

PROCEEDINGS ARTICLE

“Woe From Wit”: The Problem of the Russian National Character

Svetlana Gerasimova^{1,2,*}, Elena S. Pak^{1,a}¹ Department of Linguistics and Intercultural Communication, Institute of Slavic Culture, Kosygin State University of Russia, Moscow, Russia² Department of Russian Language and History of Literature, Institute of Journalism and Publishing, Moscow Polytechnic University, Moscow, Russia^a Email: llenura2013@mail.ru

ABSTRACT

The cultural code reflects the structure of personality. The social reason in the Russian spiritual tradition was opposed to the sacred mind of the holy fools, who seemed like crazy. This confrontation determines the specifics of the sacred and social codes of Russian culture. Chatsky realizes the social rationalistic reason of the European type. Chatsky's suffering becomes one of the conditions for the spread of rationalism in Russian culture, since the Russian cultural code includes compassion for the persecuted, based on the worship of the Divine Sufferer Christ. The sacred code of Russian culture is mainly determined by the theology of kenosis, thanks to which Russia sacralizes the persecuted, holy fools, and martyrs. The persecuted Chatsky seems to be one of them, although he does not belong to a sacred culture. He is a secular counterpart of the persecuted Christ and an analogue of the Old Testament prophets who denounced the people.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The processes of globalization confront us with the task of preserving the cultural code of Russia, the most important representative of the Slavic peoples.

Considering Griboyedov's comedy as a fixation of the semiotic system of Russian culture in the early 19th century, it should be noted that the cultural code of any country has sacred and social levels of implementation. The sacred plan is characterized by the theological and metaphysical canon of culture. In the context of the sacred code of culture, spirit and consciousness determine being. Vivid examples of the operation of this spiritual law can be found both in the Bible and in history. History is the most important form that fixes the patterns of formation of the culture of the people. The most important law of history is: when people are faithful to the commandments, live according to their conscience, thank the Creator, they

prosper. The spiritual insanity of the people, apostasy, godlessness, and cruelty lead to suffering. This law's operation underlies the Babylonian captivity, the forcible removal of the people to Assyria in biblical history. The same law predetermined such events of modern history as revolutions, world wars, epidemics.

The theology of kenosis is the most important element of the sacred cultural code of Russia. It is determined by the specifics of Russian culture.

The empirical, social cultural code claims that it is being that determines consciousness. He claims that life and experience create the consciousness of the people and the personality of each person. Personality is the result of personal experience. At the same time, Sergei Bulgakov wrote: "Man is not God and can never become either his own creator or the creator of the world" [1]. This theological concept is opposed by the idea of autopoiesis, expressed by scientists from Chile – H. Maturana and F. Varela [2]. N.N. Kozhevnikov and

*Corresponding author. Email: metanoik@gmail.com

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V.S. Danilova apply it to the person as a whole [3], pointing to self-identification as the most important vector of personality formation. This concept is close to the point of view on the personality of the French existentialist Sartre. He expresses it in the work "Existentialism is a Humanism". A similar position is characteristic of the Soviet and post-Soviet scientific schools. For example, it is expressed by the outstanding teacher V.V. Serikov.

The social cultural code is determined to varying degrees by the sacred cultural code or opposes it, but even in its opposition it is not free from it. The empirical cultural code is expressed in the linguistic picture of the world. It is expressed in proverbs, practical morality, in paternal wisdom and those life programs that the heroes can inherit from their fathers. The empirical cultural code, clearly opposed to the sacred in Russian culture, first appears in the "Tale of Woe-Misfortune" (XVII).

The purpose of our study is the analysis of the Russian national character of Griboyedov's comedy heroes from the standpoint of the identified features of the Russian cultural code, which resonates with the codes of the text of Praise of Folly by Erasmus of Rotterdam.

2. THE SACRED CULTURAL CODE OF RUSSIA: DOMINANTS

The Russian cultural code is set by the theology of kenosis. Kenosis is expressed in the Divine self-abasement and humility up to death on the cross, revealed in history. Divine kenosis is inscribed precisely in human history, in which:

He Who hanged the earth is Hanged,

Who fixed the heavens is Fixed... [4]

The feat of the martyrs is imbued with the energies of kenosis. Russian Saint Prince Boris († 1015) could protect his life, because he had a squad. The strong Prince took the role of the weak one. Blessed by his father to rule in Kyiv, he voluntarily accepts death at the hands of his brother, who illegally seized the throne of Kyiv, because Love is a value that is higher than life. Love for God, the commandments, and for the brother makes self-defense and the shedding of blood impossible. N. Berdyaev dedicated this property of the Russian character to an article about "The 'forever femininity' in the Russian soul". The intelligentsia, brought up on Western ideals, ceased to understand their native national character, to appreciate the divine height of humility.

The principles of kenosis have a beneficial effect on the human psyche and are used in modern

psychotherapy [5]. Foolishness will be a unique property of the Slavic spirit. It doesn't exist in the West. But the first Russian holy fool Procopius of Ustyug came from the West. He was potentially a holy fool, but this property was realized in him only when he came into contact with Russian culture, imbued with spiritual heights and contemplative wisdom under a fertile veil of humility.

Noting that "in Greek 'spirit' can be denoted by the words 'nous' and 'pneuma'" [6], V.T. Faritov claims that European metaphysics perceived as a spirit, "nous", reason, opposing it to everything immanent, sensually perceived, natural, even to life; while Russian pneumatology seeks to transform matter with spirit, that is, with divine superbeing, comprehended in the context of apophatic theology.

Faritov's ideas must be supplemented with the idea of two minds developed in Orthodoxy. St. John of Damascus contrasts the contemplative wise mind with an active logical reason [7]. In the feat of the holy fools, the social reason is opposed to the divine mind, which seems to be the reason for madness and foolishness. The imaginary madness of the holy fools exposes the madness of society, covered by external rationality. The idea of a higher mind was accepted by F.M. Dostoevsky, and L. Tolstoy sought to escape from the tyranny of practical reason and denied it, calling for simplification. It is codified in the Russian cultural space by the opposition of mind and reason. The mind is the value of the sacred code of culture, and the reason is the value of the empirical social code.

The cultural niche of the book has become an important element of the general Christian semiotic code. Imitation to the Gospel sets before the Christian the task of becoming as perfect, as the Heavenly Father. Oscar Wilde's joke that art does not imitate life, but life imitates art, reflects the most important element of the cultural code – the center of our culture is the Book.

This property of the cultural code has been shaken in recent years under the influence of the transfer of communication into the virtual space of the internet, one of the authors of this article has asked the question since 2008 at seminars on Goethe's "The Sorrows of Young Werther" who is more right. Is he the cardinal, who accused Goethe of causing a suicide wave across Europe because of his book, or is he Goethe himself, who answered cardinal, that life influences a person more than a book. Until 2019, the students agreed with the cardinal, in 2022, returning to studies in classes, students stated that Goethe was right and that there were too many bad books that could not be imitated, that one must proceed from life experience, not from the reader's one.

Indeed, only the Bible must be imitated, but the reader is inclined to place a favorite novel in the cultural niche created by the Bible. It is no coincidence that they talk about the Pentateuch from Dostoevsky, and Huysmans' novel "On the Contrary" is called the "bible of the decadent". Dante pointed out that the reading of the book had ruined Paolo and Francesca, and he himself sought to write a work that would inspire readers to live holy and be saved, and thanks to this, the author would have a greater chance of being in paradise.

In Griboyedov's time, book-centricity remained the most important code of culture, but life experience was glorified by A. Pushkin, L. Tolstoy and others. European literature came close to understanding foolishness - in the third part of "Praise of Folly".

3. THE PROBLEM OF NATIONAL CHARACTER IN GRIBOYEDOV'S DRAMA "WOE FROM WIT"

Griboyedov, rethinking the plot of Molière's comedy "The Misanthrope", created a conflict reminiscent of the Gospel: the pharisaic Famusov's society had found a victim for itself – Chatsky, who, thanks to the function of the persecuted and participation in the opposition "one against all", had occupied a functional niche close to the place of Christ in the Gospel.

Chatsky suffered, but the values for which he suffered belong to the empirical, not to the sacred code of culture. Chatsky's mind has no spiritual depth, it is alien to Russian pneumatology, it is "nous", which is part of the Russian social code of culture and reigns in European metaphysics.

Moreover, this mind is based on purely European scholarship and bookishness. Chatsky is a man of the book, but this is not the Bible or the Gospel. He did not accept the most important feature of the Russian sacred code from the Gospel, he did not accept humility. He is proud, he is a variety of Misanthrope. Any self-belittling seems to him worthy only of mockery and ridicule.

Russian self-deprecation on the example of Maxim Petrovich is really realized not at the level of the sacred logos of holiness, but at the level of the profane court culture of the favorites. But this spiritual illness is a consequence of the transfer of the principles of kenosis to everyday social life. A court fool or jester is a purely Russian phenomenon.

Chatsky does not understand the specifics of the Russian character. He is a Russian foreigner. Behind the truth of his words and fair denunciations there is

no truth and correspondence to the Russian code of sacred culture - there is no humility, spiritualized pneumatological mind of holy fools, there is no love. Chatsky is proud, therefore he looks like an impostor and a funny double of the Messiah in his attempts to rebuild the world. Chatsky is dual. The tragedy to his fate is given by the Gospel parallels in his conduct and his reproach. The comedy to his figure is given by empirical incarnation of preaching Chatsky seeks to fulfill the mission of Christ by replacing the central elements of the Russian sacral code. He has European bookishness in the niche of the biblical book. And he has European nous instead of pneuma.

Chatsky attacks Famusov's love for foreigners, but this love is a feature of the Russian national character, although it can degenerate into a pernicious passion for foreigners. Pushkin claims that Chatsky is not smart, indeed Chatsky's mind does not fit into the code of Russian culture. He is smart in a European way. What is valued as intelligence in European rationalist culture can look strange in Russian culture.

Man creates culture in his own image and likeness. Just as a higher mind and practical reason coexist in the human soul, in culture there are sacred and social codes. Human consciousness, subconsciousness and unconsciousness are similar to cultural structures such as text, subtext and cultural periphery. Text implements explicit meanings and is associated with consciousness, while subtext is related with implicit meanings and associated with the subconscious; there is a center of culture and texts of the periphery, ousted from the consciousness of the majority and comparable to the unconscious beginning.

Famusov contrasts the bookish and non-bookish cultural codes with each other, fixing the canon of the profane code and considering that practical reason does not need books:

And in reading the gain is not great:

She has no sleep from French books,

And it hurts me to sleep from the Russians [8].

The sacred book culture has given rise to a mass of its profane counterparts. Russian common sense points to their remoteness from life and denies a book culture as a whole. Chatsky is akin to Gogol's Inspector General - he is an impostor and forerunner of the Faithful Judge.

The Gospel Christ did not criticize sinners, as St. John the Baptist did or his distant imitator Chatsky did too. During the sermon, Christ switched the consciousness of people from the profane cultural code to the sacred one, raised their consciousness from ordinary reason to the contemplative mind. Famusov's society cannot

be convinced of anything, so criticism is useless. You can bring people back to their essence and existence, let them make sure that the sacred codes of culture are fertile. The social code of culture shapes public opinion and secular culture. The sacred code creates personality and personal culture. Human consciousness can be switched from the social code of culture to the sacred code, but it is almost impossible to convince a person.

The sacred code directs us to unanimity in Christ, but everybody is left alone with God. Sacredness is born together with personality, in solitude, in concentrated standing before Heaven in the light of conscience. The profane code is focused on mass consciousness, public opinion, but there is no unanimity within it, it represents a divided kingdom.

Chatsky and Famusov are representatives of the social code of culture. Chatsky's pride and the inability to love oppose Famusov's sybaritism and nobility, and the European bookish reason-nous contradicts the practical reason of a courtier, accustomed to surviving in a world of intrigue and the game of chance. But the very role of a misunderstood genius, persecuted loner, projects a suffering image of Christ onto Chatsky.

Christ denounced the Pharisees not because he wanted to convince them of something, but to give moral guidelines to those whom they are authority for and who are able to rise to the sacred type of culture. The Savior stopped denouncing and teaching when there was a man in front of Him who was not amenable to healing and correction at the moment, and there were no witnesses whom the rebuke of this person's sin would become a moral sermon for.

The ideal Chatsky in this situation would have to switch Famusov from the profane code of culture to the sacred one, or, if not possible now, to remain silent. Switching the cultural code requires preaching, not denunciation. Preaching is impossible without love. Reproof is a form of warning against sin to those around the sinner. New Testament is preaching. Old Testament is reproofing. Rebuke cannot fix anyone. It causes shame and protest. The spirit of contradiction, self-justification and wounded pride do not allow one to agree with the truth. Nobody is saved by the law. Saving love and preaching.

The meaning of the name of Griboyedov's comedy lies in the fact that the Famusov's society denies the European nous, the rationalistic practical mind, which brings only grief to the person who trusted him. Chatsky as the accuser is right formally, but not spiritually. His denunciation is Old Testament one, there is no love in it. Denying the proud mind of Chatsky, the Famus society testifies that it does not matter to them who is declared insane, if it a proud

person or a carrier of a pneumatological, higher, contemplative mind is done to.

All the truths of the contemplative mind are foolishness and absurdity for the practical mind. The Famusov's society was mistaken, it denies the impostor as the Messiah, and persecutes the rationalist as a holy fool, living by the highest truths, which for the world sound like madness.

Russian culture lives by this internal tension between practical reason and the holy mind of the holy fool. These minds convict each other of madness, but need dialogue with each other and form a structure of culture as stable as the structure of personality, in which mind and reason complement each other.

Chatsky's imaginary madness sounds like sacred madness in Griboyedov's comedy, thus another important feature of Russian kenosis is manifested. It is love for the humiliated and offended, the poetics of compassion. The love for a Russian person means the regret. Suffering sanctifies the reason of Chatsky, unenlightened by a higher mind, therefore, the opposition of the Famusov's society to Chatsky is potentially perceived as a confrontation between the sybarites and the prophet falling into sacred madness.

The denunciation of Chatsky in madness, combined with compassion for him, becomes a form of justification for this rationalistic European mindset. The generation of European-minded rationalists is replacing the generation of sybarites, and the European type of rationality is consolidated and spread in Russian culture precisely thanks to Chatsky. His mind was recognized as madness, he aroused love-compassion and conquered Russian culture precisely because he was correlated with the type of holy fool in the spirit of Russian kenosis. Chatsky was loved because of suffering, and his mindset was accepted, projecting onto him the type of holy fool with a higher contemplative mind.

The history of the perception of the image of Chatsky in Russian culture is incomprehensible without taking into account the phenomenon of Russian kenosis, without understanding the love of a Russian person for the innocent suffering, because the Gospel Christ for a Russian person is mainly an innocent sufferer, an outcast, a holy fool.

The semiotic system of Russian culture changed, and the antithesis between the Famusov's practical reason and the holy mind of the holy fools, which seems to be madness, was replaced by a triad: the Russian practical reason - the European nous - the holy mind of the holy fools. Famusov's practical reason is now opposed to the reason of the Chatskys, and not to the holy mind of the holy fools. Thus was born the faith of

the Russian youth of the 19th century in the Chatskys' reason, capable of reshaping the world. Chatsky is the beginning of the Russian revolution. Chatsky is a false double of Christ, in this sense a distant reflection of the Antichrist falls on him. The Famusov's society expelled from itself a hero with the shadow of the Antichrist on his face, but they expelled him not in the name of Christ, but for the right to live in sin. Truth follows from truth, and anything follows from falsehood, both falsehood and truth. Therefore, the cunning of this image lies in the fact that he, expelled from the Famusov's world as if he was Christ, gains power over the society of those who have expelled him precisely thanks to his involvement in the gospel plot of condemnation of the righteous.

Famusov's fault is that he expelled Chatsky not for the sake of Christ, not for the sake of love and kindness, but for the right not to change. A holy place is never empty, so the niche of Christ in Russian society is gradually being occupied by the persecuted Antichrist, the revolutionaries-terrorists persecuted by the government, the Nechaevs and their followers. They think of themselves as martyrs of the new ideology.

But Chatsky is not terrible yet, only ridiculous. Reason is the source of troubles and exiles in the context of Russian kenosis. Griboyedov argues by contradiction that the good is not practical everyday empirical reason, but the higher mind, divine and spiritual is the good. The rationalistic mind is banished, so that, thanks to the author's irony, the higher mind of the saint will triumph over this mind. The denouement of Griboyedov's comedy is open, the author shows how the false bearer of reason was expelled and calls: "Hey! Come Lord!" A holy place is never empty, so let Christ take it, for the impostor is expelled.

This interpretation of comedy is also possible. It seems that it is the true one, because before us is a comedy and faith in a happy outcome. Griboyedov made room on the stage so that the higher mind of the holy fools would triumph, for only it is good, for only its triumph will make a comedy a comedy.

European culture knows no holy fools. However, there are some exceptions: the divine mind lives in the wisdom of jesters from Shakespeare's tragedies. The antithesis of reason and the divine mind is recorded in the last third of Erasmus of Rotterdam's "Praise of Folly", for example, in chapters LXV-LXVIII, where the blissful "frenzy" is sung [9]. The titles of the works of Griboyedov and Erasmus of Rotterdam have spiritual resemblance, because if the grief is from a rationalistic mind, then we can only praise Folly, that is, the holy stupidity of holy fools, which at the same time is saturated with divine mind.

4. CONCLUSION

Man creates culture in his own image. The opposition in the personality of practical reason and the holy mind corresponds in Russian culture to the interaction of sacred and profane codes. The rationalistic reason of Chatsky suffered a crushing defeat in comedy in order to free up stage space for the sacred mind of the holy fools, in which outward madness merges with higher wisdom, as in the treatise "Praise of Folly" by Erasmus of Rotterdam.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

The ideas of this article matured in a dense creative dialogue between the researchers. The rights of S. Gerasimova and E.S. Pak are respected.

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In memory of Lyudmila Ivanovna Matyushenko.

Dedicated to nun Victoria.

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