystalline, clear, and epic in his personal life and in his works. The sky was his silent teacher. "When I was young, I loved to lie on my back in our grassland and on the hills, under the trees, and immerse myself in the sky or nature for hours. I was always in the mood to fly, and it always seemed to me that I could fly in the air; I felt so light, and even now it seems to me that I was flying or that I had flown. In the silence of the nights, I always listened to the sound

of Debed, which came from the deep valley, sometimes deaf and deep, sometimes clear and scary. And it seems that it was talking to my soul. My great teacher was the rushing Debed, sleeping under the starry sky, and lying alone in the grasslands for hours, staring at the sky (Toumanian (1999a)).”

Sky, stars, sun, universe. We read in the memoirs of Nvard Toumanian. Once, he said in the midst of conversation, ”The idea of infinity is a great one: thinking for an hour is a very hard thing - something that leads to madness... People are not in the habit of looking at the sky, while it is very important... (Toumanian (2021))” He was talking about the universe, the secrets of life and death, the vanity of life, the feeling of satisfaction; he was referring to the sages of the East. ”Omar Khayyam says it well: ...What then is life to us, what is our life in this bottomless ocean - a single wave that passes...” Deep identifications with the vastness of the sky expanded the boundaries of the poet’s mental world and cognitive field.

”At the age of seven or eight, he was a “herder”, but being a very dreamy child, he would often lose the oxen. He would take them to the field, set them free, and then sit on a rock or lay down under a tree, indulging in his dreams.

For hours, he admired the pink clouds of the sunset, the interplay of clouds on Chatindagh’s peak, their slow and smooth movement, and dreamed... He lay in the valley, listening to the rush of the Debed River, the chirping of birds, and the crickets. Late in the evening, he stretched out under the open sky, gazing at the starry heavens, lost in thought and dreams..... (Toumanian (1983))” .

The poet’s epic purity and harmony emerge from communion with the sky, stars, and universe. Each phrase within a poetic monologue or dialogue is either directly or mentally addressed to the speaker. The interlocutor, at times, becomes the universe; at others, the sky and the stars.

O shining stars!

Eyes of the night,

Glowing ardent,

You smile so bright.

Just as you smiled

When still a child

Lively and brisk,

Bright as yourselves

I would frolic and frisk

Without sorrow . . .

You smile today,

When weak and gray

I weep with grief

For my lost belief . . .

You will smile tomorrow

Upon my grave . . . (Toumanian (1985a))

N. Toumanian wrote: “He loved, especially, Sirius and Venus, their brilliance and color. Often, we were awakened at dusk to see the wonderful twinkling of Sirius or the fantastic glow of Venus. We also loved the stars, and each of us chose a star for ourselves: one chose Venus, another Sirius, Orion, etc. The result of Daddy’s enthusiasm was the poems ‘Venus’ and ‘The Farewell of Sirius’ (Toumanian (1987a)).”

Of course, the impulse to write came from the visit of 14-year-old Viktor Hambardzumyan to the poet. It was the summer of 1922. During their conversation, the future greatest scientist told Toumanian about Sirius. N. Toumanian recalled that it was during the summer of 1922 when “He was interested in the stars and wrote ‘The Farewell of Sirius’ (Toumanian (1985c)) in those days.”

O say, from what remoteness do you hail,

Sirius, mighty traveler of the sky,

What is the heaven to which you sail,

With speed untold

On endless routes,

As he centuries unfold?

The attainment of existential-spiritual independence occurs through connection with the universe and the eternal.

How many eyes gazed at you before

Just as we do tonight,

And how many more

As yet unborn.

The poem ‘Venus’ contains remarkable material. In it, the poet expresses love and anticipation for the appearance of Venus. Venus is portrayed as a force that must arrive to overcome ‘evil and devil’, dispelling darkness.

... When you will rise?

Arise, arise,

Hit it, hit it,

Evil and devil

Chase the darkness,

Venus!

Open the door

Of the daylight,

Venus! ...

Which door is it related to? The one through which 'Light by day shall flow,' the doorway to a vision of fair and honest coexistence. By creating equivalent relations of identity with the universe and the stars, the poet becomes distinct, a part of the people in which he remained until his last days, but also distinguished by his self-sufficient integrity and the confidence of belonging to that integrity. The carrier of the universe and the infinite has strengthened and will continue to strengthen the spiritual foundations of society and its continuity through his literature.

Perfection becomes an attainable desire, while Venus acquires a valuable foundation and imparts spiritual stability. In the poem 'Anoush,' it is no coincidence that the sky, stars, and enchanting night form the backdrop for the Ascension night and the lovers' meeting. The overture and epilogue of Ascension Night not only foreshadow its profound meaning and mystery but also encapsulate the essence of the poem, tracing its spiritual journey from inception to culmination. The author imbues the stars with strength, power, and magic, anticipating their intercession and radiant smile.

The water and the flowers she has placed  
 Beneath the stars, to plead from them,  
 Her heart filled to bursting with eagerness,  
 That they may smile kindly upon her lover... (Toumanian (1989))

In "divine, inscrutable conception" the depiction of 'Out of the distant depths of the infinite heaven' intertwines with 'a happy, wondrous moment,' symbolizing the opening of the gates to the golden sky.

It is Ascension night, that enchanting night,  
 When at a happy, wondrous moment,  
 The golden gates of Heaven are opened:  
 Down below all grow speechless and silent  
 And with divine, inscrutable conception  
 It is filled with God's holy compassion.  
 At that sublime moment of the beautiful night,  
 Out of the distant depths of the infinite heaven  
 There fly out and come together the two stars. (Toumanian (1989))

Quatrains are also reflections of existential literature. Existential areas of space are accommodated in quatrains too. Reality here also becomes a pure whole.

My soul has come into its own,  
 Great as the Universe it has grown;  
 I am the lord of the whole world,  
 Yet who knows of it? I alone! (Toumanian (2018))

In this quatrain, the universe becomes the refuge of Toumanian's soul, an ideal world where he also takes the reader to confront not only the evil and infinite tragedies of the world, but also death. In other words,

man is not a separate existence and a possessive part here, because the line "I am the lord of the whole world" signifies a state of elevated being, evaluating things and phenomena from a heightened perspective (referring to a crystallized, soul-transmission (conversion) state). In the following quatrain, "exalts the omniscient soul" as well, approaching the "deep melody and murmur" of the universe.

I feel the breath of the living God all around me,

I hear his unsilent call and response —

The deep melody and murmur of the Universe

Exalt and dispel my omniscient soul.

With this individualized perception of the universe, Toumanian makes the reader a participant in the highest experiences, expanding the latter's socio-cultural space, in which there is no social tension.

In starry dreams' world, a beam of light,

In the far reaches of pure great mind,

Deep in the mists of timeless memories,

Sometimes I feel I will reach Him...

This quatrain reflects a unique psychological mechanism: identification. The unchanging source and core of human existence, the universe, becomes the object of bio-semantic identification. An exemplary instance of psychological identification with heaven is found in the following quatrain.

My soul, an expanse as vast as the sky,

Unfolds above, unseen yet nigh.

In secret, it beholds both near and far,

Glimmers of light, shadows of a star.

Here, the sky is not just an object of psychological identification. It becomes a part of the sky and reveals what is invisible and incommunicable to many. Toumanian referred to the last period of his creative life as philosophical. On January 21, 1923, he said during a conversation: 'My last period – philosophical period – is the period of "cosmic thoughts" (Toumanian (1987b)).

The poet's connection with the universe became closer on his deathbed. From the memories of his daughter, Nvard: "In the morning, he asked us to arrange the bed to have a view of the sky (Toumanian (1987b))."

A thousand years before or since, what can ever matter-

I have existed and will exist, so what can ever matter!

I assume a thousand forms, all of them for a time,

With the soul universal my soul is one, so what can ever matter! (Toumanian (2004a))

Toumanian's poetic intelligence set the universe in motion, allowing creation to continue on earth and flow into the minds and hearts of people. This rapprochement with the universe is nothing but a cultural project of organizing life, where not only the mistakes of the past and present are corrected, but also the ways of harmonizing with the universe and God are marked. His lyrical hero becomes the superior man

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assimilated into the universe, which has returned to its creator nature and beginning. This is how Toumanian made the universe a necessary component of identification, a permanent value.

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