

# The Motive of Discrepancy in Hryhorii Skovoroda's Works

**Olha Petrenko-Tseunova**

National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy,

Department of History, Theory of Literature, and Comparative Studies

## Abstract

The article explores the discrepancy of the form and the content as a philosophical, moral and axiological problem in the works of Hryhorii Skovoroda. Using the phenomenological reading and structural analysis, the author investigates the interaction between the form and the content in treatises, soliloquies, poems, and letters of Skovoroda. The intellectual and aesthetic background of the Baroque epoch to a large extent explains why this motive of discrepancy occupies a prominent place among the writings of the Ukrainian philosopher. The article analyzes the main plots, in which the discrepancy is revealed: vocation against non-congenial work; a real friend and a flunkey; the truth and a false thing; and the heavenly and an earthly city. After considering all these aspects and other crucial issues, it is concluded what makes the problem of discrepancy an invariant motive in the works of Hryhorii Skovoroda.

**Key Words:** Ukrainian Baroque, Hryhorii Skovoroda, philosophy, Ukrainian literature, invariant motive.



## Introduction

Baroque is an epoch of oppositions and irrationality, according to the theory of cultural waves by Dmytro Chyzhevskiy.<sup>1</sup> Baroque aesthetic and philosophical thought is characterized by a combination and struggle of contrasts, stylistic and emotional excesses.

It explains why, in the search for new poetry, the Baroque authors paid careful attention to the formal side of creativity, along with the content. Moreover, the form sometimes prevailed over the content in the works of Baroque writers. The experiments with curious poems by Ivan Velychkovskiy are a bright example of that.<sup>2</sup>

Baroque authors elaborated a considerable number of poetic treatises — lists of rules for writers about composition, versification, and stylistics aspects. The Latin poetic treatise called *The Poetical Garden* (*Hortus Poeticus*), written by Mytrofan Dovhalevskiy, a professor of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy,<sup>3</sup> is, probably, the most famous one.

---

1 Dmytro Chyzhevskiy, *Ukrainske literaturne baroko [Ukrainian Literary Baroque]* (Kyiv: Oberehy, 2003), 29.

2 Ivan Velychkovskiy, *Tvory [Works]* (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1972), 53.

3 Mytrofan Dovhalevskiy, *Poetyka: sad poetychnyi [Poetics: Poetic Garden]*, trans. V. Masliuk (Kyiv: Mystetstvo, 1973), 28.

It can be noticed that the Baroque is quite an autoreflexive epoch, when pondering over the process of creative writing was an essential part of it. Even the delivery of sermons was given theoretical reflections in the treatise of the preacher Yoanykii Haliatovskyyi in his work called *Nauka, Albo Sposib Zlozhennya Kazannya* (The Instruction, or a Way of Composing a Sermon).<sup>4</sup>

It is worth noting that the key metaphor of the Baroque epoch is a book as an embodiment of the world. Nevertheless, few of the Baroque thinkers promoted the unity of form and content in philosophical categories.

Hryhorii Skovoroda is frequently called the last author of Ukrainian Baroque epoch, who managed to rise above it and analytically analyze the most distinctive feature of the Baroque – the feature that eventually became a weakness of this style, reaching its peak and giving birth to a generation of epigones imitating true masters (similar to *kotlyarevshchyna* phenomenon some decades later).

Many studies describing the ideas of cognition and education in the writings of Hryhorii Skovoroda have been published by now.<sup>5</sup> Numerous studies have attempted to explain the axiological dimension in Skovoroda's philosophy,<sup>6</sup> the categories of time and space in the worldview of the Ukrainian writer.<sup>7</sup> A large and growing body of literature has investigated the comparative aspects of Skovoroda's heritage, especially the Antique borrowings and patristic allusions.<sup>8</sup> Several attempts were also made to systematize and generalize the considerable amount of literature published on Skovoroda. In 1920, Viktor Petrov wrote a review *Literatura pro Skovorodu* (The Literature about Skovoroda).<sup>9</sup> Almost a century later, Leonid

4 Yoanykii Haliatovskyyi, *Kliuch rozuminnia. Pamiatky ukrainskoi movy* [The Key to Understanding. Written Records of the Ukrainian Language], ed. I. P. Chepiha (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1985), 211.

5 Iryna Bondarevska, "Krytyka znannia i osvity v tvorakh Hryhoriia Skovorody [The Critique of Knowledge and Education in the Works of Hryhorii Skovoroda]," in *Shliakh u chotyry stolittia: materialy Mizhnarodnoi naukovoï konferentsii "Ad Fontes — do dzherel"*, 12–14 October 2015 (Kyiv: National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, 2015), 117.

6 Oleksandr Nadtoka, "Interpretatsiia svobody v pohliadakh predstavnykiv ukrainskoi dukhovnoi elity (1750-1770-h rr.) [The Interpretation of Freedom in the Views of Representatives of the Ukrainian Spiritual Elite, 1750-1770s]," *Kyivska starovyna* 5 (Kyiv, 2010): 47.

7 Archbishop Ihor Isichenko, "Sakralnyi prostir Sadu bozhestvennykh pisen Hryhoriia Skovorody [The Sacred Space of Hryhorii Skovoroda's 'The garden of divine songs']," *Slovo i chas* 1 (Kyiv, 2013): 52.

8 Daryna Morozova, *Pokazhy meni liudynu. Antropolohiia Antiokhiiskoi shkoly ta yii spadshchyna u Kyivskii tradytsii* [Show me the Human. Anthropology of the Antioch School and the Legacy of the Kyivan Tradition] (Kyiv: Dukh i Litera, 2021), 466; Maria Grazia Bartolini, *Piznai samoho sebe: neoplatonichni dzherela v tvorchosti H. S. Skovorody* [Get to Know Yourself: Neoplatonic Sources in the Work of H. S. Skovoroda], trans. Mariana Prokopovych and Kateryna Novikova (Kyiv: Akadempriodyka, 2017), 140.

9 Viktor Petrov, "Literatura pro Skovorodu [Literature about Skovoroda]," *Knyhar. Litopys ukrainskoho pysmenstva* 1-3 (29-31) (Kyiv, 1920): 15.

Ushkalov conducted a fundamental index of research on the life and heritage of Skovoroda.<sup>10</sup>

However, what we know about Skovoroda's attitude to the fundamental interaction of categories of form and content is largely based upon occasional mentions.

For instance, Myroslav Popovych, opposing the theory of the *cordocentric* Ukrainian culture, profoundly states that Skovoroda's "Everyone is that whose heart is in it" does not claim sensuality and sensitivity as contradictions to reason and ratio, but the need to reconcile the human way of life and the essence of the person.<sup>11</sup> That is what the European scholastic tradition called the unity of the essence and the existence.

### Theoretical Framework

Since the emergence and the openness of a structure replaced the determinism in the structural analysis of the text, the text has been considered as characterized with non-systematic values. In this article, the structure is understood as a synchronous section of any system.

From this point of view, the text is based on three determinants: the sign, the code, and the discourse. The first expresses the meaning of a particular text; the second is used to decipher the purport; while the third is needed to contextualize the senses in the chronotope of other texts. Roman Ingarden<sup>12</sup> highlights two aspects of the text: on the one hand, it has hierarchy and linearity which determine the teleological side of the text. On the other hand, the text is characterized by discreteness and segmentation, which stay for the aesthetical side of the text.

The dominant itself forms the central focus of a study by Roman Jakobson.<sup>13</sup> The researcher finds a focusing element of text that preserves the integrity of meaning within any transformation.

Thus, this research is methodologically focused on a phenomenological reading and structural analysis of the system of oppositions and structures in Skovoroda's writings. The main of them are the following: the top — the bottom, the form — the content, the affinity — the futility, the truth — the deception, the sacred — the profane, and the earthly — the heavenly.

The research material includes the epistolary of Skovoroda, a collection of poems *Sad Bozhestvennykh Pisen* (The Garden of Divine Songs), his philosophical treatises, and soliloquies.

10 Leonid Ushkalov, *Hryhorii Skovoroda: seminarii* [Hryhorii Skovoroda: Seminary] (Kharkiv: Maidan, 2004), 27.

11 Myroslav Popovych, "Hryhorii Skovoroda na tli filozofsko-relihiinykh rukhiv svoiei doby [Hryhorii Skovoroda in the Context of Philosophical and Religious Movements of his Time]," *Naukovi zapysky NaUKMA* 22.1 (2003): 94.

12 Roman Ingarden, *O dziele literackim* [On Literary Works] (Warszawa: PWN, 1960), 50.

13 Roman Jakobson, *Language in Literature*, ed. Krystyna Pomorska and Stephen Rudy (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1987), 61.

At the time of exchanging correspondence with Mykhailo Kovalynskyi (1762–1765), Hryhorii Skovoroda's worldview was at the crossroads of classical and nonclassical rationality. On the one hand, the philosopher thinks in terms of the normative vision of things (in particular, in numerous passages against a flunkey personality). On the other hand, Skovoroda restores the rights of subjectivity, which leads him to opposing the classical rationality and focusing on the de-subjectification and deindividualization of the inner world. The Ukrainian Baroque philosopher shares the view that esprit is not a universal norm or a requirement of a certain standard, but rather the ability to go beyond the norm, to enter the realm of the reflection.

However, his thinking on the unity of the form and the content is typologically closer to Hegel's,<sup>14</sup> than Adorno's system.<sup>15</sup> It is explained by the requirement of the absolute maturity and concision of the main categories.

### To Be or to Pretend: Vocation and Subsistence

The doctrine of congenial work, which is central in Skovoroda's ethical system, expresses his faith in the possibility of self-fulfillment for everybody in this world. Therefore, the state of being happy is treated as pursuing one's vocation given by God, regardless of external rewards. Furthermore, since vocations are distributed in a particular way in order to ensure a social order, adopting an uncongenial task leads to social discord and unhappiness, while pursuing wealth, glory, or pleasure through uncongenial work is a short road to despair.<sup>16</sup>

Reflecting on congenial work as the major good, Skovoroda emphasizes the unreasonableness of the desire to pretend to be someone else, to violate the hierarchy, to be out of the place determined by nature, and not to correspond to one's essence.

Thus, the embodiments of inconsistency between the form and the content in Skovoroda's writing (for example, the monkey Pyshek from the treatise *Vdiachnyi Erodi* [Grateful Erodi]) can be compared with Baudrillard's simulacrum of the first order — a forgery.

Skovoroda treats an unreasonable desire to pretend being someone else as an unwise activity: "Just as merchants take precautions not to buy bad and spoiled goods under the guise of fresh goods, similarly we need to take the utmost care, so that, choosing friends, ...due to negligence not to come across something fake and imaginary, which is called a flunkey, and not to get, according to the proverb, instead of pure gold... a forgery of copper [Quemadmodum mercatores summo studio cavere solent, ne sub specie bonarum malas damnosaque emant merces, ita nobis videndum

14 Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel, *Fenomenolohiia dukhu* [*The Phenomenology of Spirit*] (Kyiv: Osnovy, 2004), 81.

15 Theodor Adorno, *Teoriia estetyky* [*Aesthetic Theory*], trans. Petro Tarashchuk (Kyiv: Osnovy, 2002), 102.

16 Taras Zakydalsky, "The Theory of Man in the Philosophy of Skovoroda," (MA Thesis, Bryn Mawr College 1965), <http://www.ditext.com/zakydalsky/skovoroda.html>.

accuratissime est, ne, dum amicos, optimam supellectilem, quaerimus, imo thesaurum inaeestimabilem comparamus, per incuriam in adulterinum et falsum incidamus, qui dicitur adulator, et secundum paroemiam ἀντί γνησίου χρυσοῦ ὑπόχαλκον, id est subaeratu].”<sup>17</sup>

The philosopher appeals to Aesop’s fable *The Jackdaw and Other Birds* when referring to Plutarch: “Immortal God! How does he describe the friendship! How vividly does he depict a crow decorated with someone else’s feathers, including the most cunning flunkey who pretends to be a friend [Deum immortalem! quam commendat amicitiam! Quam graphice depingit corniculam alienis plumis ornatam, id est, vaferimum adulatorem, amici larva tectum].”<sup>18</sup>

Skovoroda revisits Plutarch’s reasoning “How to distinguish a friend from a flunkey” in a broader sense: how to avoid entangling the veracity with the deceit.

A negatively connotated feature of deceit is its variability, or the ability to adapt to the *original*: “It is said that monkeys, trying to imitate humans, adopt their movements and reproduce their dances. A flunkey, imitating others, deceives them, seduces them, but not everybody in the same way. He dances and sings with someone... If he deals with a young man keen on literary and scientific studies, then he reads books all the time, growing his beard... and omitting entertainment [Simias ajunt capi, dum homines imitari conantes, eorum motus et saltationes adsectantur. Adulator autem alios imitando decipit atque illicit, non eodem omnes modo. Cum aliis saltat atque cantat, aliis palaestrae se et exercitationum corporis socium adjungit. Quodsi adeptus est literis et disciplinis deditum adolescentem, totus jam in libris est, barbam... demittit, rerum delectum ornittit].”<sup>19</sup>

Deception, or deliberate inconsistency with one’s essence, is probably the greatest flaw in a human being, according to Skovoroda. The philosopher states the benefits of choosing sincere, constant, and simple friends. By *simple* friends he means not non-intellectual, but open-hearted, non-lying, non-deceitful, and non-empty people.

### **The Nightmares of Mind in Skovoroda’s Philosophy**

The question of the world’s structure was a hot debatable topic at the times of Ukrainian Baroque. The canonical Christian ontology presents three worlds: the created (material) world, the heavenly world as its ideal essence, and the timeless and extraterrestrial world of God. At the same time, Joseph Turobojskyi, a professor of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy in the early 18th century, identified three principles of being: the matter, the

17 Hryhorii Skovoroda, “Lysty do M. Kovalynskoho [Letters to M. Kovalynskyi],” in *Povne zibrannya tvoriv* in 2 vol., vol. 2 (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1973): 229. Here and further trans. O. Petrenko-Tseunova.

18 Skovoroda, “Lysty do M. Kovalynskoho,” 245.

19 Skovoroda, “Lysty do M. Kovalynskoho,” 271.

form, and the chaos. According to his theory, the chaos corresponds to a deprivation of the form, the order — to the form, and the matter — to neither of them.<sup>20</sup>

Skovoroda's ontological notions include the microcosm, the macrocosm, and the world of the Bible. In this triad, the last element — the world of sacral symbols — is especially important for our consideration, as long as it is a kind of mediation between essence and existence.

Lamenting about the prevailing delusion, Skovoroda cites a poem by Pier Angelo Manzolli: "The world is a barrier for fools and a mess of vices." Therefore, the philosopher advises avoiding the grassroots defilement: "What is more blissful than the mind, purified from earthly thoughts, which sees God himself [Quid mente terrenis cogitationibus pura beatius, quae deum illum cernit]?"<sup>21</sup>

It is noteworthy that Skovoroda contrasts living people prone to deception with the most constant and non-treacherous friends — paper books: "Therefore, I consider being the most correct to make friends of the dead, that is, sacred books. Because among the living people there are such cunning, cheating, and dishonest rascals that barefacedly deceive the young man [Consultissimum igitur arbitror parare amicos mortuos, id est sanctos libros. Sunt ex vivis usque adeo callidi versutique et neinissimi veteratores, ut adolescentem videntem et viventem palam in os decipiant]."<sup>22</sup>

The philosopher appeals to Plato's *Republic*, claiming that one cannot constantly profess the virtue if they do not have strict convictions on what to strive for and what to avoid. In a poem on the Pentecost Day, when the Holy Spirit descended on the apostles, Skovoroda identifies the need to renew the discourse and come out of Platonic cave: "The language of an oafish mob is highfaluting and fool of greed. Do you think this is a new language? / No, it is an old language... / Let me come out of the cave, where the abject mob lives! / Let me live in heaven, / where the new earth shines! [Ambitiosa loquuntur ubique, loquuntur avara: / Haec nova verba putas? lingua vetusta quidem haec. / Regnat ubique scelus luxusque et spurca cupido: / Haec nova facta putas? Facta vetusta quidem haec... / Exime de specu vulgi miserabilis hujus: / Inserere coelicolis, qua nova terra nitet]."<sup>23</sup> Instead, the Holy Spirit creates both a new language and new things.

Furthermore, in one of his letters, Skovoroda points out the means to express the phenomenon which will later be called *simulacrum* — the truth that hides its absence. Mykhailo Kovalynskyi asked his teacher how to convey in Latin the meaning of the Ukrainian proverb "Aby sia kurylo," which means that it is sometimes enough to have a barely noticeable formal sign for making an assumption (sometimes false) about the existence of a whole phenomenon. Skovoroda offers the following Latin translation: "*mih i umbra sufficit, sive titulis, sive imago* — shadows, names, or images are enough for me... Our proverb in this case states that there is enough to see smoke, even if there

20 Popovych, "Hryhorii Skovoroda," 101.

21 Skovoroda, "Lysty do M. Kovalynskoho," 253.

22 Skovoroda, "Lysty do M. Kovalynskoho," 251.

23 Skovoroda, "Lysty do M. Kovalynskoho," 295.

is no fire. Thus, here is the same case, when a shadow arises instead of a body, a sign — instead of a thing [mihi umbra sufficit, sive titulis, sive imago. Graeci παροιμιαστί dicunt: ὥς τύπω. Ait ibi nostras adagium sibi sufficere fumum, licet ad flammam non est progressum. Sic et hic umbra pro corpore, titulus pro re].”<sup>24</sup>

This thesis directly correlates with Skovoroda’s reasoning about the perception of the category of time. The philosopher asserts the maxim that it is unwise to belittle the present, as far as it is the only object we have, because neither the past nor the future actually exists for humans. “While hoping for the future, we neglect the present: we strive for the defunct, and we neglect the current things, as if what is passing can go back or what we hope for ought to come true [Futurum speratur, praesens temnitur; captatur, quod non est, quod adest negligitur, tanquam aut praeterfluens redire, aut futurum certo posset obtingere].”<sup>25</sup>

This idea is consistent with Skovoroda’s broader concept of happiness in general: a happy person is not the one who still wants something better, but the one who is happy with what he or she already has.

In contrary, the average person tends to dream on the non-existent. It is noteworthy that a similar statement was said by Pascal: “We never keep to the present. We recall the past; we anticipate the future as if we found it too slow in coming and were trying to hurry it up, or we recall the past as if to stay its too rapid flight. We are so unwise that we wander about in times that do not belong to us, and do not think of the only one that does; so vain that we dream of time that are not and blindly flee the only one that exists.”<sup>26</sup>

An example of the antinomy of thinking is Skovoroda’s reflection on the moderation as a good. The student asked him: should we really restrain ourselves in virtue? “...If this is not the case, then care should not be taken in moderation either. Why does one outweigh the other in virtue [...In diligentia non esse modum necessarium. Sin, cur alius alium in virtute excellit]?”<sup>27</sup>

Skovoroda, paying tribute to the depth of this thought, replies that there are two kinds of virtue. The first — *virtus* — can be compared with a palace, a stronghold of virtue which has no measure because of no saturation, and its Master is God. Faith, hope, and love are examples of such virtues. It is worth striving for them without restraining yourself in any way even if a person is not able to reach them completely.

To get closer to this palace, there are “the virtues of the second order” — *means*, such as the knowledge of the Greek and Roman literature, obtained through night studying; the escape from the crowd and worldly affairs; the contempt for wealth; the fasting and moderation in general. In these activities, it makes sense to keep continence in order to achieve those virtues in which no measure is recognized. The intemperance

24 Skovoroda, “Lysty do M. Kovalynskoho,” 299.

25 Skovoroda, “Lysty do M. Kovalynskoho,” 292–93.

26 Blaise Pascal, *Pensées* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc, 1958), <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/18269/18269-h/18269-h.htm>.

27 Skovoroda, “Lysty do M. Kovalynskoho,” 278–79.

in the virtues of this kind is a manifestation of foolishness. “Otherwise, if you spoil your eyes or lungs during one night, how will you be able to read and talk to the saints after that [Alioquin si unica nocte per immodicas vigiliis aut oculos aut pulmonem laedas, quomodo deinceps legere ac colloqui cum sanctis poteris]?” — asks the philosopher.<sup>28</sup>

Thus, Skovoroda assumes that expedient behavior means being bold in aspirations and cautious in their implementation: “Is it reasonable for someone who, starting a long way, does not keep the measure in walking [An non stultescit, qui longum iter ingressus, modum in eundo non tenet]?”<sup>29</sup>

Reflecting on the affectivity as a cause of the eclipse of the esprit, Skovoroda quotes Boethius’s *The Consolation of Philosophy*:

Joy, hope and fear  
Suffer not near,  
Drive grief away:  
Shackled and blind  
And lost is the mind  
Where these have sway.<sup>30</sup>

However, the philosopher gives his own interpretation of the words of his Roman counterpart by “turning” the metaphor. Boethius has a negatively connoted esprit, which is “harnessed” in captivity of passions. Skovoroda instead claims that it is the esprit which “harnesses and drives” human weaknesses: “The closest to them [saints] is the one who persistently fights with the affects and restrains them with the bridle of the esprit, like the wild horses [Proximo loco est ille, qui cum his strenue pugnat ac velut equos ferocissimos moderatur freno rationis].”<sup>31</sup>

It is essential that the peace of the mind in Skovoroda’s hierarchy sometimes even exceeds the mind itself: “Days and nights, leaving everything behind, we will strive to direct every thought [...] to that world which transcends all the reasons and which is ‘a world being higher than all reasons’ [...] The colder becomes the heat of the sinister passions, the closer we get to this divine stronghold [Dies noctesque omnibus relictis contendamus, mi carissime, ad illam pacem omnem mentem super eminentem, quae est ‘myr, vsiak um preimushchy’... Quo magis cupiditatum vulgarium aestus desidit, hoc proprius accedimus ad arcem illam dei].”<sup>32</sup>

Skovoroda condemns the arrogance of a supersaturated esprit, claiming that the man who have read many sacred books has insatiable pride in his heart and ambition grown.<sup>33</sup>

28 Skovoroda, “Lysty do M. Kovalynskoho,” 279.

29 Skovoroda, “Lysty do M. Kovalynskoho,” 279.

30 Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. H. R. James, accessed December 5, 2022, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/14328/14328-h/14328-h.htm>.

31 Skovoroda, “Lysty do M. Kovalynskoho,” 283.

32 Skovoroda, “Lysty do M. Kovalynskoho,” 291.

33 Skovoroda, “Lysty do M. Kovalynskoho,” 286.



In the gastronomic categories, Skovoroda investigates the human inability to assimilate the divine knowledge: “The Christians eat the body of the God-man, drink His blood, / but, being stupid, cannot consume it [Vulgus chisticolum consumit mernbra θεάνδρου, / Sanguine potatur; sed male stulta coquit...].”<sup>34</sup> Reflecting on the futility of human efforts to understand the highest truth, he remarks, “Why do you take the seeds, when you do not bear fruit [Curve capis semen, si tibi fructus abest]?”<sup>35</sup> Instead, a true sage is aware of one’s limitations and, therefore, becomes modest.

The esprit, acquainted with its insularity, is able to foresee something alternative to itself and turn what is not yet conceivable into existing and meaningful one. After all, thinking arises from being surprised by the existence of the impossible, *unthinkable*. For being wise, it is not shameful to descend into a sphere that is usually considered grassroots and unworthy for attention: “A sage has to find gold even in the manure. Is Christ for sinners the fall, not the resurrection [Attamen sapientis est e stercore aurum legere. An non Christus improbis *padenie*, non ‘ανάστασις]?”<sup>36</sup>

According to the Georgian philosopher Merab Mamardashvili, self-reflexivity is a feature of consciousness: we adequately know the external world, provided that we simultaneously embrace the cognitive operation by which we cognize.

Skovoroda appeals to self-reflexivity in the process of thinking, in particular, demonstrating the thirst for constant action of mind. The philosopher claims that our mind does not stop being active even for a moment; it always needs to do at least something, and when it does not have a good trouble, in an instant it will turn to bad things. Skovoroda warns his student of the boredom and temptations of mind that lurk in times of holidays: “If you do not arm yourself against it, be careful of this creature, which may push you not from the bridge, as a saying goes, but from virtue to evil [Ad quod nisi te armas, vide ne in rnalā te animal detrudat, non de ponte, ut ajunt, sed de virtute].”<sup>37</sup>

### The Heavenly and the Earthly City

The philosophical basis of Hryhorii Skovoroda’s view on the concept of a city is a synthesis of Plato’s image of the cave, in which everything visible to a human is only a faded shadow of the eternal, and Augustinian opposition of two cities — the earthly and the heavenly one.<sup>38</sup>

34 Skovoroda, “Lysty do M. Kovalynskoho,” 287.

35 Skovoroda, “Lysty do M. Kovalynskoho,” 288.

36 Skovoroda, “Lysty do M. Kovalynskoho,” 298.

37 Skovoroda, “Lysty do M. Kovalynskoho,” 301.

38 See more: Olha Petrenko-Tseunova, “Nebesnyi hrad i zemne misto u tvorchosti Hryhoriia Skovorody [The Heavenly City and The Earthly City in the Writings of Hryhorii Skovoroda],” *Naukovi zapysky NaUKMA. Literary studies* 2 (2019): 30–35.

In the soliloquium *Bran Arkhystartyha Mykhayila so Satanoyu* (The Archangel Michael's Struggle with Satan), Skovoroda notes that the world has two parts — the lower and the upper, the cursed and the blessed, and the devilish and the lordly ones.<sup>39</sup>

In the collection of poems *The Garden of Divine Songs* the earthly city is depicted with the epithets *full of sadness* (song 12), *crowded* (song 13), *stormy sea of the world* (song 14).

However, the object of Skovoroda's condemnation is not a particular city. The locus of the earthly city is endowed with a high degree of conventionality. The world is opposed to heaven almost the same as hell is opposed to heaven. Skovoroda uses the biblical image of the whore-city, which entices to deviate from the righteous way to salvation.

The image of the earthly world is generalized because it goes not about a specific city, but rather about the way of life, the spiritual path that a person chooses, caring about material goods. Instead, the Heavenly City is not an imaginary space, but a concrete one, localized in the human soul.

Everyone has a city in themselves, because heaven and hell are already embedded in the human soul, not somewhere outside it: "Where is that beautiful hailstone? / You yourself are the hail, expelling the poison from your soul, / The temple and the hail to the Holy Spirit [Gdie jest tot prekrasnyi hrad? / Sam ty hrad, z dush von vyhnav yad, / Sviatomu dukhu khram i hrad]."<sup>40</sup>

The treatise *The Archangel Michael's Struggle with Satan* contains a song of hypocrites who pray to God, debunking their own unbelief. Other actions which are derided by the author include walking on pilgrimage, i. e. searching for grace outside one's own heart: "We roam the holy hail, / We pray both at home and there. / Though we do not pay attention to the psalters, / But we know it by heart. / And you have forgotten all of us [Stranstvuiem po sviatym hradam, / Molimsia i doma i tam. / Khot psaltyri nie vnimaiem, / No naizust yeii znaiem. / I zabyl ty vsikh nas]."<sup>41</sup>

The idea that happiness is attainable everywhere, and that there is no more or less auspicious place for a righteous life, is expressed in the treatise *The Entrance Door to the Christian Virtue*. The philosopher asks: "What would happen then if happiness was confined by God in America, or in the Canary Islands, or in the Asian Jerusalem, or in the royal palaces... [Chto bylo by tohda, esli by shchastie zakliuchil Boh v Amerike, ili v Kanarskikh ostrovakh, ili v aziatskom Ierusalimie, ili v tsarskikh chertohakh...]."<sup>42</sup>

39 Hryhorii Skovoroda, "Bran Arkhystartyha Mykhayila so Satanoyu [The Archangel Michael's Struggle with Satan]," in *Povne zibrannya tvoriv* in 2 vol., vol. 2 (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1973), 59.

40 Hryhorii Skovoroda, "Sad Bozhestvennykh pisnei [The Garden of Divine Songs]," in *Povne zibrannya tvoriv* in 2 vol., vol. 1 (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1973), 78.

41 Skovoroda, "Bran Arkhystartyha Mykhayila," 73.

42 Hryhorii Skovoroda, "Nachalnaia dver ko khristianskomu dobronraviiu [The Entrance Door to the Christian Virtue]," in *Povne zibrannya tvoriv* in 2 vol., vol. 1 (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1973), 144.

These places are difficult to reach — and therefore it is no good to do it, so “thanks be to blessed God that made the difficulty unnecessary.”

## Conclusions

The social conditionality of the consciousness and the need to free the mind from the outside factors which distort it have been highlighted. Skovoroda advised his readers to avoid dogmatic thinking. After all, internal authenticities (“truths”) are only the basic formations of consciousness that ensure its stability, the ability to resist external manipulation, and the socially organized coercion to the illusion.

According to Skovoroda, it is unreasonable to seek solitude if there is nothing to fill it with. Aristotle defines a lonely individual as either a wild beast or God. It means that loneliness is death for ordinary people, but it is a pleasure for those who are either completely stupid or outstandingly wise. For the former, the desert is pleasant due to its silence and immobility — so it is unwise to seek a space that cannot be filled with thoughts. Meanwhile, others are at a restless feast, creating, without disturbing their peace, the whole world. The desire for solitude can be connoted positively when it comes to the sage. To the question what philosophy is, Skovoroda answers: to be alone with yourself and to be able to have a conversation with yourself.

So only the void that can be filled with meaning is valuable. Instead, those who seek complete solitude for its own sake, not being able to fill it with thoughts, act unwisely, because the excess causes oversaturation, and the oversaturation leads to boredom, the boredom — to mental sorrow, and those who suffer from it, cannot be called healthy. In one of his letters, Skovoroda refers Kovalynskyi to the words of Jerome of Stridon: “Does the endless emptiness of loneliness frighten you? Walk with your thoughts in the Garden of Eden.”

An unambiguous relationship exists between the issues considered in the article: the essence and its realization in the congenial work; a flunker and the real friend; the truth in contrast to a fallacy; and finally the heavenly city and its earthly equivalent. All of them can be defined as invariant motives — the elements (events, situations, modes of attitude to the reality, or characteristics of people and objects) that underlie the deployment of any text. The mentioned invariant motives in Skovoroda's writings are involved in the development of one plot — the mismatch of the form and the content as a factor in the emergence of unreasonableness. This invariant motive of discrepancy is embodied in the social (friendship, vacation), axiological (truth and falsehood), and religious (the heavenly and the earthly city) planes.

Finally, appealing to the Northrop Frye's<sup>43</sup> concept of monomyth — the key motif of the text, consisting in the character's dream of a golden age, a return to

---

43 Northrop Frye, *Spiritus Mundi: Essays on Literature, Myth, and Society* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976), 100.

paradise, which becomes the engine of travel and adventure, — for Skovoroda such a monomyth is the desire to find unity of the form and the content, the essence and the existence.

### Bibliography

- Adorno, Theodor. *Teoriia estetyky [Aesthetic Theory]*. Translated by Petro Tarashchuk. Kyiv: Osnovy, 2002.
- Bartolini, Maria Grazia. *Piznai samoho sebe: neoplatonichni dzherela v tvorchosti H. S. Skovorody [Get to Know Yourself: Neoplatonic Sources in the Work of H. S. Skovoroda]*. Translated by Mariana Prokopovych and Kateryna Novikova. Kyiv: Akadempriodyka, 2017.
- Boethius. *The Consolation of Philosophy*. Translated by H. R. James. <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/14328/14328-h/14328-h.htm>.
- Bondarevska, Iryna. “Krytyka znannia i osvity v tvorakh Hryhoriia Skovorody [The Critique of Knowledge and Education in the Works of Hryhorii Skovoroda].” In *Shliakh u chotyry stolittia: materialy Mizhnarodnoi naukovoï konferentsii “Ad Fontes — do dzherel”, 12–14 October 2015*, 117–27. Kyiv: National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, 2015.
- Chyzhevskiy, Dmytro. *Ukrainske literaturne baroko [Ukrainian Literary Baroque]*. Kyiv: Oberehy, 2003.
- Dovhalevskiy, Mytrofan. *Poetyka: sad poetychnyi [Poetics: Poetic Garden]*. Translated by V. Masliuk. Kyiv: Mystetstvo, 1973.
- Frye, Northrop. *Spiritus Mundi: Essays on Literature, Myth, and Society*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976.
- Haliatovskiy, Yoanykii. *Kliuch rozuminnia. Pamiatkyukrainskoi movy [The Key to Understanding. Written Records of the Ukrainian Language]*, edited by I. P. Chepiha. Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1985.
- Hegel, Georg Friedrich Wilhelm. *Fenomenolohiia dukhu [The Phenomenology of Spirit]*. Kyiv: Osnovy, 2004.
- Ingarden, Roman. *O dziele literackim [On Literary Works]*. Warszawa: PWN, 1960.
- Isichenko Ihor, archbishop. “Sakralnyi prostir Sadu bozhestvennykh pisen Hryhoriia Skovorody [The Sacred Space of Hryhorii Skovoroda’s ‘The Garden of Divine Songs’].” *Slovo i chas* 1 (Kyiv, 2013): 52–63.
- Jakobson, Roman. *Language in Literature*, edited by Krystyna Pomorska and Stephen Rudy. Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1987.
- Morozova, Daryna. *Pokazhy meni liudynu. Antropolohiia Antiokhiiskoi shkoly ta yii spadshchyna u Kyivskii tradytsii [Show Me the Human. Anthropology of the Antioch School and the Legacy of the Kyivan Tradition]*. Kyiv: Dukh i Litera, 2021.
- Nadtoka, Oleksandr. “Interpretatsiia svobody v pohliadakh predstavnykiv ukrainskoi dukhovnoi elity (1750-1770-rr.) [The Interpretation of Freedom in the Views of Representatives of the Ukrainian Spiritual Elite (1750s-1770s)].” *Kyivska starovyna* 5 (Kyiv, 2010): 47–53.
- Pascal, Blaise. *Pensées*. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc, 1958. <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/18269/18269-h/18269-h.htm>.
- Petrenko-Tseunova, Olha. “Nebesnyi hrad i zemne misto u tvorchosti Hryhoriia Skovorody [The Heavenly City and the Earthly City in the Writings of Hryhorii Skovoroda].” *Naukovi zapysky NaUKMA. Literary studies* 2 (2019): 30–35.
- Petrov, Viktor. “Literatura pro Skovorodu [Literature about Skovoroda].” *Knyhar. Litopys ukrainskoho pysmenstva* 1-3 (29–31) (1920): 15–24.

- Popovych, Myroslav. "Hryhorii Skovoroda na tli filozofsko-relihiinykh rukhiv svoiei doby [Hryhorii Skovoroda in the Context of Philosophical and Religious Movements of his Time]." *Naukovi zapysky NaUKMA* 22.1 (2003): 91–103.
- Skovoroda, Hryhorii. *Povne zibrannya tvoriv [Complete Collection of Works]* in 2 vol. Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1973.
- Ushkalov, Leonid. *Hryhorii Skovoroda: seminarii [Hryhorii Skovoroda: Seminary]*. Kharkiv: Mайдan, 2004.
- Velychkovskyi, Ivan. *Tvory [Works]*. Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1972.
- Zakydalsky, Taras. "The Theory of Man in the Philosophy of Skovoroda." MA Thesis, Bryn Mawr College, 1965. <http://www.ditext.com/zakydalsky/skovoroda.html>.



**Olha Petrenko-Tseunova** studied at the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy. 2016 — Bachelor of Philology, the thesis entitled "The Food Code in the Poems of Wandering Diaks." 2018 — Master of Philology, the thesis entitled "The Constants of the Baroque Kyiv's Text." She is now a postgraduate student and a lecturer in the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy. The author of six academic publications devoted to Ukrainian literature of the Baroque period.