

PHILOSOPHICAL SCIENCES

THE DEVELOPMENT OF UKRAINIAN SOCIETY IN THE CONTEXT OF H. SKOVORODA'S PHILOSOPHY

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Hryhorii Skovoroda is an educator and poet, was one of the most original philosophers of Ukraine in the 18th century. His philosophy has direct references to the European Enlightenment. He wanted to answer the most significant social questions that were interesting for Ukrainian society at that time. The Ukrainian thinker as the philosophers of the European Enlightenment investigated such issues as society development, ethical and aesthetic ideals of a person and a person's moral characteristics for their own development.

H. Skovoroda was interested in philosophical topics from a young age. His philosophical path began at the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, which was the main centre of education in Ukraine. He studied humanitarian concepts of ancient philosophy, literature, history, Christian theology and classical philosophical teachings of the philosophers of the Enlightenment. On top of that, during his studies, the Ukrainian philosopher learned several foreign languages. These skills allowed him to communicate with Eastern European students who studied at the academy. In addition, H. Skovoroda with a special mission visited Hungary and Poland. After returning to Ukraine, he taught at the Pereiaslav and Kharkiv colleges, where he promoted his ideas among ordinary people and the Ukrainian nobility.

M. Popovych in his article «Hryhorii Skovoroda in the Context of the Philosophical and Religious Movements of the «Early Modern»» analysed the originality of H. Skovoroda's work. In his opinion, the Ukrainian philosopher's constant readers and interlocutors were quite educated. He was also surrounded by intelligent people and children who aspired to philosophy. They understood H. Skovoroda's philosophy as something special, unusual, something that would go beyond church and educational approaches. At the same time, the Ukrainian philosopher's religious and philosophical ideas were very close to those who knew the figurative and symbolic features of the Ukrainian church tradition. «To read Skovoroda's poems as they were read in his time, you must always remember that these are cants, spiritual songs. They are classically

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Christian in their imagery, combining linguistic and figurative elements not only with the literature of the Ukrainian church but also with archaisms that sometimes span entire periods and were well understood by the educated Ukrainians of that time, who sang something similar in the church from childhood. Skovoroda's cants would have been accepted even if they contained nothing but the usual Christian teachings» [1, p. 34].

Plenty of biographical facts show that H. Skovoroda was at the centre of the social life of Ukraine in the 18th century. Fundamental education, frequent travels, teaching activities, and interesting meetings are strict evidence of his involvement in the most interesting issues of Ukrainian society. These factors had a significant effect on his philosophical ideas.

The concept of man and the idea of self-knowledge are the fundamental components of H. Skovoroda's philosophy. In general, the Ukrainian thinker thought that a person cannot be happy if their activities contradict their self-knowledge and spiritual development. This idea is similar to one of the well-known theses of Renaissance philosophers. Such a similarity of the understanding of the essence of a person is caused by the fact that the social and economic conditions in Western Europe were similar and had practically the same worldview. The mentioned abstract view of a person continues in H. Skovoroda's philosophy. He developed this idea considering social factors, which clearly distinguishes it by its theoretical perfection and relevance among others.

Philosophers of the European Enlightenment supported the idea that a person is not free, because their life is regulated by political, cultural, religious, legislative norms and institutions. In general, H. Skovoroda shared this idea, but considered the given norms as spheres where a person can find self-realization.

Ukrainian church tradition considered society as a passive and inert phenomenon, it cannot make any changes or accomplishments and needs an intelligent government. On top of that, the person appeared as a lonely and isolated individual in this paradigm. On the other side, H. Skovoroda wanted to discover the inner nature of society and explore moral and ethical concepts. He was convinced that such immoral, religious principles hinder a person's development. The thinker was aware of the intellectual lack and moral poverty of the people that's why he tried to find the answers to the important questions of a person's essence. He wanted to help people to find their place in this unfair and cruel world. Investigating these issues, H. Skovoroda claimed that it is impossible to find this in selfishness or wealth.

According to H. Skovoroda's doctrine about «two natures» and «three worlds» a person is a separate part of «nature», he called it a microcosm. «The second world consists of two parts or small worlds. The first is a

microcosm, which is called a person. The second world is symbolic, the Bible» [2, p. 138]. This doctrine explains a person's essence and relation to the world. Such concepts as kindness, love, wisdom and happiness are not available freely but become possible in life mostly through work. Wisdom is not an innate quality, it should be discovered by a person through life experience. Thus, these concepts are given to a person not at birth, but throughout life.

H. Skovoroda substantiated the unity of nature and man, which is revealed in the principle of «the great in the small». The Ukrainian thinker believed that everything in the «big world» exists in the «small world» and that everything possible in the «small world» is possible in the «big world». This statement combines thesis and antithesis. H. Skovoroda considered a person as a polar phenomenon or a unity of opposites, which essentially determines a person's self-awareness. Therefore, the well-known principle «know yourself» has significant value in his philosophy.

H. Skovoroda believed that the shortest path to a happy life should be in the principle of «related work». A person should realize this principle by activities according to a vocation. A person's ability for a specific kind of activity has the greatest impact on the awareness of a person's essence and the development of individual qualities. This activity helps a person to take their place in society. However, this is impossible without working hard on yourself. The Ukrainian thinker compared work with an unstoppable engine that works until it creates pleasure for its creator. In other words, the activity inspires a person's essence and determines the role of a person in society.

The socio-ethical ideal was historically limited in the philosophical heritage of H. Skovoroda. The concept of an ideal person was that such virtues as honesty, charity, peace, and friendship should be based on the development of society. Good intentions improve society through the moral perfection of the individual.

H. Skovoroda's philosophy has an anthropological direction that's why man as a microcosm is one of the central doctrines. The main person's characteristic is self-knowledge. This characteristic was determined by the idea of the «inner man» and had fundamental importance. A person should know their «inner nature», it helps to develop their skills.

According to H. Skovoroda's concept of the «inner man», any cognitive activity aimed to understand the «inner nature». Thus, this concept hides the idea of a person's self-knowledge, which consists of spiritual and practical experience and awareness of the fact that the main goal of a person is to understand their essence and to determine their role in society.

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