

ISCKMC 2020
International Scientific Congress «KNOWLEDGE, MAN AND CIVILIZATION»

**CLASSICAL RUSSIAN APHORISMS AS A MEANS OF
REPRESENTING CULTURE**

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Abstract

The culture of each nation is part of its national heritage. The basis for culture manifestation and national identity is the language recorded in diachrony in the monuments of literature. Any language of the world there includes a fund of stable verbal complexes, including paremias, phraseological phrases of different types, aphorisms, sayings and winged expressions. Aphorisms that go back to ancient of times are the most complex unit of language and speech in terms of linguistic and literary approach and fully demonstrate the worldview cultural dominants of the Russian people. They reflect the value paradigm of the mentality of the people in synchronicity and diachrony, despite the fact that simultaneously they show its individual author's interpretation. Russian aphorism has retained national identity, moral and ethical values of the people for centuries, it is able to hand down cultural and historical memory from generation to generation. Aphorisms show not only the uniqueness, originality of Russian culture and mentality, but also the commonality of cultural codes and universality of human values, which are exemplified through the key words-concepts fixed in Russian sayings: love, Motherland, work, happiness, man, kindness, friendship, time, mind, stupidity, truth, word, poetry, etc. Classical aphorisms touch on socio-political, moral and ethical, everyday life, pedagogical, professional, philosophical problems, thus reflecting the conceptual picture of the world and representing the cultural heritage of the Russian world, which is part of the global cultural heritage.

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Keywords: Aphorism, classical Russian aphorism, culture



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1. Introduction

Russian aphorisms is rooted in antiquity, and began to be memorized by people from the time writing appeared in Russia. The history of Russian aphorisms in diachronic terms shows the stage of Old Russian aphorisms, the stage of aphorisms of the times of medieval Russia, etc. However, the rise of aphoristic thought occurred in the 19th century, traditionally called the golden age of Russian literature. It should be noted that both in the 20th century and at the beginning of the 21st century, aphorisms is developing outstandingly actively.

A transitional stage in the history of aphorisms of the late 18th–early 19th centuries was the work of the most famous writers and poets of the late 18th–early 19th centuries, such as N.M. Karamzin. Their works include a large number of introductory aphorisms, organically woven into the literary text. In the 19th century, separate books of aphorisms were published in Russia, but a larger number of sayings are found in literary and journalistic texts of the classics of Russian literature from A.S. Pushkin to L.N. Tolstoy, we refer to this stage in the development of aphoristic thought as Russian classical aphorisms.

2. Problem Statement

The problems of aphorism interpretation arose at different times, developed in various national (international) traditions, under the influence of various cultural trends and social processes, within the paradigms of scientific knowledge and linguistic cultures. Only nine of the most significant empirical understandings of aphorism are available (scientific-philosophical, literary-philosophical, religious-literary, literary-artistic, literary-journalistic, literary-legal, folk-poetic, poetical-rhetorical, everyday-linguistic) (Ivanov, 2019). We adhere to the following interpretation of the term. An aphorism is a brief phraseological utterance, which features the presence of concept words in the structure; categorization, reproducibility, brevity. Among the optional features of aphorism, paradox and the desire to express general truth are often indicated. For example, Cosmin (2015) wrote about it in his paper Aphorism: Function and Discursive Strategy and highlighted that ‘although the aphorism is of a contextual nature depending on time and geography, it ‘transfers its wealth to others generations’ (p. 2269). The contradictions of aphorisms are discussed in the paper Conceptualizing Doubt in Proverbs and Aphorisms by Beilison and Karasik (2019), etc.

The processes of globalization in various areas of human life are currently irreversible. These processes can cause leveling of national cultures. In this regard, culturologists, philologists, linguists, ethnographers and scientists of other specialties put forward a fair question about preservation of individual characteristics of cultures, about national and ethnic self-identification of peoples.

Traditionally, it is believed that stable phrases in any language express peculiarities of the worldview of an ethnos. In the phraseological system of the language, in the paremiological fund, winged expressions, and aphorisms provide ‘multilayered data on the material and spiritual culture of the people speaking a particular language (Mokienko, 2010, p. 8).

3. Research Questions

The subject of research is the corpus of Russian classical aphorisms of the late 18th–19th centuries recorded in the Dictionary of Aphorisms of Russian Writers (Korolkova et al., 2004). In the text of the paper, all examples of aphorisms are cited from this dictionary.

4. Purpose of the Study

The aim of the study is to investigate Russian classical aphorisms and to prove the statement that the entire corpus of sayings is the most important means of expressing national and cultural values of the people, a conceptual picture of the world.

5. Research Methods

The research uses a comparative-comparative method and a method of semantic analysis that implies highlighting keywords in aphorisms. The aphorism includes keywords as a semantic core, the basis of the saying. Key words in aphorisms represent the concepts of Russian culture (in italics throughout the text).

6. Findings

Consider the system of cultural constants represented by Russian classical aphorisms, sayings by writers, poets and scientists.

At the turn of the 18th–19th centuries, the work by N.M. Karamzin was a specific phenomenon in Russian literature, culture, and historical scientific thought. For the first time, the history of Russia became the property of both historical science and literature, and a wide range of readers. Karamzin was aware of the uniqueness of everything that had happened and was happening in Russia and tried to capture and convey the perception of this uniqueness to the readers.

N.M. Karamzin believed that the history of Russia and all humanity was moving inexorably forward. The *human race* evolves, and approaches, albeit slowly with uneven steps, spiritual perfection. Aphorisms by N.M. Karamzin provide a description of the moral qualities of a person, condemnation of vices, ironical remarks about stupidity, sayings about the exclusiveness of the Russian path of development, a comparison of the Russian character with those of Europeans, sayings about love for the fatherland, about truth, and certainly about poetry and poets, etc.

For example:

Centuries passed and plunged into eternity -

Poetry has always been a joy of

Innocent, pure souls.

* * *

The heavens are just and they only plunge *evil nations* into slavery.

* * *

Disasters reveal the most forces in the character of people and nations.

* * *

Until then, the *truth* is dangerous

Some find it boring, others terrible;

Nobody wants to listen to it.

His aphorisms cover a broad range of subjects. Artistic legacy by N.M. Karamzin includes a large number of aphorisms, since, like any historian, he loved generalizations and conclusions. In this regard, one can note his sayings about the importance of preserving historical monuments, about the need to study the history of the native country in order to bring up worthy sons of the fatherland. In general, the works by N.M. Karamzin and his aphorisms taught his contemporaries to see and understand the beauty in life, in art, and in antiquity. Truth interpreted by N.M. Karamzin was perceived by Russian literature and Russian culture.

The history of the introductory Russian aphorism of the 19th century is highly rich and diverse. The literature of the 19th century reflects a struggle between different literary trends. However, writers and poets that belong to different literary movements have a lot in common in terms of aphorisms. It is from this period of time that we can judge about the aphoristic nature of the work of this or that writer, poet, literary critic, historian, and even a public figure. Aphorism can be considered as a special stylistic device in the work by one or another author. From this point of view, the work by A.S. Pushkin, which is beyond doubt aphoristic, is highly interesting. The interest in his work has been enormous for several centuries, and many aphorisms by A.S. Pushkin long ago turned into catchphrases and are studied in special lexicographic works, for example, in the Dictionary of Winged Expressions by Mokienko and Sidorenko (1999).

Aphorisms by A.S. Pushkin avoid direct and obsessive edification, and at the same time it is deep, diverse in topics. He touches upon very serious problems and simultaneously is ironic. Even a very short and seemingly frivolous Pushkin aphorism makes you think about it.

For example:

There is no hat that will not flatter

A *girl* who's only seventeen

This aphorism from the poem *Ruslan and Lyudmila* is slightly ironic, the author snickers at the innocent coquetry of a young girl, and at the same time touches upon the theme of the fleetingness of time. Seventeen is a wonderful age, but how quickly it passes, no one is ever given a chance to preserve the charm of youth, immediacy, and youthful beauty. Note that this aphorism is issued from the pen of a very, very young man.

Many years later, in the novel *Eugene Onegin*, A.S. Pushkin is ironic about virtue and vice in modern society.

Today a mental fog enwraps us,

each *moral* puts us in a doze,

even in novels, *vice* entraps us,
yes, even there its triumph grows.

A.S. Pushkin always rejected moralizing literature; he found instructions and edifying tone were really boring. He hastened to share this feeling with the readers.

In literary works by A.S. Pushkin, you can find poetic and prosaic aphorisms. The latter, most often, represent the sayings of the poet when he contemplates the fate of Russian literature and the Russian language. Aphorisms by A.S. Pushkin require a separate study.

The poets of Pushkin's circle also did not neglect the possibilities of the laconic and wise genre of aphorism. Introductory aphorisms are encountered in the poetry of P.A. Vyazemsky, A.A. Delvig, K.N. Batyushkov, E.A. Baratynsky, D.V. Davydov and others. The poetry of P.A. Vyazemsky is particularly aphoristic. His early work is imbued with freedom-loving motives, which is reflected in aphorisms.

Later P.A. Vyazemsky abandoned freedom-loving dreams and turned to quite real and even harsh reality. At this time, he began to advocate 'the poetry of thought' – a kind of philosophical poetry in which fools are condemned and ridiculed.

Fools make us laugh – and *laughter* is curative!

* * *

Mind is exhausted, and *stupidity* is powerful –

The more stupid they are, the more tenacious.

The corpus of aphorisms by P.A. Vyazemsky includes sayings about freedom, about time, about man, about mind, etc. He devotes subtle and ironic aphorisms to women.

A *beauty* needs men more than air –

The desire to please was inherent in her from birth;

It is her second life and a moral axis

On which all women's springs move.

A number of serious literary-critical works by P.A. Vyazemsky also contain aphorisms similar to the prosaic critical aphorisms by A.S. Pushkin. At the end of his life, P.A. Vyazemsky was interested in issues of faith, therefore, he wrote the poetic texts interspersed with the corresponding aphorisms.

The aphorisms of other poets of Pushkin's circle are diverse and at the same time similar in topics and range of problems to the aphorisms by A.S. Pushkin and P.A. Vyazemsky.

In terms of the history of aphorisms, it is necessary to note the famous comedy by A.S. Griboyedov *The Mischief of Being Clever*. It is known that A.S. Pushkin was struck by a special aphoristic style of the play and did not doubt that 'most of the poems will go into sayings.' Indeed, analyzing the text of the comedy, we encountered 70 aphorisms, with a total of 13,724 lexical units. Many aphorisms from *The Mischief of Being Clever* turned into catchphrases, having gone through several stages of phraseological contamination. Well-known aphorisms by A.S. Griboyedov are as follows:

It's not the *doing wrong*: it's what they say that matters

* * *

He's everywhere, the man that loves to crawl,

But *shame* can bridle now, and *ridicule* appal

* * *

But tell me, where to find the *man* who's clean, – and clever

The aphorisms and catchphrases from *The Mischief of Being Clever* have long been the subject of special lexicographic works (Mokienko et al., 2009).

In the 19th century, poetic aphorisms turned out to be very common, however, prosaic sayings also actively replenished the collection of Russian aphorisms. At the beginning of the century, these were, first of all, the prose aphorisms by A.S. Pushkin, N.V. Gogol, V.I. Dal. In the middle and early 60s of the 19th century, these were aphorisms of both writers and literary critics. The situation in Russian literature was such that it was criticism that determined the path of development of Russian literature.

Literary critical works by V.G. Belinsky had a huge impact on the development of the literary process in Russia. Aphorisms by V.G. Belinsky are scattered throughout his numerous works. The sayings by V.G. Belinsky are devoted not only to literature but also to the urgent problems of Russia, as well as to the 'eternal questions' inevitably faced by each generation. The creativity of V.G. Belinsky is aphoristic, numerous sayings on a wide variety of issues can be found in his works. Aphorisms by V.G. Belinsky are distinguished by consistency, his works show no aphoristic repetitions, no thematic contradictions, which, for example, inherent in works by K.N. Batyushkov. Aphorisms by V.G. Belinsky provide a completely accurate description of his literary-critical, political views and attitude to moral and ethical problems.

Here are some examples of aphorisms by V.G. Belinsky:

Of all the critics the greatest, the most brilliant, the most infallible one is the *time*.

* * *

To live means to feel and think, suffer and enjoy. Any other *life* is *death*.

* * *

Love is often mistaken when it sees something in a favorite object that is not there, but sometimes only love reveals in it beautiful or great, which is inaccessible to observation and mind.

Along with V.G. Belinsky's aphorisms, the aphorisms of his contemporaries N.G. Chernyshevsky, N.A. Dobrolyubov, and D.I. Pisarev are of interest. In their works and literary texts, there are also many aphorisms on a wide variety of topics. The views expressed by them are aphoristic, and often complement each other. These are primarily sayings about work, about freedom, about the Russian language, about Russian literature, about the meaning of life, and about love.

For example, sayings about labor:

Labor is the activity of the brain and muscles that make up the natural, internal need. (N.G. Chernyshevsky).

* * *

Labor constitutes the strongest and most reliable bond between the person who works and the society for whose benefit this labor is directed. (D.I. Pisarev).

* * *

If you have a degree of respect for *work* and the ability to evaluate work according to its true value, you can find out the degree of civilization of the people. (N.A. Dobrolyubov).

Or, sayings about love:

To love a person and not interfere with him in life, not to poison his existence with unwelcome cares and obsessive participation, this is a trick that few can do. (D.I. Pisarev).

* * *

The feeling of *love* can be truly good only with the inner harmony of those who love, and then it constitutes the beginning and the guarantee of that social well-being that is promised to us in the future development of mankind by the establishment of brotherhood and personal equality between people. (N.A. Dobrolyubov).

* * *

It is not only those who love to shout about their love who know how *to love*; in an intelligent person, feeling is expressed both in word and in deed, in others only in deed, and, perhaps, the stronger the more silently. (N.G. Chernyshevsky).

The middle and the end of the 19th century were marked primarily by efflorescence of introductory aphorisms in works by classics of the critical realistic direction, such as I.S. Turgenev, N.S. Leskov, M.E. Saltykov-Shchedrin, and F.M. Dostoevsky.

Since the middle of the 19th century, a variegated picture has been observed in Russian aphorisms; aphoristics is actively developing not only in works of art (as introductory), but also in literary and critical works, as well as in scientific works. It is well known that the historical works by V.O. Klyuchevsky are aphoristic.

V.O. Klyuchevsky was called a great master of the living word, a recognized political and academic wit, whose sayings, as a rule, full of irony, were picked up on the fly and spread first in Moscow, and then in other Russian cities and villages (as cited in Nechkina, 1968).

In addition, V.O. Klyuchevsky believed that in a concise, capacious form of aphorisms, one can perfectly express one's own philosophical views and worldview judgments. After his death, separate notebooks with numbered aphorisms were found in his archive, which the author himself arranged in a chronological order. Aphorisms by V.O. Klyuchevsky are original, they touch upon a wide variety of issues and go far beyond the boundaries of historical science as such.

For example:

A worthy person is not one who has no shortcomings, but one who has merit.

* * *

A good person is not one who knows how to do good, but one who does not know how to do evil.

* * *

Thought without morality is thoughtlessness, *morality* without thought is fanaticism.

* * *

Thought is light only when it is illuminated from inside with a good feeling.

Aphoristics, being an integral part of language and culture, reflects the value paradigm of the mentality of the people in synchronicity and diachrony. Russian aphorisms retain national identity, moral and ethical values of the people for centuries, and hand down cultural and historical memory from generation to generation. Aphorisms show not only the uniqueness, originality of Russian culture and mentality, but also the commonality of cultural codes and the universality of values, an example of which

are the key words-concepts fixed in Russian sayings: *love, Motherland, labour, happiness, man, kindness, friendship, time, mind, stupidity, truth, word, poetry*, etc.

Stepanov (2004) in the dictionary *Constants: Dictionary of Russian Culture* noted that these words-concepts are part of the national cultural code of the Russian world.

7. Conclusion

The aphorisms of the 19th century can be defined as classical both in terms of a wide range of topics and individual directions of aphoristic thought. It was in the 19th century that the first books of Russian aphorisms appeared. Humorous, ironic aphorisms and aphorism of deep generalizations and maxims developed as well. Aphorisms penetrate from the field of artistic thought into journalism, into scientific works, actively invade from the pages of newspapers, magazines and books into everyday speech. A large number of sayings become popular quotations.

Aphorisms represent rich Russian culture and the history of Russian social thought of the 19th century.

Classical aphorisms touch upon socio and political, moral and ethical, everyday, pedagogical, professional, and philosophical problems, thus reflecting the conceptual picture of the world and representing the cultural heritage of the Russian world, which is part of the world cultural heritage.

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