

“*Similis Simili Gaudet*”: Lavrentii Kordet and Hryhorii Skovoroda

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Abstract

The paper examines the connections between the rector of Kharkiv Collegium, Archimandrite Lavrentii Kordet, and some of the close friends, acquaintances, and correspondents of Hryhorii Skovoroda. The main focus is on Kordet's intellectual biography and the essential features of interpersonal communication among the faculty of Kharkiv Collegium in the second half of the 18th century. The study draws on the principles of network analysis and reconstruction of intellectual network models. The author argues that Lavrentii Kordet, Hryhorii Skovoroda, and some of their friends connected with Kharkiv Collegium (Mykhailo Kovalynskyi, Yov Bazylevych, etc.) embodied the type of person whose identity centered on intellectual activity. They devoted a significant portion of their lives to academic teaching, cared about professional self-improvement, and kept up with the latest scholarly and literary works. These intellectuals engaged in active “academic communication” with their colleagues, which was designed to generate specific activities aimed at dissemination of learning. The community of which Lavrentii Kordet and Hryhorii Skovoroda were part clearly represented a new type of intellectual relations in the lands of Sloboda Ukraine.

Key Words: Lavrentii Kordet, Hryhorii Skovoroda, Kharkiv Collegium, intellectual networks, Ukrainian culture.



Friends and Enemies of Hryhorii Skovoroda: Research Approaches

As early as the last decade of the 18th century, Mykhailo Kovalynskyi, in his account of the life of his mentor Hryhorii Skovoroda, named friends and admirers of the prominent philosopher and also mentioned (or sometimes only hinted at) his enemies and opponents. Subsequently, scholars established the names of many people with whom Skovoroda met or corresponded, whom he befriended, or who offered him their hospitality during his travels. The biographical information about these individuals has become a significant addition to the story of the thinker's life and work. And yet, in most cases the authors of studies devoted to Skovoroda¹ mention such people only in

¹ The body of scholarly literature devoted to Hryhorii Skovoroda is massive. We will name only a few studies that outline the main approaches to the exploration of the historical and cultural contexts of the philosopher's life and work: Liudmila Sofronova, *Tri mira Hrygoriia Skovorody [Three Worlds of Hryhorii Skovoroda]* (Moskva: Indrik, 2002); Myroslav Popovych, *Hryhorii Skovoroda: filosofiia svobody [Hryhorii Skovoroda: A Philosophy of Freedom]* (Kyiv: Maisternia Biletskykh, 2007).

passing, while emphasizing Skovoroda's atypicality and uniqueness. In recent decades, such developments as "the anthropological turn," the spread of biographical research of contextual type, and interest in intellectual networks and various types of communities have increasingly pushed scholars to give more attention to those individuals that have long remained "in the shadow" of the great thinker. It has become obvious that these "ordinary" intellectuals were not just witnesses to the life and work of Hryhorii Skovoroda; indeed, it was they who largely constituted the "world of Skovoroda." This paper is dedicated to one such individual – rector of Kharkiv Collegium, Archimandrite Lavrentii Kordet (1720–1781).

Discussing the milieu surrounding Skovoroda at the collegiums of Kharkiv and Pereiaslav, researchers have often contrasted the philosopher with other people. Moreover, if the authors of early biographies tried to somehow distinguish between his friends and foes, the Soviet era's approach routinely treated all Skovoroda's colleagues at those institutions in emphatically negative terms (as "illiterates," "dumb scholastics," ("neuky," "tupi skholasty") etc.).² They were often mentioned only "in general," individual figures thus being effectively erased from history. In particular, the figure of Lavrentii Kordet, the friendship with whom figures in Skovoroda's own writings,³ suffered from neglect by Soviet time scholars. The disparaging assessment of the entire faculty of the two collegiums that emerged in historiography in the 1920s was due primarily to the fact that the eminent philosopher's time at these institutions was fraught with conflict and he eventually left teaching.⁴ However, this scholarly attitude was also influenced by the general context, when, under pressure from the norms of "heroic biography," authors would build appropriate binary oppositions, within which "the progressive" was supposed to clash with "the backward."⁵ An "advanced thinker" was obliged to have his personal "persecutors." The search for Skovoroda's "harassers" at Kharkiv Collegium continued for many decades; new names were added to this list as late as

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- 2 Oleksandr Mazurkevych, "Literatura yak zasib vykhovannia v uchytelskii diialnosti i tvorchii spadshchyni H. S. Skovorody [Literature as a Means of Education in the Teaching and Creative Heritage of H.S. Skovoroda]," in *Pedahohichni idei H. S. Skovorody*, ed. O. Dzeverin (Kyiv: Vyshcha shkola, 1972), 123; I. Pukha, "Deiaki pytannia teorii navchannia v spadshchyni H. S. Skovorody [Some Questions of the Theory of Learning in the Legacy of H. S. Skovoroda]," in *Pedahohichni idei H. S. Skovorody*, ed. O. Dzeverin (Kyiv: Vyshcha shkola, 1972), 109.
 - 3 Hryhorii Skovoroda, *Povna akademichna zbirka tvoriv [Complete Academic Collection of Works]*, ed. L. Ushkalov (Kharkiv–Edmonton–Toronto: Maidan; Vydavnytstvo Kanadskoho Instytutu Ukrainskykh Studii, 2011), 1269.
 - 4 Olha Vodolazhchenko, "Z istorii Kharkivskoho kolehiumu v XVIII vitsi [From the History of Kharkiv Collegium in the 18th Century]," *Naukovi zapysky naukovo-doslidnoi kafedry istorii ukrainskoi kultury* 6 (1927): 122.
 - 5 Anastasiia Nizhenets, *Na zlami dvokh svitiv. Rozvidka pro H. S. Skovorodu i Kharkivskiy kolehium [At the Turn of Two Worlds. A Study of H.S. Skovoroda and Kharkiv Collegium]* (Kharkiv: Prapor, 1970), 111.

the 1990s.⁶ However, over time this approach revealed significant logical pitfalls. Thus, it is known that some of Skovoroda's friends, including Lavrentii Kordet, were not outcasts or marginal figures; they built successful careers and enjoyed a respectable status. Trying to get out of this impasse, previous researchers began to look in the biographies of these friends of Skovoroda for facts that could be interpreted as "oppression" by the administration, directed against people with "progressive views."⁷ The need for new criteria for analyzing Skovoroda's milieu became even more obvious with the appearance of a number of works in which the Orthodox collegiums and Kyiv-Mohyla Academy were considered through the prism of social history, and attempts were made to reconstruct the lifestyle of their faculty and students and uncover those intellectual networks that emerged around these institutions.⁸

A study of Hryhorii Skovoroda's milieu based on the approaches of cultural history and the theory of network society should make it possible not only to better understand the philosopher's life and work, but also to shed more light on the intellectual landscape of the Hetmanate and Sloboda Ukraine in the second half of the 18th century in general. At this time, Kyiv Academy and the Orthodox collegiums (in Kharkiv, Pereiaslav, and Chernihiv) became a kind of "organizational" structure around which a new intellectual community was taking shape. This community extended far beyond the professional corporation and connected people of different classes from the neighboring regions.⁹ Participating intellectuals were brought together by active interpersonal communication and shared pursuits: teaching, writing and translating books and textbooks, etc. The aim of this paper is to reconstruct the network of such connections around Lavrentii Kordet (first and foremost with other close friends, acquaintances, and correspondents of Hryhorii Skovoroda). It is important to identify the basic features of these interactions, as well as of the circle of intellectuals that

6 Vasyl Mykytas, *Davnoukrainski studenty i profesory* [*Ancient Ukrainian Students and Professors*] (Kyiv: Abrys, 1994), 139.

7 For instance, Lavrentii Kordet's appointment as hegumen of Sviatohirsk Monastery was described as his removal from the post of instructor and exile (Nizhenets, *Na zlami dvokh svitiv*, 105).

8 Maksym Yaremenko, "Akademiky" ta Akademiia: Sotsialna istoriia osvity y osvichenosti v Ukraini XVIII st. [*"Academics" and the Academy: A Social History of Education and Enlightenment in Ukraine in the 18th Century*] (Kharkiv: Akta, 2014); Svitlana Kagamlyk, "'Kyiv-Mohyla Academy Intellectual Space' as a Manifestation of Intercultural Communications (based upon the Ukrainian Hierarchs' Epistolary Legacy)," *Kyiv-Mohyla Humanities Journal* 5 (2018): 61–82.

9 Svitlana Kagamlyk, "Intelektualne seredovyshche mohyliantsiv u Kyievo-Pecherskii lavri (XVIII st.) [The Intellectual Environment of the People of Mohyla in the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra (18th century)]," *Kyivska Akademiia* 2–3 (2006): 177–96; Liudmyla Posokhova, "Intelektualy Kharkivskoho kolehiumu druhoi polovyny XVIII – pochatku XIX stolittia: merezhyvo zviazkiv i vzaiemyn [Intellectuals of Kharkiv Collegium of the Second Half of the 18th – early 19th Centuries: the Lace of Connections and Relationships]," *Kyivska Akademiia* 12 (2014–2015): 160–84.

formed around Kharkiv Collegium. We believe that in studying Skovoroda's relations with people around him we must abandon the focus on the semantic-structural and semantic-axiological oppositions that have already been mentioned (friend vs. enemy, us vs. them, progressive vs. reactionary). Hryhorii Skovoroda's uniqueness proves that a simple comparison of his life and work with those of other people is ineffective (and often inappropriate). At the same time, it is worth looking at Skovoroda as a man of his time; one way to do this is through exploring the "worlds," values, ideals, and preferences of his friends, acquaintances, and students.

In writing this paper, we tried to follow the principles of network analysis and reconstruction of models of intellectual networks proposed by Randall Collins. In his view, it is personal contacts that play the leading role in the formation of intellectual networks. The dissemination of cultural experience and intellectual capital takes place most effectively through such contacts. Collins introduced the concept of "intellectual network," defining it as intellectuals who know each other personally and are involved in the interpretation of the same texts.¹⁰

Emphasis in this study is placed on the correspondence of Lavrentii Kordet with the people who also corresponded with, or knew personally, Hryhorii Skovoroda. All of them were closely connected with Kyiv Academy or the collegiums. Epistolary exchanges gave rise to various networks of relations and also constructed them. The exceptional importance of epistolary correspondence in the life of this group was also due to the fact that the "official" channels of academic communication (university ceremonial addresses, academic periodicals and meetings, and activities of organizations for the advancement of knowledge) were only just emerging in the Ukrainian lands at this time.

The Biography of Lavrentii Kordet: Unique and Typical

We know little about Lavrentii Kordet. He came from a Cossack family in Sloboda Ukraine and studied at Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, where, in addition to Latin, he mastered ancient Greek and Hebrew.¹¹ After the academy he was sent to Kharkiv Collegium to teach poetics and rhetoric, and it was there, in Kharkiv Pokrovskiy School Monastery, that he became a monk in 1756. In 1759 he was elevated to the rank of hegumen and appointed head of the Belhorod Nikolaievskiy Monastery. A year later, Kordet returned to Kharkiv Collegium, where he taught a course in philosophy and served as a prefect.

We know that Hryhorii Skovoroda and Yov Bazylevych, who later became the bishop of Pereiaslav, taught at Kharkiv Collegium during the same period (in 1759–1764, with a break for the 1760–1761 academic year, and in 1753–1770, respectively).

¹⁰ See Randall Collins, *The Sociology of Philosophies: A Global Theory of Intellectual Change* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).

¹¹ For a more detailed account of Kordet's life, see: Liudmyla Posokhova, "Rechi ta chas rektora Kharkivskoho kolehiumu Lavrentiia Kordeta [Things and Time of the Rector of Kharkiv Collegium Lavrentii Kordet]," *Kyivska Akademiia* 13 (2013): 107–34.

A friendship developed between them, which continued in later years. Their correspondence is evidence of this; it is also known that they repeatedly visited each other.

In the spring of 1765, Kordet became hegumen of the Sviatohirsk Monastery, but in 1770 he returned to Kharkiv Collegium as its rector and the archimandrite of Kharkiv Pokrovskiy School Monastery. In a petition for his return, Bishop Samuil Myslavskiy of Belhorod¹² noted Kordet's outstanding talents, especially in teaching theology and delivering sermons.¹³ Kordet held the position of rector until October 1775, after which he was appointed as hegumen of Kursk Znamenskiy Monastery, where he passed away in 1781. Several of his friends hinted in their letters that his appointment as bishop was expected.¹⁴ Unfortunately, nothing else is known about this.

Clearly, Lavrentii Kordet was not an ordinary man; he received a very good education and enjoyed a high social status. His life, ideas, and activities mark him as an outstanding personality. And yet, the analysis of Kordet's biography makes it clear that it was quite typical for a collegium instructor. This statement is based on comparing Kordet's life with the generalized portrait of the faculty of the Orthodox collegiums in the 18th and early 19th centuries.¹⁵ In particular, it was common practice to begin teaching immediately after graduating from the Academy or one of the collegiums (72 percent of collegium faculty began their teaching careers immediately after graduation).¹⁶ The appointment of talented instructor-monks as hegumens was also quite typical: 19 percent of the total number of instructors served as hegumens of monasteries in Ukrainian dioceses, and 13 percent – in Russian.¹⁷ Instructor-monks who would later become heads of monasteries worked at collegiums for long periods of time (an average of 9 years). Kordet taught for approximately 15 years. Discussing his life, we can use the term “professional educator.” Incidentally, a similar professional path characterizes the biography of Yov Bazylevych, whose teaching career spanned 17 years.

Principles and Methods of Network Analysis

Following R. Collins's methodology of modeling intellectual networks, the first task of this study was to outline the internal structure of the intellectual connections that

12 Myslavskiy was Skovoroda's classmate in philosophy (1751–1753) at Kyiv-Mohyla Academy (Leonid Makhnovets, *Hryhorii Skovoroda. Biohrafiiia [Hryhorii Skovoroda. Biography]* (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1972), 73–74).

13 Posokhova, “Rechi ta chas,” 113.

14 Andrei Tankov, “Propovednoe slovo v Belhorodskoi yeparkhii v XVIII veke [Sermons at the Belhorod Diocese in the 18th Century],” *Kurskie eparkhialnye vedomosti. Chast neofitsialnaia* 37 (1897): 719.

15 These comparisons are based on the analysis of a database including the biographies of 255 instructors from Chernihiv, Kharkiv, and Pereiaslav collegiums (Posokhova, *Na perekhresti kultur, tradytsii, epokh*, 233–52, 358–86).

16 Posokhova, *Na perekhresti kultur, tradytsii, epokh*, 382.

17 Posokhova, *Na perekhresti kultur, tradytsii, epokh*, 384–85.

emerged in and around Kharkiv Collegium during the period when Lavrentii Kordet and Hryhorii Skovoroda taught there. This structure consisted of vertical chains ("intergenerational networks," links of the "teacher/student" type) and "horizontal alliances" (communication within groups of intellectuals). The next step in the reconstruction of these intellectual networks included the "ranking" of intellectuals according to their cultural and intellectual significance and establishing the nature of their interpersonal relationships. In this stage, we drew on the results of the analysis studying the database of the faculty of Kharkiv Collegium and information about the persons and their connections to the collegium in the second half of the 18th century (students, their relatives, representatives of the local ecclesiastical and secular elite, and so forth).¹⁸ This body of information allowed us to establish the general features of an "ego-network" and to imagine a broader "intellectual map." These research components are essential because, as noted by Daniel Roche, "culture cannot be studied without first studying the social system in which it develops" ("issledovat kulturu nelzya, ne izuchiv predvaritelno socialnuyu sistemu, v kotoroi ona razvivaetsya").¹⁹ Therefore, turning to the analysis of the "collective portrait" of the faculty of the Orthodox collegiums and identifying the factors that shaped this socio-professional group are very important because it opens a way to clarifying or even overturning some established conclusions. For example, until recently historiography was dominated by the idea that most collegium instructors came from clergy families. However, it turns out that this group included many representatives of the *shlihta* (nobility) and men of bourgeois and Cossack origin. The share of instructor-monks gradually decreased, especially in the second half of the 18th century, even as the number of those from the white clergy or with a lay background increased. Accordingly, it can be stated that the community of collegium instructors was not socially closed, as scholars used to believe;²⁰ it was not only heterogeneous in many respects, but also quite fluid.

Of course, in analyzing the network of intellectuals who grouped around Kharkiv Collegium in the second half of the 18th century, we may choose to take into account the so-called "cultural significance" of historical figures (that is, in a way, "rank" them, according to Collins's methodology). We may single out the names that are mentioned more often than others in epistolary texts (in those parts that pertain to the cultural life of the region and events significant in this respect), and whose activities were highly regarded by the contemporaries. While this criterion does lack clarity, in our case it is obvious that Hryhorii Skovoroda has the highest level of "cultural significance." Next to him we can place the men who served as the rectors of Kharkiv Collegium in the

18 Posokhova, "Intelektualy Kharkivskoho kolehiumu," 160–84.

19 Daniel Rosh, "Ot sotsialnoi istorii k istorii kultur: epokha Prosveshcheniia [From Social History to Cultural History: the Age of Enlightenment]," in *Istoriia prodolzhaetsia = L'Histoire continue: Izuchenie vosemnadtsatogo veka na poroge dvadtsat pervogo*, ed. S. Karp (Moskva; St. Petersburg: Fernei-Volter, 2001), 253.

20 Posokhova, "Intelektualy Kharkivskoho kolehiumu," 238–42.

1760s and 1770s, namely the archimandrites Yov Bazylevych and Lavrentii Kordet, as well as Samuil Myslavskyy, the bishop of Belhorod.

However, it also makes sense to draw on other methods of reconstructing models of intellectual networks – particularly the already-mentioned “vertical chains” and “horizontal alliances.”

“Vertical Chains”: Teacher – Student

Within the internal structure of the intellectual network around Kharkiv Collegium in the second half of the 18th and early 19th centuries, we can clearly trace the so-called “vertical chains” – that is, connections of the teacher-student type, which are inherent in all educational institutions. Incidentally, many of Hryhorii Skovoroda’s and Lavrentii Kordet’s closest students chose teaching careers – the list includes Mykhailo Kovalynskyy, Vasyl Dvyhubskyy, Vasyl Snisarev, and Fedir Tatarskyy.²¹

Close relations were maintained between the generations of mentors and students. One of the most vivid and well-known examples is the friendship between Hryhorii Skovoroda and Mykhailo Kovalynskyy.²² Skovoroda’s correspondence with Kovalynskyy is considered by scholars to be one of the best examples of the epistolary genre in Ukrainian literature.²³ In his letters, Skovoroda shared with Kovalynskyy and other students his thoughts and reflections and gave advice on studies, reading, and hobbies. Kovalynskyy left reminiscences of walks with his mentor, during which they discussed issues of philosophy and everyday life. Incidentally, in several letters to Kovalynskyy (in 1763 and 1764), Skovoroda mentioned his friend Lavrentii Kordet.²⁴

Skovoroda’s biographers neglected the fact that Mykhailo Kovalynskyy also kept up life-long relations and correspondence with Lavrentii Kordet. Kovalynskyy’s letters to him are first and foremost a clear example of communication in the genre of “letters from student to mentor.” They feature references to important “fruits” of education, received directly from the mentor. For example, in 1774 Kovalynskyy related to Kordet the details of his educational trip to Europe and his studies at the University of Strasbourg. He sent Kordet a product of his labors – a translation from French of a work by D’Alembert.²⁵ Kovalynskyy wrote an ode and, sending it to Kordet, remarked

21 On Skovoroda’s students, see: Nizhenets, *Na zlami dvokh svitiv*, 105, 137, 158, 160.

22 After graduating from Kharkiv Collegium, Mykhailo Kovalynskyy (1745–1807) taught there, and later became the curator of Moscow University.

23 Leonid Ushkalov, “Hryhorii Skovoroda [Hryhorii Skovoroda],” in *Skovoroda, Hryhorii. Povna akademichna zbirka tvoriv*, ed. L. Ushkalov (Kharkiv–Edmonton–Toronto: Maidan; Vydavnytstvo Kanadskoho Instytutu Ukrainskykh Studii, 2011), 11.

24 Skovoroda, *Povna akademichna zbirka*, 1120, 1162, 1163, 1170.

25 *Zapiski Khristyny korolevy shvedskoi s primechaniiami g. Dalamberta. Perevedeno s frantsuzskago iazyka Mikhailom Kovalenskim [Notes of Christina the Queen of Sweden with the Notes by Mr. D’Alembert. Translated from French by Mikhail Kovalenskiy]* (St. Petersburg: Typography Art. i inzh. kadet. Korpusa, 1774).

that it was to his correspondent that these fruits of learning belonged. He also made a telling observation that their exchanges were devoid of formalities, representing a genuine friendship.²⁶ Such remarks by Kovalynskyi show that this milieu gave rise not only to one-way instructive contacts along the lines of "mentor – student," but also to new forms of communication that worked as a two-way street. Students became like-minded comrades, discussing various issues with their mentors. This point is confirmed and reinforced by those parts of the correspondence where it was already Kovalynskyi who was giving advice to Kordet.²⁷

Horizontal Alliances: "Us" Speaking about "Ours" and "Our Own"

Reconstruction of the structure of the intellectual network that emerged in and around Kharkiv Collegium also involves the recreation of "horizontal alliances" among colleagues. Such relations are brought into sharper relief when we add to a virtual "intellectual map" the names of key individuals around whom the cultural and intellectual life of that circle revolved and list these individuals' contacts. Keeping in mind the variety of horizontal links, we will try to identify the specific features of this intellectual community. It is noteworthy that its members themselves often noted this specificity in their correspondence. This makes it possible to identify the features of "their" community from the point of view of those who considered themselves its integral part.

Despite the fact that historians usually focus on the persecution of Hryhorii Skovoroda by the collegium administration and on misunderstandings and intrigues in the faculty milieu, the philosopher had many supporters among not only the students, but also the colleagues. The instructors Yoan Levanda and Stepan Hrechka were known to have become friends with Skovoroda at Pereiaslav Collegium.²⁸ Similar cases existed at Kharkiv Collegium – first and foremost Lavrentii Kordet, whom Skovoroda called his friend and about whom he wrote that "God leads like to like" ("podibnoho do podibnoho vede Boh").²⁹ Given this passage about "likeness,"³⁰ it is worth sketching out the personal traits of Kordet noted by the philosopher.

26 "Materialy dlia istorii Kurskoi eparkhii [Materials for the History of Kursk Diocese]," *Kurskii eparkhialnye vedomosti. Chast neofitsialnaia* 20 (1891): 365.

27 "Preosviashchennyi Samuil, episkop Belohradskii. Ego pisma k arkhimandritu Lavrentiiu (1770–1774) [Right Reverend Samuel, Bishop of Belohrad. His Letters to Archimandrite Lawrence (1770–1774)]," *Kurskie eparkhialnye vedomosti. Chast neofitsialnaia* 5 (1888): 100.

28 Hrigorii Danilevskii, "Skovoroda, ukrainskii pisatel XVIII veka [Skovoroda, Ukrainian Writer of the 17th Century]," *Osnova*, no. 8 (1862): 20; "Kratkii ocherk istorii Pereiaslavsko-Poltavskoi seminarii [A Brief Outline of the History of Pereiaslav-Poltava Seminary]," *Poltavskie gubernskie vedomosti* 52 (1862): 435.

29 Skovoroda, *Povna akademichna zbirka*, 1269.

30 This phrase appears in Skovoroda's works several times (Skovoroda, *Povna akademichna zbirka*, 191).

Characterizing the merits of their fellow educators, the intellectuals of this milieu often attached paramount importance to scholarly abilities and familiarity with modern trends in scholarship and literature. Therefore, it is not surprising that in a letter dated 18 April 1765 to Yov Bazylevych, the rector of the collegium, Skovoroda, first of all, highlighted and praised Kordet's expertise in such fields as economics, mathematics, and geography. He also noted that Kordet had a talent for both scientific and practical matters and showed an aptitude for both secular and spiritual affairs. According to Skovoroda, his friend was especially gifted as a philosopher.³¹ We should note that Kordet taught a course in philosophy following the rationalist system of Leibniz-Wolff. His personal library featured many textbooks by Friedrich Christian Baumeister on logic, natural philosophy, and metaphysics, as well as works written by other representatives of this philosophic trend and several books by French Enlightenment thinkers.³²

Kordet's outstanding abilities were also remarked upon by Samuil Myslavskiy, Bishop of Belhorod, when he recommended Kordet to Ivan Melissino, the curator of Moscow University and chairman of the Free Russian Assembly. Myslavskiy wrote about Kordet as a specialist who could finalize the articles about Sloboda Ukraine for the soon-to-be-published *Geographical Dictionary*.³³ Later, after Kordet completed this task, Myslavskiy facilitated his election to the Free Russian Assembly.³⁴ Kordet's erudition was also noted by Kovalynskiy, who recommended him to Hrygorii Teplov, a member of the Imperial Academy of Sciences and Arts.³⁵ Given all this, it is interesting that Skovoroda's letter praising Kordet was not actually a recommendation; it was written after Kordet had already become the hegumen of Sviatohirsk Monastery and left Kharkiv Collegium. In the letter, Skovoroda stressed that the collegium's students would all miss their outstanding teacher.

The analysis of the letters exchanged among Kharkiv intellectuals allows us to identify some other features of their community. The communication within this circle centered around the exchange of ideas and discussion of current events. Iconic scientific and literary works featured prominently in it. Unfortunately, for none of the members of this group (including Skovoroda) do we have a full set of correspondence – only fragments have survived. However, even scattered references speak volumes. For example, in the letters dated early 1770s, Samuil Myslavskiy often recommended noteworthy works of philosophy and theology to Lavrentii Kordet. He particularly singled out works by Friedrich Christian Baumeister and other representatives of that philosophical school. In his letters, Myslavskiy also discussed contemporary Russian literature and recommended some of the latest books to Kordet.³⁶

31 Skovoroda, *Povna akademichna zbirka*, 1269–70.

32 Posokhova, "Rechi ta chas," 109–36.

33 "Materialy dlia istorii," 20 (1891): 363.

34 "Preosviashchennyi Samuil", 4 (1888): 75–76; 5 (1888): 100.

35 "Preosviashchennyi Samuil", 5 (1888): 100.

36 "Preosviashchennyi Samuil", 3 (1888): 56.

The discussion of new scholarly works and the desire to acquire them indicate that "knowledge" was perceived by these people as a fluid substance whose changes had to be closely followed. It is noteworthy that a prolonged intellectual exchange of this kind with Kordet was described by his friend and colleague Yov Bazylevych, already the bishop of Pereiaslav at that time, as a *discursus per litteras* – conversation in letters.³⁷ Using Ukrainian materials to study one of the key socio-cultural phenomena of early modernity – the virtual community of European intellectuals – may help significantly expand our understanding of the boundaries of the so-called "republic of letters" (*Respublica Literaria, Republique des Lettres*).

One feature of the ongoing *discursus per litteras* among the representatives of this community was that discussions of scholarly and literary works went beyond the goals of information exchange and self-development. In their correspondence, these intellectuals considered the collegium curriculum and shared their views as to which contemporary works needed to be included in it. The conversation was usually pragmatic and focused on specific actions (inviting an instructor, introducing a new course, etc.). The letters available to us do not contain in-depth reflections on the ideological basis of such activities. In the most general terms, participants formulated their mission as "solicitude for the propagation of learning" ("popechenyie k rasprostranenyiu nauk") (Samuil Myslavskiyi in a letter to Lavrentii Kordet from 28 September 1771).³⁸ The key term that characterizes the contents of these exchanges is "the common good" ("obschaia polza").

The most important outcome of the epistolary correspondence under consideration was probably the radical change in curriculum that took place at Kharkiv Collegium in the late 1760s.³⁹ First and foremost, rationalist philosophy from the textbooks of Friedrich Christian Baumeister, Christian Freiherr von Wolff, and their followers began to be taught. This philosophical system's appeal lay in its rationalism, connection with the natural sciences, and absence of conflicts with Christianity dogmas, which made it possible to use it in the teaching practice of the Orthodox collegiums. The Leibniz-Wolff philosophical system dominated German Protestant universities, especially the universities of Halle and Marburg. Its spread led to drastic changes in teaching, thus pushing it towards the understanding that the truth should be sought and that professors should teach not the established wisdom, but the art of discovering new truths. Thus was born the principle of *libertas philosophandi* – the freedom of scientific endeavor, teaching, and learning.⁴⁰

In his personal letters to Kordet, Samuil Myslavskiyi repeatedly named a number of contemporary works that, in his view, deserved to be seen as models.⁴¹ Advice given

37 Tankov, "Propovednoe slovo," 719.

38 "Preosviashchennyi Samuil," 3 (1888): 58.

39 On the collegium's curriculum, see in more detail: Posokhova, *Na perekhresti kultur, tradytsii, epokh*, 53–170.

40 German Veil, *Matematicheskoe myshlenie [Mathematical Thinking]* (Moskva: Nauka, 1989), 310.

41 "Preosviashchennyi Samuil," 3 (1888): 56.

in a friendly letter allows us to analyze the style of communication between like-minded people. Myslavskyi, of course, also wrote official letters to the rector. A comparison of how the same book was discussed in the public and private domain shows how new practices of reading and finding new meanings and connotations in the process of reading gradually contributed to the entrenchment of new ways of teaching and spurred on the use of new literature in the educational process. It might also be noted that the prolonged epistolary interaction between Lavrentii Kordet and Yov Bazylevych was conducted in a similar spirit. The central issues for discussion between them were always those related to the organization of teaching at the collegium.⁴²

The intellectual network formed around Kharkiv Collegium and its professors was notable for its high density and openness. Often one letter mentions many names of people to whom a book or a piece of news needed to be passed on. The correspondence of Lavrentii Kordet features such individuals as Archimandrite Nartsys Kvitka; Hryhorii Poletyka (writer, translator from German and Latin, member of the St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences); Feofil Ihnatovych, bishop of Chernihiv; Ohei Kolosovskiy and Yoasaf Mitkevych, bishops of Belhorod; Ye. O. Shcherbinin, governor of Sloboda Ukraine; and many local priests and nobles.⁴³ It can be observed that the list of correspondents of Kordet and Skovoroda included people of different social strata and occupations. It was true not only for correspondence, but also for interactions in person. Fedir Lubianovskiy, an alumnus of the collegium and later a senator and author, recalled that Skovoroda came to Kharkiv once or twice a year to meet with his friend, collegium instructor Ivan Dvyhubskiy,⁴⁴ and it was at the latter's home where Lubianovskiy met Skovoroda.⁴⁵

The correspondence between Kordet and his colleagues shows a gradual expansion of their intellectual network, which came to involve dozens of "ordinary" intellectuals who knew each other and exchanged books and opinions about them. Epistolary contacts connected people of different social strata, transcending corporate and professional boundaries. This was facilitated by the very nature of the network – open, with a high level of sociability among its members.

Lavrentii Kordet's Personal Library and "the Reading Revolution" in the Ukrainian Lands

One of the visible results of *discursus per litteras* was the change in the composition of intellectuals' personal libraries that we observe during the second half of the 18th century. We have analyzed several registers of personal libraries belonging to

42 Tankov, "Propovednoe slovo," 719.

43 "Preosviashchennyi Samuil," 70; "Materialy dlia istorii," 333.

44 Ivan Dvyhubskiy (1771–1839) served as professor and rector at Moscow University and studied natural history.

45 Fedor Lubianovskii, "Vospominaniia [Memories]," *Russkii arkhiv* 1 (1872): 107.

several faculty members of Kharkiv Collegium faculty, including two registers of Lavrentii Kordet's personal collection.⁴⁶ From these documents, it becomes clear that Kordet gradually accumulated educational literature on the disciplines he taught and from time to time added new "sets" of textbooks as he moved on to teaching new courses. Comparing Kordet's book collection with the libraries of his contemporaries, we can state that their notable feature was a decrease in the share of religious and spiritual works. Only 10 percent of Kordet's books belonged to this type. In the collection of the bishop of Chernihiv Kyrylo Liashchevetskyi (with whom Skovoroda corresponded and met⁴⁷), the number of such books did not exceed a third of the total.⁴⁸ Kordet's library contained books in different languages, such as Russian, Latin, German, Polish, and Church Slavonic. Yov Bazylevych also had an interesting library, featuring books in ancient Greek, Hebrew, Latin, and Russian.⁴⁹ Incidentally, Kovalivskyi proved that some books in Oriental languages from the library of Kharkiv Collegium were studied by both Hryhorii Skovoroda and Lavrentii Kordet.⁵⁰

The "secular block" of the libraries of Lavrentii Kordet and Kyrylo Liashchevetskyi contained contemporary works in astronomy, physics, mathematics, mineralogy, biology, and more. Archimandrite Lavrentii also owned recently-published medical treatises and general studies in economics, history, and geography (over 70 volumes).⁵¹

46 *Pryvatni zapysky ta lysty Lavrentiia Kordeta* [Private Notes and Letters of Lawrence Cordet] (1770s.) [Manuscript] (Section of Manuscript Collections and Textology at the Institute of Literature of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, Kyiv, f. 20, no. 13, p. 230–98 back); *Po donosheniiu episkopa Belgorodskogo Aggeia o smerti arhimandrita Kurskogo Znamenskogo monastyria Lavrenteia s prilozheniiami opisi* [On the Report from the Bishop of Belgorod Haggei about the Death of Archimandrite of the Kursk Znamensky Monastery Lawrence with Annexes of the Inventory] (1786) [Manuscript] (Russian State Historical Archive, St. Petersburg, f. 796, desc. 67, no. 572. p. 1–14 back). The calculations given hereafter are made based on these registers.

47 Skovoroda, *Povna akademichna zbirka*, 1261–64, 1292; Makhnovets, *Hryhorii Skovoroda*, 127.

48 Calculations are based on the register: "Po donosheniiu Chernihovskoi konsistorii o konchine preosviashchennogo Chernihovskogo Kirilla (delo 238) [On the Report from Chernihov Consistory about the Death of the Right Reverend Cyril of Chernihov (case 238)]." In *Opisanie dokumentov i del, khраниashchikhsia v arkhive Sviateishego Pravitelstvuiushchego Sinoda* 50, 700–11. Petrohrad: Sinodalnaia tipografia, 1914.

49 Vladimir Parkhomenko, *Ocherki istorii Pereiaslavsko-Borispolskoi eparkhii (1733–1785)* [Essays on the History of Pereiaslav-Boryspil Diocese (1733–1785)] (Poltava: Tip. G. Markevicha, 1910), 72.

50 Andrii Kovalivskyi, "Vyvchennia Skhodu v Kharkivskomu universyteti ta Kharkovi u XVIII–XX st. [Study of the East at Kharkiv University and Kharkiv in the 18th – 20th Centuries]," in *Antolohiia literatur Skhodu*, ed. V. Astachov (Kharkiv: Kharkivskyi universytet, 1961), 15, 23.

51 For more on these books, see: Posokhova, "Rechi ta chas," 109–36.

The presence of academic periodicals in private libraries deserves special attention. Both Lavrentii Kordet and Kyrylo Liashchevetskyi owned several volumes of the *Trudy Volnoho Ekonomicheskoho obshhestva* (Proceedings of the Free Economic Society), several issues of the popular science magazines *Ezhemesyachnye sochineniia i izvestiia o uchenykh delakh, Iezhemesiachnyie sochineniia, k polze i uveseleniiu sluzhashchiie* (Monthly Essays and News of Learned Affairs and Monthly Essays Serving towards Benefit and Amusement) (the first monthly popular science magazine in the Russian Empire, launched by St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences), and a number of articles from the *Encyclopedia* of Diderot and D'Alembert.

From all this, it follows that encyclopedism became a typical feature of personal libraries in that circle. We observe the obvious desire of its members for comprehensive education and deep familiarity with various fields of knowledge. However, to what extent can we speak of encyclopedism as an epistemological ideal shared by the faculty of the collegiums and Kyiv-Mohyla Academy? More research into the world of this group is needed to answer this question. It is also worth recalling some recent scholarship that argues that the most attractive and popular among the cultural elites of the Russian Empire was that model of encyclopedism which was most closely associated with a practical implementation in the field of the organization of scholarship and education. Therefore, it was not encyclopedic publications as such, but the encyclopedic method of comprehending the world and organizing education that was most in demand.⁵²

The analysis of the libraries of Lavrentii Kordet, Kyrylo Liashchevetskyi, and some other members of their circle reveals another characteristic trait – the growing proportion of works by modern authors. In the second half of the century, the share of such works (that is, those that were written and published no more than 50 years before the compilation of the register) in many collections reaches 50 or even 80 percent. Kordet's collection, numbering 243 titles in total, contained approximately 200 such modern works.

The register of Kordet's private library shows that he was interested in new social ideas. Among other things, we find such well-represented categories as fiction, "moral periodicals," and satirical magazines. The "section" on the subject of education is no less noticeable. The registers of the collections of both Kordet and Liashchevetskyi feature the famous *Émile* by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, books on raising children by John Locke, and a number of other iconic pedagogical works of that era. These collections also included books addressed to young people and women.

It is worth emphasizing the noticeable presence and diversity of entertainment literature in Kordet's collection, including satire, "women's fiction," adventure novels, and the like. The library also featured a number of works of "moralizing entertainment." The fact that such books are so strongly represented encourages reflection on their

52 Tatiana Artemeva, "Entsiklopedizm kak epistemologicheskii fenomen: istoriia idei [Encyclopedism as an Epistemological Phenomenon: the History of an Idea]," *Vysshhee obrazovanie v Rossii* 3 (2005): 139.

purpose and role in the lives of the members of this circle. The sheer number of books in the library of Lavrentii Kordet, their thematic and genre variety, and the presence of scientific, educational, and children's literature all point to significant changes in reading practices and reflect the phenomenon known as "the reading revolution." The contents of his library and its comparison with some others suggest that the faculty of the collegiums and Kyiv-Mohyla Academy experienced a transition from "intensive" to "extensive" type of reading in the second half of the 18th century.⁵³

Additionally, the registers of the private libraries of Kordet and his colleagues testify not only to the orientation of their interests, but also to the existence of an established network of communication with publishers, booksellers, and like-minded people (stationary book trade did not yet exist in the region).

Conclusion

Finally, let us return to Hryhorii Skovoroda's symbolic assessment of his friendship with Lavrentii Kordet: "God leads like to like" ("podibnoho do podibnoho vede Boh"). Based on this judgment, identifying the essential characteristics of the intellectual biography of Lavrentii Kordet and the persistent features of his relations with students, friends, and acquaintances affords us a better understanding of Hryhorii Skovoroda himself. However, focusing on the similarity and closeness of these figures' "worlds" does not mean arguing that they were absolutely identical or fully overlapping. Rather, such research optics, in our view, highlight the obvious spiritual and intellectual kinship between Hryhorii Skovoroda and several intellectuals of Kharkiv Collegium, who shared broadly similar lifestyles. Lavrentii Kordet, like Skovoroda's some other correspondents, represented the type of person whose identity centered on intellectual activity. These were people who devoted most of their adult lives to academic teaching and cared about professional self-improvement and personal development, which went hand-in-hand with their interest in modern academic literature and belles-lettres. Building a community of kindred spirits, they engaged in active "academic communication" with colleagues, designed to generate specific activities towards the dissemination of learning. The circle of which Lavrentii Kordet and Hryhorii Skovoroda were part clearly represented a new type of intellectual relations in Sloboda Ukraine.

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53 We are referring here to Rolf Engelsing's well-known conceptual opposition between intensive and extensive reading; see Rolf Engelsing, "Die Perioden der Lesersgeschichte in der Neuzeit," *Archiv für Geschichte des Buchwesens* 10 (1969): 944-1002.

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