

At War with Prometheus: The Philosophy of Hyhorii Skovoroda

Matthew Raphael Johnson
Johnstown, PA

Prometheus is merely the Greek variant of Lucifer, himself the Hebrew variant of Set-an (Satan), the Egyptian demon of dark technology. Prometheus is a Titan, as in a “titan of industry.” He is the icon, the pattern for global rulership. In the Old Testament, he would be classed with the Nephilim, or the “Sons of God,” the rulers of this world.

Demons raped human women (Genesis 6:2) including Eve, so it is said, out of which came Cain. “The fall,” or the verb “to fall” in Hebrew can be stated as “*naphal*.” As a noun, it can be “the fall” or “the fallen ones.” The head of this infernal tribe is Azazel, made famous in the television show “Supernatural,” at least for Season 1. He is the creator of civilization. That is, the mentality that demands far more from the natural order than she will normally give. This is ritualized into magic, alchemy, deceit, writing (as in rhetoric), metal-work commerce and technology. As an example, it is he who taught women to wear cosmetics. Set in Egypt is the same. His Greek counterpart is Tryphon.

The Anunnaki are a tribe whose name comes from Anu, Enlil and Enki, termed the “Titans of earth and heaven.” Enki-marduk was the prototype of the antediluvian world. Eridu is the first recorded city showing early agricultural and civilization. They created the pyramids and colossal monuments to their self-absorption. These were built by “Titans of industry” and the excess they were able to gather around themselves led to all manner of irrational behavior. Civilization was built on the destruction of nomads, dissenters and those seen to be “unfit.” The Titans, symbolized by their size, were the embodiment of the “Will to Power.” This is also the Tree of Knowledge at its worst: the “backside;” the Tunnels of Tryphon, ritualized by male homosexuality on the “other side” of the Tree of Knowledge.

It was Raphael who was sent against Azazel. These Titans were subject to “unnatural lusts” (Jude 6-7) and, according to Isaiah, are not resurrected at the end times. It is from this “Atlantian” civilization that all “secret teachings” and later “arcane knowledge” proceed. Leviathan, Behemoth, and all the rest are based on the Titanic god-men. The Phoenician trading cities of Tyre and Carthage, finally reaching their terminus in New York and London, trace their origin to Prometheus the Titan. He is also the patron of deception (along with Hermes) since he sided with the gods in their war against the Titans. Similarly, Set is seen as a usurper and also the mixed offspring of the heavens and the earth. Set, like Lucifer, was bored with the order that had been created in the cosmos. Set is Lucifer, in the same sense that Set-an is. It is one and the same being that, in this case, refers to a person only dimly perceived by the ancient writers. The ancients did not see him as such, but Christian revelation taught that these are also personalities as well as natural (or unnatural) forces.

This essay deals with one of the most powerful philosophies set against the rule of Set/Prometheus, that of Hyhorii Skovoroda. Skovoroda synthesized Plato, Spinoza and Hegel

within a Christian framework. Like Nietzsche, he wrote in aphorisms and poems, rarely in direct expository prose. Ultimately his system is based on the constant interplay between Logos and appearance. Reality is hidden under appearance. Appearance is the shadow; the Beast. It is the nominal world symbolized by the snake. Words, when used in nominalist thought, point only to images rather than to Reality. Logos is reality. It is falsely described as “Sophia” by the trendy, but Logos is the Form of Forms, Christ himself as he is manifest in his creation. Logos is Truth, yet it is generative of appearances that the world considers truth. It is relatively false.¹

Matter and Appearance

The material world is not “eternal” but is the result of sin. This need not mean it is evil in itself, no differently than the results of sin in any other context are. Rather, eternity is form; the real is the Formal and the Archetypal. He writes, “The universe consists of two natures: one visible, the other invisible. The invisible is called God. This invisible nature or God penetrates and sustains all creation and is and will be present everywhere and at all times.”

Such lines are often misinterpreted. Pantheism is a word that gets thrown around with little thought. Neither Spinoza, Skovoroda or Kulish were Pantheists, since none claimed they were parts of God's body. The problem is that nominalism rules western thought to such an extent that realism cannot be conceived as a doctrine other than as a historical relic (and even that's usually butchered). Anything that suggests that essence or substance permeates matter is seen as bizarre, foreign and inexpressible, so the term “pantheist” gets used without much analysis.

Skovoroda is not read by Orthodox people. They usually have no specific reason for this, but the Russian church, in its Petrine guise, went out of their way to repress his memory. Philosophers do not read or study him. Literary critics, unless they specialize in Ukrainian work, do not read him. When Ukrainian specialists mention him, it is usually philosophically uninteresting, since they are dealing only with his influence rather than his ideas. His system, one of the most profound in European history, is totally unknown in the west.

He writes:

All three worlds consist of two natures in one, named matter and form. In Plato these forms are named idea, that is, presentations, appearances, images. These forms are the original worlds, the primal secret threads penetrating and sustaining matter or shadows. In the great and small worlds the material appearance indicates a form or an eternal image hidden under it.²

In all Orthodox theology, God is present in creation. He is not “up.” Logos is the lawfulness in creation, and no Christian theology worthy of the name can dispense with it. The western church eliminated Logos from its vocabulary during the Gothic era, and only rediscovered it when the east made its reappearance in the western world in the 19th century. The protestant sects hold that nature, by and large, is mere dead matter. They are the prophets for Gnostic industrialism and the recreation of nature in the image of capitalist elites.

“Matter” is actually nothing. It is not a substance in its own right, but only has the quality

¹ An excellent English text is: Marshall, Richard H., Thomas E. Bird. Hryhorij Savyč Skovoroda: An Anthology of Critical Articles. Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1994

² From, Zakydalsky, Taras. The Theory of Man in the Philosophy of Skovoroda. (MA Thesis, 1965)

of appearing, that is, antagonizing the senses. Since there can be no proof that the senses pick up what is actually there, or, even more, that our will does not manipulate what we see, “appearance” is “nonsense,” in the vocabulary of positivism. When one speaks of qualities or accidents, one speaks of matter in this sense.

“Matter” in this state, is a symbol of our fallenness. Our estrangement from Logos, “original sin,” means that appearances are more vivid than Logos, and, much of the time, appearance becomes all that is. It is reality inverted. Regimes realize this and use pictures and picture-thinking (with their requisite emotional attachments) to create a reality that exists only in the minds of their servants and consumers. If anything, matter, in this state, is only a symbolic doorway to reality. It provides a tiny and incomplete glimpse into Logos. It is a set of codes that must be grasped so that Logos can show itself, or be manifest.

Appearance is not itself evil, but is normally a disruptive force for the majority of humanity, the veritable “swarm of locusts in stretch pants” that only know their will and passionate drives. The mediocre are content to live and die in appearance, in untruth, in living death. Logos is the reality of things, their common origin, source and telos. It is, in a sense, a partial revelation of Truth, but only for those who can see it. It requires true belief, a rejection of the world and ascetic struggle.³

Man and the Heart

Man is the end and purpose of the natural world in the sense that his deification returns him to his proper place. Like any other created thing, man contains Logos, but the realization of that is impossible without grace. Logos is fleeting under the best of circumstances, and there is nothing easier than to let the flux of appearances flow over the soul, drowning it in meaninglessness. The natural world is a book of symbols, but so is man. Logos in man is found in the “heart.” In general terms, Skovoroda is the only Orthodox writer to build an entire theory around this important idea after St. Gregory Palamas.

The heart is the center of man both in the qualitative and quantitative sense. It contains the mark of the creator, though buried under millennia of genetic error, habit and passionate stimulation. The heart is the ultimate ontological principle since it synthesizes all manifestations of Logos in non-human nature, but recapitulates it in man. It is the very core of human existence and, for that very reason, ignored by the bulk of humanity, including its religious leaders. It sustains the entire human composite, and, if rightly understood and activated, the entire cosmos, since it is the temple of Christ himself. Concerning the heart, Skovoroda writes in his *Conversation among Five Travelers*:

What does it strive toward? It seeks its sweetness and peace but it does not find peace in standing still, or in being extended, like a dead body. This is alien and contrary to its living nature. Thought, like a traveler on the road, seeks its own likeness among the dead elements. Its thirst is not slaked, but rather intensified, by ignoble diversions. It moves the more rapidly from perishing material nature toward the supreme divine nature, the beginningless beginning or principle, which is akin to it, so that having been purified by its radiance and by the flame of its secret vision, it may free itself from its bodily earth and earthly body. And this is to enter into the peace of God, to purge

³ Boldyrev AI *The Problem of Man in Russian Philosophy of the XVIII Century*. Moscow University Press, 1986 (in Russian)

oneself of all corruption, to move in complete freedom and without obstruction, flying from the narrow limits of matter to the freedom of the spirit, as it is written: "Thou hast enlarged my steps under me . . . I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself." And David exclaims: "Oh that I had wings like a dove! For then would I fly away, and be at rest."⁴

This statement is as Orthodox as one can get. Sweetness and peace are the forms of Plato, synthesized in Logos as its generating principle (which Plato was unable to understand). When the heart seeks after appearances, its thirst for truth is never slaked, but only when it reaches Logos himself. Complete freedom can only be found in the immaterial, since the material world is determined. This is the philosopher's approach to theology.

The depths of the heart, as St. Augustine writes, are not fully known. It is the receptacle of the divine Energies always present in nature, but only able to be experienced under grace and ascetic practice. It is the ground of both reason and will, as Logos is the synthesis of both as well as its final telos. One has no precedence over the other. Fallen man will place one or the other as the dominant principle, but grace alone can show how both entities imply each other and, in fact, become one object. The heart can either lean to the world of appearance or to Logos. This is a matter of will. He writes in *Travelers*:

Receiving this secret glory of the dark kingdom from one another, men, led by a spirit infected with worldly appetites, wander from the glory of the Light Divine which leads to true happiness. They have not entered into the heart of the sweetest truth, and their sinful wandering, in the words of Jeremiah, "is written . . . with the point of a diamond: it is graven . . . upon the horns of your altars." Whatever they say or do follows from this, since this primordial script cannot be rubbed out, or cut away, or destroyed, unless a man tries with all his heart, as God says to Paul: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood. . . ." Gird up your loins, oh man, and arm yourself against your own wicked opinion. Why do you esteem the ways of the world? For you know that truth always resides and will reside in the few men enlightened by God; truth cannot accept the world. Bring before you the best painters and architects, and you will discover that truth in the plastic arts is not spread abroad, but that the crowd is marked by ignorance and lack of taste.⁵

Thought has one goal: to see the world of forms, synthesized in Logos, throughout all creation. Logos, in its various manifestations, is the blueprint of nature, its "plan." This, under grace, is the same as experiencing the divine energies of the Spirit, the full grace of Eden and the resurrection all in one. It is the recreation of creation according to grace rather than will.

Skovoroda's metaphysics is one of the more interesting in the history of Ukrainian philosophy. Like so many others, he is misunderstood by historians who either have no training in philosophy or theology. Occasionally, they are treated by literary critics that are illiterate of metaphysical concepts. He is mutilated by philosophers who have no training in history. This is part of the reason why Skovoroda remains unknown even in his home country of Ukraine.

⁴ Skovoroda, Hryhorii: *Tvory v Dvokh Tomakh* (Gregory Skovoroda's Works, Vol I and II, in Russian)

⁵ *ibid*

Chalcedon and Dualism

All that exists is in dual form. All is form (in Plato's sense), which generates the matter which appears. Form is Spirit, while at the same time being Energy. These are terms in the Orthodox lexicon, but not well known outside it. This is yet another reason why western historians fail miserably in dealing with such writers. Energy and grace are the same, it is the presence of Logos in nature. Logos is Christ in his divine nature, and contains the Forms within himself as divine archetypes that are imposed on the material world (which is also created and not sui generis). It might do translators some good to know these distinctions.⁶

“Spiritual” means “energetic” and is the manifestation and presence of the divine in the created world. This is not “pantheism,” since that would imply that the material world is God. It is not. It just means that the laws one observes in nature (as well as its manifest beauty and utility), exist because it is a partial manifestation of Logos. God is present in nature in the same way that nature herself is present in the human body. This does not imply that human nature is hence just another part of creation or identical to it.⁷

Three worlds exist, interpenetrating each other. This can be oversimplified, but is merely an understanding of three ways that an object can be experienced and perceived. The three are the world of nature, the world of man and the world of Scripture. Nature is the world of science; both metaphysics and natural. Scripture is the world of the church and its Symbols. It is not “the Bible” as many commentators suggest. His cultural milieu would have long taught him that there are no Scriptures without the church, and the church is the product of God's sacrifice on the Cross, but in more human terms, the writings of the church fathers and great ascetics. This is what is meant by “Scriptures.”

Man is the world of will, morality, culture and nationhood. Man is capable of both logical thought and deep contemplation. Thought can lead man into a vision of Logos. Man begins with the basic necessities and, though them, begins to ascend to what they have in common, what the purpose is in even worrying about life and sustenance.

All three worlds are dual in that they made up of matter and form. Matter, in its “rough,” obtuse form, exists only because of the fall of Adam. “Matter” is that which appears., that is, that which is available to the bodily senses. Spirit of Energy is that which is comprehended or experienced by the whole man, not merely the body or mind. Spirit alone is real. Matter is the realm of illusion, especially when it is taken as self-existing.

Spirit is Logos. It is the second Person of the Trinity as an aspect of created nature, its Formal aspect. Spirit is Logos, and Logos is identical with itself. Therefore, as matter is multiple, Spirit is unity. Matter in Creation can take on practically any form, but it also can conceal form and act as just a provocation of the passions.⁸

God, Logos, is the creator of appearances in that He is the Logos which generates them. He generates both the Form as well as their material hypostasis. This is the proper word because a hypostasis is not merely an appearance, but an appearance according to essence. This is part of natural law and hence is the indirect work of God. The traces of Energy and grace are in nature in that the logic – the substantial form – is discernible in each object and their many relations. Matter is what is denoted upon perceiving anything. One does not “perceive” substantial form, but only experiences it. Matter is a Symbol—in the true sense—of God's presence in things. Its

⁶ Klein, George. “Skovoroda's Metaphysics” Hryhorij Savyč Skovoroda: An Anthology of Critical Articles. Marshall, Richard H. and Thomas E. Bird, (eds). Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, pps 223-239, 1994

⁷ From, Zakydalsky, Taras. The Theory of Man in the Philosophy of Skovoroda. (MA Thesis, 1965);

⁸ Ciapalo, Roman T. The Neoplatonic Dimensions of Skovoroda's Aesthetic Theory. Neoplatonism and Western Aesthetics. Aphrodite Alexandrakis, Nicholas J. Moutafakis (eds). SUNY Press, pps 165-186, 2002

importance lies in appearing. Appearing is the communication of divine content to men. Matter is in the mind of God and is an aspect of his action. It is the lowest, however, of these aspects.

Form and Spirit can be distinguished not in essence, but in function. The Form is the formal, quantitative nature of the thing. Logos or Spirit is its vitality. These are not really distinct, but are separable in the same sense that nature's beauty is separable from the laws of its reproduction or generation.⁹

One of the most important things to recall is that the three words are not separate from one another. Like in Spinoza, they are separate only because humans are too alienated and sinful to see them for the unity they are. At least, the three worlds should be considered in constant communion with one another.

The knowledge of the physical world is not valuable in itself. This is because it has to, even in secular life, have a purpose that lies beyond itself that is not physical. What would be the purpose in understanding physical nature? It is to understand the spiritual unity of all things. This is implied in the fact that matter is law bound and follows universal and regular laws of movement. Therefore, movement and change are tied to the stable, legal structure of all objects in existence.

Empiricism is needed because man is sinful: we must start from the “bottom” of reality and work our way up. The physical, “material” appearance of things is only a first step, since only from there do we begin to put together its spiritual essence, its stable part in the created order. An angel, on the other hand, only grasps the physical object secondarily. Given that they are bodiless, they see the form first, then deduce the material appearance of it relative to man.

Epistemology as the Gateway to Ontology

Vladimir Ern writes in his book on Skovoroda that vocational life is the human version of the organic's place for each being. Nature is the expression of Logos in that each object has its form, that is, its function. In a similar way, the inner heart can generate vocation. Symbols are guides for the mind because man is fallen, and the sheer amount of labor it takes to extract the spiritual principle in each thing is prohibitively difficult for day to day living.¹⁰

When Skovoroda claims that all knowledge is based on faith, he does not mean “blind” faith, which is the default definition today in English. Faith is the attitude of the will, leaning towards appearance or essence. One's heart begins its development at this point. Happiness is the end of all knowledge or action. However, falsity leads to misery, as all thought is desire. Thought only exists because the will wants something. The highest desire is for Truth.

Objects never exist in and of themselves. They are all part of a greater system that essentially includes them all. They are more than their properties and their reality is more than words. The nominalist system holds that they only accidentally interact. The Realist view of Skovoroda holds that objects in the world imply one another in an ordered system. Nominalism is the worst conception of reality – it deals only with appearances. Nominalism is the raising of falsehood to a science. Rather, for each of the six days of creation, there is a corresponding Platonic form.

The desire for Truth is a specific desire that comes from our natural constitution, but can be satisfied only through the divine energies. The desire for Truth (as such, rather than utility as a cheap substitute) cannot be a “natural” desire in the fallen world, so grace is necessary. Outside

⁹ Ciapalo, Roman T. *The Neoplatonic Dimensions of Skovoroda's Aesthetic Theory*. *Neoplatonism and Western Aesthetics*. Aphrodite Alexandrakis, Nicholas J. Moutafakis (eds). SUNY Press, pps 165-186, 2002

¹⁰ Ern VF. *Gregory Skovoroda. His Life and Teachings*. Moscow: The Way 1912 (in Russian)

of grace, people see only what they want, or what those in power generate as “reality.” There is no clear connection between what is “out there” and what people think they see. The life of falsehood knows no stability even at that rudimentary level. To lean towards appearance and matter is to encapsulate oneself in the lie.

The conception of “faith” is an odd one. The triumph of nominalism in the west to the point of being an axiom of all thought has rendered an ultimately purpose in creation almost absurd. “faith” is identical to mere blind belief. Rather, faith is that which comes before reason. Reason contains not in itself any justification for its value. Reason is a tool that develops after faith, that connection between consciousness, other beings and creation that force ultimate questions to be asked. Blind faith is absurd: Christianity can be known through natural reason. However, man's sinful state prevents this from ever being clear.

Laws of nature have a purpose beyond themselves. They are symbols in the proper sense of the term. In English, “symbol” is almost synonymous with “without substance.” Not too long ago, this word has the very opposite definition. In Skovoroda's ontology, there are three logical elements to the symbol: The first is mere representation. This is not a symbol at all. The next step is the depiction of the essence of the object. Humans see attributes first, but or the object to be an object at all, it must have a purpose in the whole. This is its essence. Finally, the symbol is to discover and manifest the hidden meanings in objects.

Human reason can only be happy with Truth, at least because it does not change. Technology is a perversion of the natural order. It is twice removed from spirit, since it takes matter and creates a “new world” with it. It can only come with sacrifice and death. Materialism never satisfied. Men always want something above and beyond the material. Self-consciousness demands higher things. Things in accordance with its non-material nature. Self-consciousness proves the spiritual foundation of life and knowledge.¹¹

Self-consciousness contains, in itself the natural law. Being “born again” is to be “initiated” into the Spirit. Striving for the Truth, Logos, that remains unchanging. Striving for Logos requires asceticism. Suffering has the purpose of permitting us to see the evil in the material world. Forces the will to consider the Spirit.

None of this matters unless it is connected to his ethics, his “doctrine of man.” Like Spinoza, Skovoroda spends quite a long time on other issues so as to properly ground the ethics, the real purpose of his writing. Like everything else, of course, ethics is tightly bound to his view of the world. Will comes before all. The will can “lean” to appearance, or it can lean to reality, or Logos. His is a strongly existentialist and libertarian concept of freedom not shared by Spinoza, from which Skovoroda borrowed much. The disordered soul is projected onto the world.

Skovoroda stresses that freedom and unfreedom are both inherent in nature, as spirit and matter are equally so. The former is Logos, or the presence of God in nature, acting as its essence, its form and final end. On the other hand, matter exists. Matter is not free. It is not evil in itself, but is the source of all evil when the human will identifies with it. This is the very definition of a “passion.” A drive towards an object that is not controlled by reason. A passion can be the drive for domination or physical pleasure. Rationality, or that which is attached to the spirit, views objects as immaterial, as manifesting freedom rather than necessity.

The worldview presented here is about what derives from these two deductions of the “cogito,” both freedom and unfreedom. It implies that the human will is paramount – the intellect will interpret the world in accordance to its loves. Pleasure and control are passions, it leads to a

¹¹ Ciapalo, Roman T. *The Neoplatonic Dimensions of Skovoroda's Aesthetic Theory*. *Neoplatonism and Western Aesthetics*. Aphrodite Alexandrakis, Nicholas J. Moutafakis (eds). SUNY Press, pps 165-186, 2002

worldview based on cause and effect, the necessity of the materialists. Leaning towards freedom is that of the spirit, or the will that sees nature as reflecting Logos, or the eternal archetypes of being immersed in matter. Matter here does little than act as a symbol that brings the intellect deeper and deeper into what unites all appearance. The intellect then seeks to penetrate appearance to grasp the essence. This is truth.

Right and wrong here are based on the will. Matter, if taken as the ultimate principle of the world, leads to a life of passion without end. The passions of hunger or lust are never satisfied. These pleasures are mingled with pain since the adept of this lifestyle realizes that the satisfaction of one appetite leads to another. Truth is the spirit – the constant struggle to rip the appearances and masks off objects to see them in the light of eternity. Right and wrong then are integrated closely with ontology.¹²

The world of the Spirit is also, in Skovoroda's work, tightly connected with the concept of vocation. In fact, vocation is at the root of Skovoroda's thought and the main reason his work is so morally agreeable. The concept of a vocation is the “destiny” of the human heart. It is the purpose of the person in the broader society. The “heart” in Skovoroda is actually an ontological idea that integrates thought, reason and will within each person. Like everything else, it is dual – it can reflect the life of passionate attachments or the life of spiritual reason.

Intellect is never isolated from the body and its affections. The intellect and will are so tightly bound as to be indistinguishable. If every object in the natural order has its place in the whole, then the place of each human being too can be grasped. A vocation is the internal destiny of the person in society. It is a combination of aptitude, attitude and social situation where a specific discipline becomes appealing. Vocations can include law enforcement, scholarship, the clergy, public service, education, or medicine. It is a general discipline that can insert the citizen into society as a contributing member. Justice is then a society where each person has the freedom to understand and act upon the internal inclination to work in the discipline appropriate to him or her. The greatest evil is coercion – where labor is forced.

Even more than this, the entire purpose of nature is to guide man. It is a forest of symbols that constantly remind man of his destiny and purpose. Philosophy must constantly remain close to the world of actual living; actual decisions. In Skovoroda's case, it's about the heart, that which maintains the entire person as a unity.

Logos appears in the heart in a different manner than he appears in nature. For most, Logos appears in nature as a merely quantitative thing. An object that can be measured as a matter of living law. The heart contains Logos as a person – an individual who “pushes” one to “lean” to the right direction. For the most part, this is dismissed as a psychological aberration and the will becomes focused on more prosaic, practical concerns.¹³

Man is the “image and likeness” of God. The patristic consensus holds that this means, respectively, that free will and Logos are present in man in a unique way. Free will assumes and implies immateriality. Yet, that is insufficient to exhaust the Biblical idea. Logos must become present in a real way in the heart. This is a matter of struggle. It is not merely given.

The heart directs the composite, but it is not reducible to mere will. Will is only part of it. The “calling” is important. For Skovoroda, the heart contains a customized purpose for each man – a desire and ability for a specific vocation in the world. Following this calling is one of the most fundamental paths to happiness. God gives each man this path, though there is nothing

¹² Ciapalo, Roman T. *The Neoplatonic Dimensions of Skovoroda's Aesthetic Theory*. *Neoplatonism and Western Aesthetics*. Aphrodite Alexandrakis, Nicholas J. Moutafakis (eds). SUNY Press, pps 165-186, 2002

¹³ Fuhrmann J.T. *The First Russian Philosopher's Search for the Kingdom of God*. In: *Essays on Russian Intellectual History*. Ed: L.B. Blair. University of Texas Press, 1971

necessary about it. It can be ignored completely.

Skovoroda's Social Economics

In his poetry and dialogues, Skovoroda saw the Enlightenment as “the Beast” prophesied in Daniel and Revelations. It is only in Christ that the true purpose of living is preserved, since the fetishization of technics will destroy man's relationship with the natural world, of which he is a part. The machine is the Judaic “*tikkun olam*,” or the fixing of the earth. Since the Talmudist is God (or higher than God since God is the mere chaos of non-being), he (re)creates the planet in his image. The Enlightenment, in many significant respects, is precisely this Luceferian and Promethean doctrine in action. The “machine” was brought everywhere: the state, the army, the church, the man. All was seen as a large machine that can be tinkered with in order to make it work better.

“*Tikkun olam*” should never be confused with the idea of moral reform or the “fixing” of the world by grace. Grace and the demands of human power are opposites. Christ reconstituted Eden by his resurrection. Skovoroda cannot even be approached unless that central doctrine is understood. The grace of Eden is present on earth, only to be approached by humility, repentance and asceticism (in a broad sense). This is the purpose of philosophy. This approach to philosophy cannot be more opposed to the enlightenment and its Talmudic roots.

Above, the Kahal had begun to think in terms of the coming *mashiach*. That the *Olam Ha-Ba* was not too far off came from the immense wealth and power of the Jews connected to an ignorant and savage Polish elite. That the *mashiach* will be violent and a military leader of great skill and ferocity is a commonplace, but not universal among Jews. The *Olam-Ha Ba* is a strictly Jewish world. Their enemies are defeated, impoverished and reduced to utter dependence. In very deceptive wording, the argument has been made that there will be no force used to destroy the goyim, though this is probably because there is no spirit left to coerce. That the surviving goy will merely “know” the truth is just to say that only one option will be available to them. This is the route to peace, in fact, the only one.

That this view began to gain currency in the secret life of the Kahal structure in Poland shows the level of degradation the Polish oligarchy had forced upon the orthodox peasantry. That the uprisings of the Cossack forces did nothing to alter this view of both Poles and Jews might suggest a strange obsession or neurosis of some kind that kept simple information from being processed, but the general trajectory of the idea is easily seen. Khmelnytsky, the avenging angel, is the proper and just response to such delusions.

Christ's life was based on the rejection of such worldly delusions. You can not fix nature, since it is only grace that can fix the man. Nature is to be approached with humility, not with the implied superiority of the “*tikkun olam*.” In fact, it might even be the “foolishness” that is to confront the wise and powerful of the world. The Pharisees were arrogant, proud and self-absorbed. The “Law” was a mere means to worldly power and prestige. Christ's condemnation of this brood in the harshest of language should eliminate the popular concept of the long-haired hippie. Christ was harsh, difficult and unbending. Today, He would be in a mental institution. In the Roman world, that institution was the cross.

The Jews at the time of Christ looked to Shimeon ben Kosiba as their version of a deliverer. No one denies his violence, martial skill, or utter loathing of the goyim. That this is a prototype of the Jewish *mashiach* should cause alarm and suggest and even greater argument supporting the Cossack resistance to this evil. That the 613th Commandment is to “destroy the seed of Amalek” is the proof text here. The Orthodox (really, all the idolaters in the Jewish mind,

including Catholics but not Muslims) are this seed, and should be treated like any other enemy or idolater.

Since “antithesis” lies at the heart of the Baroque, Skovoroda loved playing with the concept of confrontation. The world was confronted by the fool. Christ confronted the Pharisees as the homeless, wandering prophet with a handful of followers, all of whom abandoned him at his arrest. Christ acted as a constant confrontation with the Regime: that unity of “private” and “public” capital for the sake of control and manipulation. The Regime is the same then as today: that eternal cooperation of Talmudic race-supremacy with pagan materialism. It knows no national bonds, rejects nationalism as such (except for its own) and holds to an ontology of nominalism: the state controls the isolated individuals in a Hobbesian sense. Individuals, of themselves, are powerless. Hence, the state has an interest in eliminating the (inconvenient) ties among people. Nations are the primary ones.

Freedom only exists in the realm of Substance. Reading the excommunicated Sephardim makes Skovoroda much easier to grasp. Spinoza's immense profundity has been deliberately misread to force him into an Enlightenment role. Yet, freedom alone can be found in Substance, not in the demands of the state, organized capital or currency. Substance confronts multiplicity, at least from the point of view of man. Spinoza has confounded many, but his message was disarmingly simple: freedom is unity; death is multiplicity.

Multiplicity derives from our expulsion from Eden. It is at the root of nominalism, a concept Spinoza vehemently opposed. Spinoza found Substance (God, but only in the most extremely formal description) to be the sole source of Truth, and more importantly, happiness and satisfaction. Unhappiness is in the realm of appearance. In Spinoza's term, the error of taking the finite modes as “real.” They are not. They are the nature of Substance in the “form” of appearance. Nevertheless, the truth of the finite mode is that it serves as a gateway to the underlying spirit that is All Things.¹⁴

Substance, no matter how one tries to manipulate it, is not a physical thing. It is the spiritual source of all that is later interpreted (by us) as physical. Appearance is a symbol of a deeper reality. In the Realist (that is, anti-nominalist) approach, a symbol is the very nature of appearance. Appearance is a gateway that gives some hints about what reality is. When symbols are taken for reality, error, multiplicity and nominalism develop. Skovoroda's inner heart alone can grasp the presence of Substance, for it alone is akin to it (as it is in itself, not in manifestation).¹⁵

Labor for Skovoroda was the link between the personal and the social. Vocation is essential to happiness: military, theology and farm life were the three categories of vocation. For the peasant life, the child sees the beauty of nature and family: this suggest a vocation. For the military, a desire to defend, to suffer for truth, a strong nature and tolerance for pain.

Social order is based on labor. A true vocation is never alienated labor. Even if exploitation is present, the vocation is sufficient to make the world one's own. This labor brings joy even if it is entirely unpaid. The key concept is that knowledge of the self is essential. Logos has its parallel in the human heart, which, at its inner, spiritual reaches, contains this knowledge. It is occasionally confusing when one reads that all “knowledge is self-knowledge.” It is not confusing at all: rather, it means that perception is never neutral. Perception comes in part from

¹⁴ Zakydalsky, Taras “Skovoroda's Moral Philosophy” Hryhorij Savyč Skovoroda: An Anthology of Critical Articles. Marshall, Richard H. and Thomas E. Bird, (eds). Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, pps 239-250. 1994

¹⁵ Boldyrev AI The Problem of Man in Russian Philosophy of the XVIII Century. Moscow University Press, 1986 (in Russian)

the projection of the self rather than an independently existing personal world.

The social is mediated by labor; that is, social life is based on work and hence, cooperation through different vocations and specialties. The nation is automatically involved because no cooperation is possible without a common language. The General Will is created through vocations working together. vocations merge with the general will. The guilds are the hypostasis of these vocations. Vladimir Ern argues that love connects the heart to Logos through labor. Scripture is Logos in written form.

“*Srodnosti*” (сродності) is the term used by Skovoroda to describe this state of non-alienation. It is to be found in the “inner heart” and is the presence of Logos in a formal sense – it is showing the position the person has in society. There is a human nature, but to individuate the species, each man his vocation. This vocation is not idiosyncratic, but is connected with the natural needs that all humans have in social life such as the martial arts or agriculture. In the macrocosm, different organisms have functions that serve the whole, the same in the microcosm.

In his poem “Twelfth Song,” Skovoroda lays out his general social ideal. The “Oak Grove” is the promised land. The Oak has long been seen as the “heavenly” tree, that which leads one to heaven. It is the “world tree” that connects heaven and earth. The alternative to the Oak Grove is a life where seeking power is the only activity. It begins:

I'll not go to the moneyed city. I'll live in the fields.
I'll pass through my life where time quietly moves on.
O oak grove! O green grove! O native mother of mine!
In you life is joyful, in you there is peace and quiet.

The city for Skovoroda is always evil. It is a place where men are cut off from the earth and are surrounded by the creations of alienated men. He continues, “ Tall as the sea is wide, glorious cities inveigh sorrows; [its] beautiful gates, so wide lead to bitter captivity.” This is a common thread in Ukrainian nationalist thought, that the city is foreign, concerned with money and most of all, lives from its parasitic relationship to the country. It is also factually true in Ukraine then and now.

Conclusions

Skovoroda's metaphysics exists so that justice can be understood fully. Justice is defined simply: it is the system of economics and social life where each man is doing that for which he was called. This is deceptively simple. This does not imply a placid and peaceful society – since the critic is called to help the society dissolve itself. It is a constant war against necessity. It is a war against the prosaic. The evil in society comes from bureaucracy (in the broad sense). The constant drive to make society into a machine—rather than an organism—seem to be a built-in destroy-mechanism in social life. The recreation of life into a machine is creating the world in the image of demons.

The will and heart are the image for God in man. The machine is the image of Satan. For Skovoroda, the fate worse than death is being made into a machine, which is done through forcing people into a bureaucratic mechanism. Labor is not just about producing things, but also about living out a vocation. Men would work even if they had everything. They work not just to create necessities, but they work so as to explore their vocation. The refusal to work is a sign of intense alienation, since the implication of man's inherent sociality is that man works. But work for a man and a bee are very different things.

When someone becomes a lawyer because it is prestigious or lucrative, then his is tantamount to forced labor. It reflects not the internal yearning of the soul or heart, but instead reflects the arbitrary bias of society. Alienation is the condition of this kind of coerced labor. This is the day to day application – following the desire of the heart is the means to health. Coercion leads to misery and neurosis. In our daily labor, we are either following our internal destiny, our vocation, or we are being coerced by the market, family demands or an unjust economic system. This is how the rarefied metaphysics of Skovoroda or Plato can be easily injected into our daily decisions. Careers and work that are imposed from the outside are the very essence of injustice and depression.

The best way to summarize Skovoroda simple is to say first, that man is at the center of the world, the man is the crown of all living things. Then, secondly, that all knowledge is self-knowledge. The ultimate goal is to find one's vocation in this way, found at the interior heart. Only here can happiness be found and therefore, social life should revolve around solving the problem of alienated labor.