

The Ontological Basis of Hryhorii Skovoroda's Ethical Doctrine

Purpose. The aim of the article is to outline Skovoroda's distinctive position in interpreting the fundamental principles of ethical doctrine. To achieve this aim, it is necessary, firstly, to pay attention to the specificity of the cultural and historical situation in Ukraine at the end of the 18th century; secondly, to analyse the similarities and differences between the Ukrainian thinker's principles and those of the Enlightenment philosophers and Kant as his contemporaries regarding the fundamental principles of human conduct; and thirdly, to examine the peculiarities of his attitude toward religion and mysticism, which are the basis of his ethical doctrine. **Theoretical basis.** The methodological framework of the study is based on the texts of classical ethical thought, as well as the works of Skovoroda and national scholars of his philosophical legacy. **Originality.** A comprehensive analysis of the fundamental principles of Skovoroda's ethical doctrine is presented. The study reveals original aspects of his philosophical position concerning the ontological basis of ethics compared with the doctrines of Enlightenment thinkers and Kant as his contemporaries. It examines the ways in which Skovoroda transcends the epistemologism characteristic of his age and argues for the importance of Christian religion and the mystical tradition of European culture in forming the ontological basis of his ethics. **Conclusions.** The article focuses on the ontological basis of Skovoroda's ethical doctrine. Its specificity and originality become more evident when the Ukrainian philosopher's position is compared with the philosophical doctrines of the Enlightenment and Kant, in which epistemology takes a central place. The study analyses the prerequisites for and manifestations of Skovoroda's movement beyond the prevailing tendency of his era to overestimate rationality and scientific knowledge while underestimating the role of religion. It is demonstrated that the basic principles of Skovoroda's ethical doctrine are rooted in the Christian religion. The key to understanding the philosopher's distinctive attitude toward religion lies in the mystical nature of his position. It is important that Skovoroda's ethical doctrine is grounded in a deeply personal perception of the image of Jesus Christ. Today the relevance of his basic ethical principles stems from the personalist focus of his ethical position, rooted in Christianity, which distinguishes his concept from the ethical ideas of the Enlightenment of his time.

Keywords: human being; happiness; cognition; science; religion; ethics; affinity; Hryhorii Skovoroda; Enlightenment

Introduction

Hryhorii Savovych Skovoroda is a world-renowned Ukrainian philosopher and a pride for the Ukrainian nation. He is a vivid representative and classic figure of Ukrainian philosophy, exemplifying a profound elaboration of philosophical themes inherited both from the great European thinkers and deeply rooted in the peculiarities of the Ukrainian mentality. When studying his philosophical legacy under the current difficult and dramatic conditions of the struggle against Russian aggression, it is especially important to highlight the remarkable vitality of his ideas. It is hard not to agree with the authoritative opinion of A. Yermolenko (2022) regarding the heuristic potential of this eminent national thinker: "The moral orientation of his philosophy serves as a guiding beacon in our movement toward a European future. It is worth emphasizing once again: Skovoroda is a great Ukrainian philosopher – more contemporary than ever!" (p. 22).

Understanding his legacy today is one of the essential conditions for sustaining the high level of contemporary Ukrainian philosophy. Among the complex issues in the history of philosophy is how Skovoroda's philosophical doctrine can be explained through the features of his era – through the "spirit of the age", as Hegel wrote. When turning to Skovoroda's texts, we find that the specificity of the Ukrainian philosopher's position includes a number of elements that go

beyond the general intellectual tendencies of his time. First of all, the attention should be drawn to scholars' well-founded observations concerning the distinctive nature of his profound legacy as a doctrine of the human being. It is necessary to note that we are dealing with the "Ukrainian Socrates", as he has fairly been called. This distinctive feature of Skovoroda's anthropological thought is insightfully revealed in the substantial study by M. V. Popovych, who compares the Ukrainian philosopher with his contemporaries:

Skovoroda's philosophy was not an alternative to the rationalistic theodicy of Leibnizian Enlightenment, it complemented it with a philosophical anthropology of a special kind, one that drew equally on antiquity and Christianity, yet was also connected to the humanistic ideas of modern Europe. (Popovych, 2007, p. 241)

What is crucial for us is that today, at the beginning of the 21st century, the philosophical heritage of our thinker continues to attract attention both in Ukraine and beyond its borders. A striking evidence to the long-neglected heuristic potential present in Skovoroda's thought, particularly relevant in the context of the ecological crisis, is the research of contemporary Ukrainian scholars (S. Ryk & M. Ryk, 2024).

According to some foreign researchers, today Skovoroda's texts are valuable as a unique synthesis of ancient Roman culture, Renaissance humanism, and the spirituality of Hesychasm "an original synthesis of Latin culture and humanism with modernism and Hesychasm's spirituality" (Perri, 2015). What are the reasons for this popularity and intellectual vitality? We consider that it is Skovoroda's distinctive understanding of the ethical principles he proposed in his doctrine. Today, we are interested in the philosopher's response to the question of the ontological basis of his ethics, which continues to remain compelling and relevant.

In the current study of Skovoroda's philosophical heritage, it is important to remember that he was a contemporary of the eminent German philosopher Immanuel Kant. Analysing the shared motifs within the legacies of these two great thinkers, scholars suggest formulating this commonality through the idea of a "model of human self-realization". One of the most recent publications of this type is the article by O. Y. Marchak (2019). The author emphasizes the presence of similar themes and intellectual resemblance, focusing primarily on the external biographical circumstances of the two thinkers' lives. However, this study pays insufficient attention to the distinctive character of each philosopher's legacy and to the internal motives of human behavior.

It is significant for us that although Skovoroda was familiar with the philosophical developments of his time, he did not find any ethical ideals close to him in the texts of the Enlightenment thinkers. As for Kant's philosophy, it should be noted that, firstly, Kant was long known primarily as a theorist of epistemology grounded in the experience of mathematical natural science; and secondly, although ethical problems took an important place in his work, he demonstrated them at a later stage.

It is important that Skovoroda as a Ukrainian philosopher placed a profound reflection on religious experience in his ethical doctrine. A detailed examination will allow us to thoroughly

address the problem articulated in the title of this article and to fully clarify Skovoroda's distinctive position regarding the basic principles of his ethical doctrine in the context of the Enlightenment.

Purpose

To outline Skovoroda's distinctive position in interpreting the fundamental principles of the ethical doctrine. To achieve this aim, it is necessary, firstly, to pay attention to the specificity of the cultural and historical situation in Ukraine at the end of the 18th century; secondly, to analyse the similarities and differences between the Ukrainian thinker's principles and those of the Enlightenment philosophers and Kant as his contemporaries concerning the fundamental principles of human conduct; and thirdly, to examine the peculiarities of his attitude toward religion and mysticism, which are the basis of his ethical doctrine.

Statement of basic materials

As it is well known, the fundamental principles of Enlightenment philosophy and ethics include, first, a high valuation of reason, a belief in the rationality of the world and the rational nature of the human being and second, a belief in the power of education and the possibility of significantly improving the human being through knowledge. However, when it comes to the distinctiveness of Skovoroda's ethical inquiries, these ideas are unacceptable to him. A partial explanation for this can be found in the works of the respected scholar of Ukrainian philosophy V. S. Horskyi, who writes,

The Cossack person born of the previous era was perishing... The new social reality deprived one of any hope for self-preservation. In such circumstances, three paths remained, either to accept and adapt to the new conditions, or to enter into struggle with this reality in the name of preserving what the new world was destroying, or to direct the force of free personal self-activity always inherent in the Ukrainian spirit and born of its 'borderland culture' beyond the limits of the social sphere, into the domain of spiritual reality, which was consciously opposed to an unacceptable social order. (Horskyi, 2001, p. 133)

As we can see, the conditions in which our national philosopher sought answers to ethical problems were significantly different from those faced by his western European contemporaries. This is largely determined by how he formulated and interpreted the ways toward solving ethical issues.

As it is well known, European philosophy of the Enlightenment era was characterized by a belief in the positive influence of education and science on society. The philosophy itself was

regarded as a universal means of guiding society toward the common good. However, when addressing the specificity of the Ukrainian Enlightenment, scholarly literature typically distinguishes two of its main types: the scientific-educational and the ethical-humanistic. With regard to the first type, its representatives emphasized that the principal precondition for social progress is the development of science and technology. It is important for us that nature, as the object of scientific inquiry, is not mysterious and enigmatic. It appeared as transparent to human reason and as a material for transformative human activity.

Essential features of Enlightenment philosophy include: a) a widespread and popular concept of deism, which simultaneously acknowledges the existence of God as the creator of the world while affirming that the world exists and functions according to its own laws; and b) the concept of the dualism of soul and body, which holds that the two possess opposing qualities yet remain inseparably united.

As for the ethical-humanistic type of Enlightenment thought, it is characterized by an understanding of rational egoism as the driving force behind human actions. The principal source of social improvement is moral doctrine, which is grounded in human reason. Equally important features of Enlightenment philosophy, which should be mentioned here, include the tendency to break away from religion and the appeal to Epicureanism. Its representatives tended to share the illusion that it is possible to master the realm of human feelings and passions and subordinate them to reason.

Giving a modern interpretation of Skovoroda's philosophical doctrine in the context of the eighteenth century, it is important to remember that he was a contemporary of the French Enlightenment and of the German philosopher Immanuel Kant. Scholarly literature traditionally draws attention to common themes and motives in their ethical concepts, namely, the criticism of the customs and traditions of the preceding epoch, the dismantling of inherited myths, and the elevation of human reason.

Until recently, a number of historians of philosophy naïvely suggested viewing Kant as more "progressive" in comparison with "backward" Skovoroda. However, in recent years Ukrainian philosophers have reconsidered such simplistic judgements.

It is difficult not to agree with V. Tabachkovskyi (2005), who points to the high theoretical level of the Ukrainian thinker's doctrine and to the presence of substantial conceptual common features in the intellectual heritage of both philosophers "...the anthropological and general metaphysical views of Hryhorii Skovoroda", he is right to observe, "resonate with Kantian criticism, which takes shape in the very same historical period... Skovoroda's 'philosophy of the heart' is imbued with criticism rather than with naïve elegiac sentimentality (as it was often imagined)" (p. 163).

For Skovoroda, the Enlightenment understanding of human happiness as the realization of a person's rational desires is unacceptable. This divergence arises from profoundly different preconditions, firstly, those traditions of the Ukrainian mentality that are connected with introspection, and secondly, Skovoroda's deep religious outlook. For this reason, he urges to reject the naïve view that all desires of the ordinary person can be considered rational. For him, it is crucial to distinguish those desires that correspond to a religious understanding of human nature as part of God's design from the false desires rooted in the bodily nature of the human being, which he views as illusory. In this context, unlike the Enlightenment thinkers, Skovoroda writes about the significance of self-knowledge, not as the self-knowledge of a being who is a part of nature, but as the self-knowledge of a creature of God. In other words, as a religious

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thinker, Skovoroda rejects the absolutization of social life as it is, but a human being is a representative (expression) of the universe. Taking this into account, we agree with the opinion of Mykhailo Hrushevsky, who noted that Skovoroda is not only a representative of the Ukrainian nation but also a "citizen of the universe".

Examining Skovoroda's position regarding the ontological foundations of human existence in the world of his time, it is important to focus on the peculiarities of his attitude toward science and religion as cultural spheres. Such analysis allows us to gain a deeper understanding of the specificity of his philosophical doctrines, the difference between his perspective and those of the Enlightenment thinkers and Kant, for whom science was the basis of their philosophical systems. For Skovoroda, the central role is religion in the worldview. This is especially evident in those texts where the main emphasis is placed on ethical problems. In the dialogue "A conversation among five travellers concerning true happiness in life", we observe the skeptical attitude of the participants to the undeniable achievements of science that fascinated Skovoroda's contemporaries. He writes

...we have measured the sea, the land, the air, the heavens; we have disturbed the earth's womb for the sake of metals; we have divided the planets, discovered mountains, rivers, and cities on the moon; found countless numbers of incomplete worlds; we build incomprehensible machines; we fill in chasms; we stop and redirect the flow of water; every day we conduct new experiments and create new inventions. (Skovoroda, 2005a, p. 337)

It is obvious, the author of the dialogue proclaims the idea that science is dangerous for the inner world of the human being, since it poses a threat to religion. He emphasizes that although we cannot help but marvel at the capabilities and power of human reason, at the same time we experience an inner emptiness that accompanies this long list of human achievements. A bit further, the author draws attention to specific manifestations of this spiritual incompleteness, referring to hunger and thirst of the soul.

In order to convey to the readers his rejection of naïve admiration for the successes and achievements of the natural sciences, Skovoroda introduces in "A conversation among five..." a hypothetical character, the inhabitant of the Moon, whose perspective helps reveal the abnormality of such worldview. Among suspicious and questionable aspects of our worldview, he highlights our emotional fascination with the artificially constructed world of things and our simultaneous undervaluation of the human body as the most perfect system.

In the conversation with the lunar inhabitant, we learn about significant flaws in the traditional European worldview, particularly its insufficient attention to our own body "Yet how astonished our lunar visitor would be to see that within the estate of our tiny world we are blind and unskilled, like in a small London clock, and entirely drones unable to perceive or care for the most wondrous system of all systems – our body" (Skovoroda, 2005a, p. 338).

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As we can see, for Skovoroda the natural scientists of his time, those who fascinated his contemporaries, are examples of a one-sided vision of the world. He draws attention to the fact that for them mathematics is the basis of true knowledge which studies only the quantitative characteristics of the world while ignoring the qualitative ones. Therefore, the philosopher leads his readers to the conclusion that the sciences of nature may be dangerous for the human being.

In his opinion, the particular danger of mathematical science lies in its indifference to human emotions, which makes it amoral. Its polar opposite is wisdom, which studies the qualitative characteristics of the world. Wisdom, for Skovoroda, is intimately connected with a person's spiritual health, with joy, and the cheerfulness of the heart. Thus, Skovoroda as the "Ukrainian Socrates" refuses to accept natural science as a synonym for the real image of the world. In his view, it is only a partial, fragmentary reflection of reality. We must not forget, he reminds us, that science means only a reflection of *natura* – a synonym for the real world in his terminology. For the philosopher, science is "the daughter of nature". Considering the present cultural stage as the estrangement from reality, he sees the source of danger in the fact that it is accompanied by an overestimation of artificially created images.

For Skovoroda, the human being becomes a "foolishly wise ape", wandering far from its own nature. Emphasizing the abnormality and danger of such an outlook, he seeks and finds convincing arguments to justify the thesis of the *unnaturalness* of these approaches. In particular, he writes "who calls the race of nightingales and thrushes to the forests and gardens, the larks to the fields, and the frogs to the waters and marshes? Who leads the rivers to the sea? Who draws steel to the magnet? Who pulls upward the shimmering ray?" (Skovoroda, 2005a, p. 440)

As we can see, for Skovoroda the overestimation of the role of human reason, which is the basis of the natural science of his time, is unacceptable. Therefore, he repeatedly emphasizes the close connection between the concepts of *natura* and God, concepts that the Enlightenment thinkers tend to overlook. Unlike his western contemporaries, Skovoroda is firmly convinced that nature surpasses science. As for the pursuit of glory and practical achievements as the main motivations for engaging in science among his western contemporaries, he unequivocally rejects such an approach.

The main shortcoming of such approaches, in Skovoroda's view, is their nihilistic attitude to religion and to the concept of "affinity", which is a key notion in his philosophy. The importance of this concept is closely connected with forgetting God and divine providence. It is well known, Skovoroda himself was firmly convinced that every human being is born for happiness, and he saw his principal task in philosophy to show a person this path to it. Through his way of life and his literary legacy, the philosopher emphasizes the importance of self-knowledge as the condition for fulfilling one's calling, understood as one's "affinity". Skovoroda elaborates his doctrine of affinity and its significance for human life both in "A friendly conversation about spiritual peace" and in "A conversation called the alphabet, or the primer of peace". He interprets the idea of affinity as acting "in accordance with God" or "in accordance with nature". It is also important that the epithet "affinity" is characterized by him as something "simple", "light", "useful", and "necessary". Seeking the simplest and most accessible form of expressing his understanding, Skovoroda (2005a) highlights the importance of listening to the voice of God in the search for happiness "...happiness depends neither on learning, nor on rank, nor on wealth, but solely on one's willingness to surrender oneself to the will of God" (p. 417).

Developing his position further, the philosopher warns against a "blind" (naïve) understanding of simple and unambiguous expressions such as "to surrender to the will of God"

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and "to live according to nature". Here, in his opinion, it is essential to be attentive and to distinguish between the "slave nature" and the "sovereign nature", and it is equally important not to mix these two into the same notion, which would lead to tragic consequences. The one who does so, Skovoroda continues,

...instead of choosing the insightful and divine nature as one's guide, chooses the bestial and blind nature. This is the native impiety, ignorance of God, failure to know the peaceful path, movement along the road of misfortune that leads into the kingdom of darkness, into the dwelling of restless spirits. (Skovoroda, 2005a, pp. 417-418)

One of the preconditions for a deeper understanding of Skovoroda's position regarding the concept of "affinity" is careful attention to the texts of his predecessors in which similar ideas can be found. In particular, this concerns those philosophical works that he translated and incorporated into his literary legacy. These include Cicero's treatise "On Old Age" and Plutarch's work "On the Tranquility of the Soul".

Keeping in mind his aim as a translator to convey his own positive attitude to Cicero's ideas to his readers, Skovoroda pays attention to the specificity of his translation. He notes that in this case "not the words, but the thoughts have been translated" (Skovoroda, 2005b, p. 185). In contrast to the Enlightenment philosophers, his contemporaries, who emphasized the dependence of human ideas on external circumstances, Skovoroda highlights the importance of those aspects of the human soul that cannot be explained by the influence of the environment. In this context, our author, like Augustine long before him, turns to the concept of the "inner person". "Our priceless treasure" he writes "is our inner and secret human being, poured into us by God". Explaining his position further, he points to the impossibility of relying on the illusory idea that a person can fully know themselves and the motives of their own behavior, especially when the pursuit of pleasure is considered one of the primary motives. Skovoroda views his mission as emphasizing the dangers of such ideas. "Pleasure-seeking" is for him "the deadliest poison". Here he expresses his fundamental disagreement, as the worldview contradicts the basic principles of Christianity: "Pleasure-seeking is poison to sound judgment, the death of reason, the blindness of the soul's eyes, and has no relation to the light" (Skovoroda, 2005b, p. 197).

To explain his unwavering commitment to the absolute priority of the soul and its spiritual needs, he appeals directly to the idea of God "...you must", he writes to his addressee, "honor the spiritual being in me". One important precondition for rejecting the habitual worldview, the one oriented toward the body and the material world, is the renunciation of the idea that earthly life is the highest good, and the gradual cultivation of an attitude toward one's own mortality "to fear no death" (Skovoroda, 2005b, p. 206).

Another instance of Skovoroda's translation of philosophical texts of the past, close to his own worldview, is Plutarch's "On the Tranquility of the Soul". When reading this work, one can easily notice a certain continuity with the previously cited text. Here, one of the key themes reinterpreted by Skovoroda is the negative passions of the human being. Plutarch tends to

include among them envy, jealousy, vanity, obstinacy, irritability... All of these serve as obstacles on the human path toward the kind of enjoyment of life that is dear to the author.

Demonstrating the thesis that envy is the primary obstacle, he writes "Thus almost all of us, gazing upon another's happiness as if upon a beautiful woman, grow blind to our own lives – lives endowed with many advantages – and fail to enjoy what is ours, devouring ourselves with envy". As for the ways of resisting envy, Plutarch invokes self-knowledge as a condition for a realistic self-assessment. The author is convinced that "the whole world suffers from this vice" (Skovoroda, 2005b, p. 218). Skovoroda explains Plutarch's position, close to his own, by noting that a person blinded by the successes and benefits of others has neither the strength nor the desire to live their own life. Such envious attitudes elicit the philosopher's ridicule and disdain "The foolish crowd strives to gather all excellences into one place and steal them, so as to be simultaneously the ruler of a city and a military commander, a theologian and a philosopher, both worldly and monastic; an artist and a cook, a bird and a beast, warm and cold..." (Skovoroda, 2005b, p. 220).

As for Skovoroda's own position on "affinity", he considers it self-evident that every person must come to know themselves as the necessary condition for being able to take delight in life. When a person strays far from their true nature, Skovoroda (2005b) writes, the behavior of animals should serve as an instructive lesson for the "How little people understand", he writes, "that within us there secretly dwells the true good, which neither moth consumes nor thief steals! Why then, O human, do you fear fate?" (p. 223).

As it was already mentioned, the distinctiveness of Skovoroda's inner world and the specificity of his life are difficult to understand if focusing only on external circumstances. Unlike Enlightenment thinkers, he devoted great attention to religion. Awareness of this dimension is essential for understanding the most original and intellectually compelling aspect of Skovoroda's worldview. As M. V. Popovych observes, studying the philosopher's position one must keep in mind that for Skovoroda the life of Jesus Christ was the ideal and the model to follow. Elaborating on this interpretation, another scholar of Skovoroda's thought, Chernyshov (2018), suggests taking this claim quite literally: "One may say that, in a mystical manner, Skovoroda, following Christ, Himself ascended the cross, was crucified with Him, and became a participant in His Resurrection. He partook in eternity..." (p. 79).

It is easy to notice, we encounter here this mystical character of Skovoroda's position, one of the distinctive features of his philosophical legacy. The importance of this aspect for understanding the philosopher's worldview and way of life was first emphasized almost a hundred years ago by Dmytro Chyzhevsky (2005, pp. 348-373). In recent studies greater attention has been devoted to the philosopher's inner world, and particularly to his mysticism (Chernyshov, 2018). As the researcher mentions, a significant event took place at the very beginning of Skovoroda's spiritual path – the dream in the village of Kavray in November 1758, which is associated with the beginning of his spiritual independence. According to Chernyshov (2018), this dream served as a kind of culmination of Skovoroda's earlier, intense search for himself: "This dream was the result of a deep and prolonged inner process that unfolded in Skovoroda's soul a process of seeking the meaning of his own life, his vocation, and his place in the world" (p. 68).

One more remarkable event in Skovoroda's life, closely connected with mysticism, occurred during his stay in Kyiv in 1770, when the philosopher suddenly felt an inexplicable urge to leave the city. Skovoroda himself interpreted this experience as a manifestation of divine providence,

accompanied by a sense of powerful spiritual elevation. Its manifestations included "reverence and gratitude to God", which were complemented by a "feeling of love". Here, as in the previous case, the significance of this mystical ecstasy for Skovoroda lies in its role as a response to his intense inner reflections. It represents "an immediate Divine response to his aspirations and searches" (Chernyshov, 2018, p. 71).

When analyzing Skovoroda's texts in the context of the mystical dimension of the history of European philosophy, attention should be paid to new insights that have appeared in recent years in scholarly literature. A persuasive thesis by T. Lyuty concerns the existence of significant parallels between the teachings of the German mystic Meister Eckhart and those of Hryhorii Skovoroda. Among these parallels are "...the eternity of the world, the identity of the inner human being (*homo divinus*) and Christ, the convergence of knowing oneself and knowing God, the impossibility of naming God, the theme of self-emptying (*Vernichtikeit*), the idea of the heart, the spark, etc." (Lyuty, 2022, p. 4). The substantive parallels between Skovoroda's doctrine and the ideas of another prominent representative of medieval mysticism – Jakob Böhme are equally evident and important for us today, according to the Ukrainian researcher. These include both external analogies such as the tension and conflicts with representatives of the Church combined with a strong sense of inner righteousness, as well as the internal motives, namely the awareness of the need to transform oneself into a new human being, the necessity of inner rebirth resulting from self-knowledge. Summarizing the comparison between the positions of the Teuton (Böhme) and Skovoroda, Lyuty (2022) emphasizes their profound affinity "Almost all the themes mentioned above", he writes, "can be found in Skovoroda: the true human being, the divine spark, the struggle against despondency and Satan, self-knowledge, new birth, and the constantly recurring images of Holy Scripture, and so on" (p. 9).

Examining the ways in which mystical insights influenced Skovoroda's manner of life, it is necessary to pay attention to the works of the prominent Ukrainian literary scholar and writer Leonid Ushkalov, who proposes to attribute these insights to the philosopher's asceticism.

Skovoroda perceived his strange dream as a Divine revelation. He interpreted these images as follows: the Lord urges him to renounce the world and thus to step beyond the ordinary conditions of life. From that moment onward, Skovoroda's attitude toward the 'theater of life' would forever retain a distinctly ascetic character. Not without reason was Skovoroda repeatedly portrayed as a kind of 'monk in the world', a 'earthly angel', a solitary wandering ascetic... (Ushkalov, 2017, p. 195)

It is appropriate here to draw attention to the dual nature of mysticism influence on Skovoroda's way of life. This influence involves not only a person's renunciation of the world and withdrawal from it, but also the union of the human being with God. For Skovoroda, the consequence of this union is a deeply personal attitude to religion. For the philosopher, religion is something much greater than a set of behavioral rules, as it may be for an ordinary believer.

Religion is far closer and more important to him than science was to his contemporaries. What is essential is the fact that, unlike natural science, religious experience requires personal participation both in the act of knowing and understanding divine truth (as discussed above), and in the process of resolving the question of one's own salvation. For this reason, Skovoroda's entire life and intellectual legacy can be interpreted as an extended commentary on Holy Scripture.

Originality

A comprehensive analysis of the fundamental principles of Skovoroda's ethical doctrine has been carried out. The study identifies the original elements of his philosophical position regarding the ontological basis of ethics through comparison with the doctrines of Enlightenment thinkers and Kant, who were his contemporaries. It examines the ways in which Skovoroda transcended the epistemology characteristic of his era and argues for the significance of Christian religion and the mystical tradition of European culture as essential components of the ontological basis of his ethics.

Conclusions

The article examines the ontological basis of Skovoroda's ethical doctrine. The specificity and originality of his position become especially evident when contrasted with the philosophical doctrines of the Enlightenment thinkers and Kant, where epistemology takes a central place. The study analyses the preconditions and attention of Skovoroda's beyond the tendency of his era to overestimate rationality and scientific knowledge, a tendency that was accompanied by an underestimation of the role of religion. The analysis demonstrates that the fundamental principles of Skovoroda's ethical doctrine are rooted in the Christian religion, and that the key to understanding his distinctive attitude toward religion is his mystical position. It is essential that Skovoroda's ethics is grounded in a deeply personal perception of the image of Jesus Christ. The contemporary relevance of his fundamental ethical principles stems from the personalist orientation of his ethical worldview, rooted in Christianity, which sets his conception qualitatively apart from the ethical ideas of the Enlightenment of his time.

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Онтологічний базис етичного вчення Григорія Сковороди

Мета – окреслити своєрідність позиції Сковороди в тлумаченні базових засад етичного вчення. Умовою її реалізації є: по-перше, увага до специфіки культурно-історичної ситуації в Україні в кінці 18 століття; по-друге, аналіз спорідненості та відмінності позиції українського мислителя від позицій Просвітників та Канта як його сучасників щодо базових засад людської поведінки; по-третє, розглянути особливості його ставлення до релігії та містики, які є фундаментом його етичного вчення. **Теоретичний базис.** Методологічну базу дослідження складають базові тексти класиків етичної думки, а також тексти Сковороди та вітчизняних дослідників його філософської спадщини. **Наукова новизна.** Здійснено комплексний аналіз базових засад етичного вчення Сковороди. Виявлені оригінальні моменти його

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філософської позиції щодо онтологічних засад етики в процесі порівняння з вченнями Просвітників та Канта як його сучасників. Проаналізовані форми виходу Сковороди за межі гносеологізму його епохи та аргументовано важливість для онтологічного базису його етики християнської релігії та містичної лінії в європейській культурі. **Висновки.** В тексті статті основним предметом вивчення є онтологічні засади етичного вчення Сковороди. Його специфіка та оригінальність стають більш явними в умовах порівняння позиції українського філософа з філософськими вченнями Просвітників та Канта, де чільне місце посідає гносеологія. Аналізуються передумови та форми виходу його уваги за межі традиційної для його епохи тенденції завищеної оцінки раціональності та наукових знань, яке доповнюється недооцінкою ролі релігії. Продемонстровано, що базові принципи етичного вчення Сковороди укорінені в християнській релігії, а ключем до розуміння особливого ставлення філософа до релігії є містичність його позиції. Істотно, що етичне вчення Сковороди спирається на особистисне сприйняття образу Ісуса Христа. До причин актуальності сьогодні базових етичних принципів Сковороди належать персоналістична спрямованість його етичної позиції, що базується на християнстві, що якісно вирізняє його концепцію серед етичних ідей сучасного йому Просвітництва.

Ключові слова: людина; щастя; пізнання; наука; релігія; етика; споріднена праця; Г. С. Сковорода; Просвітництво

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