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Olena YAKYMCHUK

PhD in Art, Associate Professor, Doctoral Student for the Department of History of Ukrainian Music and Musical Folklore studies, Ukrainian National Tchaikovsky Academy of Music, Horodetskyi Str., 1-3/11, Kyiv, Ukraine, 01001

ORCID: 0000-0002-2276-6061

Scopus-Author ID: 59394938300

Maryna STOLIAR

Doctor habilitatus in Philosophy, Professor, Head of Philosophy and Cultural Studies Department, T. H. Shevchenko National University "Chernihiv Colehium", Hetmana Polubotka Str., 53, Chernihiv, Ukraine, 14013

ORCID: 0000-0002-7643-3027

Scopus-Author ID: 57219143491

Olena KOLESNYK

Doctor habilitatus in Cultural Studies, Associate Professor, Professor of Philosophy and Cultural Studies Department, T. H. Shevchenko National University "Chernihiv Colehium", Hetmana Polubotka Str., 53, Chernihiv, Ukraine, 14013

ORCID: 0000-0002-0597-6489

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THE SPECIFICS OF UKRAINIAN NATIONAL MENTALITY

*The study of Ukrainian mentality has paramount philosophical, ideological and scientific significance. It is important for finding practical solvation of current geopolitical and cultural problems, and it has theoretical significance for humanities. **The purpose of the research** is to identify universal and specific features of Ukrainian mentality in historical, geopolitical, socio-psychological and cultural contexts. **Methodology.** The article uses an interdisciplinary, comparative, culturological approaches.*

Scientific novelty. *The authors propose to consider the peculiarities of the Ukrainian national mentality through the prism of a realistic and moderately nominalistic worldview philosophical paradigm. the Realist and the moderately Nominalist methodology do not contradict each other; and both can be used in studying Ukrainian mentality as a complex, multi-level, heterogeneous phenomenon, in which, along with monovalent dimensions, features of ambivalence and polyvalence are manifested.*

Conclusion. *Studies of Ukrainian mentality mostly occur within the philosophical paradigm, which the authors call Realist. It means conceptualising the common features of Ukrainians' mentality, inherent in the nation as a whole. Along with the said Realist approach, a form of Nominalist approach is developing, which emphasizes the specifics of the mentality of individual ethnic groups. Both approaches do not contradict each other, because Ukrainian mentality is a complex, multi-level, heterogeneous phenomenon.*

The mentality of Ukrainian people and its ethnic groups was formed in the natural-geographical, geopolitical, socio-psychological and cultural context. Each historical era formed its special features. In particular, cordocentrism is a feature of the Baroque era. In the era of Romanticism, the emotionality and subjectivism of the Ukrainian worldview were manifested. In the process of transmission from generation to generation, the mentality of Ukrainians undergoes changes, and therefore it requires both diachronic and synchronic analysis.

Key words: *mentality, Ukrainian mentality, Realism, Nominalism, ambivalence, cordocentrism, sensuality, emotionality.*

Олена ЯКИМЧУК

кандидатка мистецтвознавства, доцентка, докторантка кафедри історії української музики та музичної фольклористики, Національна музична академія України імені П.І. Чайковського, вул. Городецького, 1-3/11, м. Київ, Україна, 01001

ORCID: 0000-0002-2276-6061

Scopus-Author ID: 59394938300

Марина СТОЛЯР

доктор філософських наук, професор, завідувач кафедри філософії та культурології, Національний університет «Чернігівський колегіум» імені Т.Г. Шевченка, вул. Гетьмана Полуботка, 53, м. Чернігів, Україна, 14013

ORCID: 0000-0002-7643-3027

Scopus-Author ID: 57219143491

Олена Колесник

доктор культурології, доцент, професор кафедри філософії та культурології, Національний університет «Чернігівський колегіум» імені Т.Г.Шевченка, вул. Гетьмана Полуботка, 53, м. Чернігів, Україна, 14013

ORCID: 0000-0002-0597-6489

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ОСОБЛИВОСТІ УКРАЇНСЬКОЇ НАЦІОНАЛЬНОЇ МЕНТАЛЬНОСТІ

Дослідження української ментальності є актуальним завданням, яке має величезне світоглядно-філософське, ідеологічне та наукове значення в контексті як історичного буття народу, сучасних геополітичних і культурних проблем, так і з погляду логіки розвитку сучасної гуманітарної науки. **Мета статті** – виявити загальні та особливі риси української національної ментальності в контексті певних історичних, геополітичних, соціально-психологічних і культурних практик. **Методологія.** Досягнення мети передбачає використання міждисциплінарного, компаративного та культурологічного підходів. **Наукова новизна.** Автори розглядають особливості української ментальності крізь призму реалістичної, помірно номіналістичної світоглядно-філософської парадигми. Вони не суперечать одна одній у контексті дослідження українського менталітету, який постає як складний, багаторівневий, гетерогенний феномен, в якому поряд із моновалентними вимірами проявляються риси амбівалентності та полівалентності. **Висновки.** Автори дійшли висновку, що вивчення феномену української ментальності розвивається переважно в межах світоглядно-філософської парадигми, яку вони пропонують назвати реалістичною. Йдеться про відображення в понятті спільних рис ментальності українців, притаманних народу в цілому. Поряд з реалістичним підходом набуває розвитку помірний номіналістичний підхід, який акцентує увагу на специфічних рисах ментальності окремих етносів. Обидва підходи не суперечать один одному, адже українська ментальність постає як складний, багаторівневий, гетерогенний феномен, в якому поряд із моновалентними вимірами проявляються риси амбівалентності.

Автори підсумовують, що ментальність українського народу та окремих українських етносів формувалась у контексті певних природно-географічних, геополітичних, соціально-психологічних і культурних умов. Кожна історична доба формувала особливі риси ментальності українців. Зокрема, кордоцентризм є специфічною рисою української ментальності епохи бароко. У добу романтизму яскраво проявились емоційність, сентименталізм, суб'єктивізм українського світосприйняття. Попри певну усталеність, ментальність українців перебуває в постійному розвитку, передається від покоління до покоління, зазнає змін, тому потребує як діахронічного, так і синхронічного аналізу.

Ключові слова: українська ментальність, реалізм, номіналізм, амбівалентність, кордоцентризм, чуттєвість, емоційність.

Introduction. Complex socio-political and socio-cultural processes taking place in the modern world have led to an increase of interest among scientists in the topic of mentality as a muly-faceted,

dynamic phenomenon that has a huge impact on all spheres of individual and national life. The humanities of the 20th – early 21st ct. provide sufficiently wide-ranging and diverse material for studying

this phenomenon, which enables us to systematize and deepen the research of Ukrainian mentality. In particular, it is vital to develop a methodology and appropriate tools for studying mentality at the intersection of various humanitarian traditions.

Theoretical framework. The topic of Ukrainian mentality is fundamental in domestic humanities. A significant number of works are devoted to its essence and genesis. It can be seen in the works of Ukrainian philosophers, cultural scientists, historians, psychologists. The collective monograph by historians Ya. Kalakura, O. Rafalsky, and M. Yurii (Kalakura, Rafalsky, & Yurii, 2017) provides a theoretical and methodological basis for understanding the mentality of the Ukrainian people. The historical conditions for the formation of the Ukrainian mentality, are revealed in M. Yurii's (Yurii, 2008) monograph. Psychologist O. Strazhnyi in his study "Ukrainian Mentality: Illusions, Myths, Reality", answers the question, "Who is a Ukrainian? How does he differ from a European or a Russian?" (Strazhnyi, 2017). The German historian P. Dinzelbaher devoted his works to the study of the history of European mentality from antiquity to the present. He considers religiosity, sexuality, love, illness, age, death, phobias, communication, images of Self and the Other, the chronotope of culture, etc., as the main foundations of human thinking (Dinzelbaher, 1993).

Monographs of L. Dovha (Dovha, 1997), S. Krymskyi (Krymskyi, 2008), and L. Ushkalov (Ushkalov, 2019) are devoted to the analysis of the philosophical, cultural, and worldview characteristics of the Ukrainian mentality that took shape during the Baroque era.

These and other studies contributed to the emergence and development of interest in the phenomenon of Ukrainian mentality. O. Yakymchuk studies the peculiarities of national mentality in Ukrainian musical folklore (Yakymchuk, 2025). N. Averianova and T. Voropaieva (Averianova & Voropaieva, 2020), V. Kulyk (Kulyk, 2023) study the impact of war on Ukrainian national mentality.

Taking into consideration the studies in the fields of philosophy, history, cultural studies, ethnopsychology and social psychology, the authors define the **purpose of the article** as identifying general and specific features of Ukrainian national mentality in the context of certain historical, geopolitical, socio-psychological and cultural practices.

Results and discussion. Studying the problem of mentality in the context of the methodological achievements of the world scientific and philosophical thought, we find two main approaches, which we will designate as Realistic and Nominalistic. Here we agree with M. Loux, who expounds these terms not only as characterizing to the medieval philosophical discourse, but as universal methodological paradigms (Loux, 2021, p. 608). In this article, the terms "Realism" and "Realistic" are used in the philosophical, not aesthetical sense.

The *Realistic* position has two versions, which we designate as "National realism" and "Meta-realism". *National realism* is based on the fact that the mentality of a certain ethnos corresponds to the real specifics of its way of thinking, values, culture of feelings. *Meta-realism* analyzes mentality of a particular people in the context of general cultural universals (archetypes) inherent in all peoples and cultures.

Nominalism has a fundamentally different methodological vision of mentality. Within this paradigm, two positions are possible: 1) extreme and 2) moderate. The *extreme Nominalist position* recognizes only the mentality of an individual people. From this point of view, scientists do not need to know the "universal mentality" to interpret the "phenomena of attributive coincidence" of individual person's mentalities (Loux, 2021, p. 129). Today, this point of view is almost absent in publications on the topic.

However, we have several examples of *moderate Nominalism*, whose representatives propose to study the mentality of different sociums, ethnic /sub-ethnic groups of the nation, which in certain periods of history were included in different cultural contexts. From methodological point of view, it is important to remember that mentality is dynamic, able to change under the influence of other cultures and civilizations. Despite a certain stability, mentality is in constant development. It has a transitory nature; while being transmitted from generation to generation it undergoes changes, and in its turn, actively influences all spheres of life. Therefore, it requires both diachronic and synchronic analysis.

Studying Ukrainian mentality, the authors apply the concept of *ambivalence*, proposed by F. Nietzsche for the analysis of the culture of Ancient Greece. Since then it was applied

successfully to studying numerous cultures and civilizations.

We have already noted that in the context of the Realist approach: 1) the main features of the national mentality are explicated (a list of common features of thinking, feelings, values inherent in all representatives of the people is given), and /or 2) a certain leading feature of the mentality is highlighted, in particular the mentality of a certain era. Within this paradigm, the general, all-national factors of Ukrainian mentality were studied by such thinkers as M. Kostomarov, M. Maksymovych, D. Chyzhevskiy, P. Yurkevych. Their ideas continue to be interpreted by Ukrainian authors, including our contemporaries such as Ya. Kalakura, S. Krymskyi, L. Ushkalov, M. Yurii and others.

Most researchers highlight such features of Ukrainian mentality as love of freedom and individualism. In socio-psychological terms, these features are closely associated, and manifest themselves in desire to do only what a person considers to be necessary and unwillingness to obey authorities, whether it be another person or state structures. This trait was noticeably weakened in the mentality of Ukrainians during the totalitarian Soviet era when there was a strict weeding out of freedom-loving people. However, freedom-loving was activated again after the collapse of the USSR. At the same time, because of individualism, the striving for freedom acquired not a unidirectional, but a multi-vector character.

The philosopher S. Krymskyi considers the belief in moral and ethical value of the individual to be a prominent feature of Ukrainian mentality of the Baroque era. He connects this with the fact that in Ukraine lived free-spirited people such as Cossacks (Krymskyi, 2008).

The *Meta-realist* position is represented by works based on the Jungian methodology, which uses the category of “archetype” or similar methodological approaches that involve studying of semantics of universal, supra-national ways of being and thinking as they manifest themselves within the framework of a national culture. This approach is associated with the names of such scholars as D. Brown (Brown, 2004), G. Murdock (Murdock, 1965), and others. In Ukraine, the theory of the cultural universals is presented in the works of the founders of national philosophy and cultural studies such as L. Dovha (Dovha,

1997), S. Krymskyi (Krymskyi, 2008), M. Popovych (Popovych, 2006), L. Ushkalov (Ushkalov, 2019), as well as one of the authors of this article – O. Kolesnyk (Kolesnyk, 2013).

Analyzing Ukrainian philosophical and literary heritage of the Baroque era, L. Ushkalov comes to the conclusion that Ukrainian Baroque writers defined the highest value of human earthly life by the existential (archetype) of *freedom*, which is a characteristic feature of the Ukrainian mentality (Ushkalov, 2019, p. 317).

According to S. Krymskyi, the archetypal embodiment of a free personality in Ukrainian mentality was Cossack, the embodiment of the culture of “characters of high adventure”. In them the features of free individuality, personal conquest of the world gained virtuoso expression. In general, the desire for freedom was understood as a sign of dignity, a moral virtue, from which it is as impossible to evade as from the truth (Krymskyi, 2008, p. 315).

The Meta-realist paradigm of studying mentality includes the works of psychologist A. Furman, who defines mentality as a socio-psychological self-organization of representatives of a certain cultural tradition, characterized by the unity of their guidelines, experiences, thoughts, feelings and manifested in the identity of world-attitude and worldview (Furman, 2001).

In our opinion, among the leading Ukrainian researchers M. Popovych was the steadfast supporter of the Nominalist position. He believed that the study of mentality requires presentation of the cultural history of a people as the history of mentalities, the generalization of which makes it possible to clarify the way of thinking and behavior of this people at different historical stages (Popovych, 2006, p. 232). M. Stoliar and M. Bohun believe that M. Popovych was inclined to the Nominalist position not only as the first stage of studying a certain subject, for example, mentality or spirituality. In contrast to the leading philosophical tendency to study the “essence” of phenomena, M. Popovych proposed to identify “a whole spectrum of real phenomena, without knowledge of which the concept of essence remains abstract and <...> even unnecessary. This was a kind of cultural denial of essentialism” (Stoliar, & Bohun, 2023, p. 180–181). That is, the result of generalizing empirical material was not to be an *essential*, but a *spectral* understanding of the phenomenon as

such, which has a whole range of internal differences on a certain common ground.

Within the methodological framework of *moderate Nominalism*, whose representatives pay attention to the mentality of different groups, ethnicities/sub-ethnicities of the nation, in 2023, R. Holyk, Doctor of Historical Sciences, Senior Research Fellow at the I. Krypiakevych Institute of Ukrainian Studies of the NAS of Ukraine, gave an interview. He recalled that the prominent French historians Jacques Le Goff and Georges Duby, using the example of medieval mentality, studied not one, but different mentalities of “those who fight”, “those who work” and “those who pray” (from theological discussions of the Middle Ages we know well that the mentality of those who pray also had significantly different variants). R. Holyk claims, “None of the mentalities was holistic, and each of them, obviously, contained different elements” (Holyk, & Filonenko, 2023). Accordingly, the panorama of Ukrainian mentality is very diverse and, as such, practically unexplored.

From the point of view of the authors of this article, *both the Realist approach and the moderately Nominalist methodology do not contradict each other in the context of studying Ukrainian mentality as a complex and heterogeneous phenomenon*. In the history of Ukrainian nation there were periods and factors that for a certain time formed common characteristics of the mentality: Christianity; imperial ideology; totalitarian ideology and the unified economy of the Soviet era; processes of democratization of public opinion in the late 20th – early 21st centuries, the information revolution and the development of capitalism in the same period; the policy of Ukrainization of the early 21st century, the Russian-Ukrainian war and the emigration of Ukrainians from the East of the country to the Western regions, etc. There were also periods and circumstances that contributed to the formation and development of special ethnic/sub-ethnic mentalities when Ukraine was divided between different empires and cultures. We must also understand the differences in individual mentalities not only as a result of cultural division, which must be overcome, but as a phenomenon of internal cultural wealth, which in a democratic Ukraine should be considered the property of the entire nation and developed.

The analysis of Ukrainian mentality using the *ambivalent approach* was most successful when

applied to studying the mentality of the *Baroque era*.

Some authors see in Ukrainian mentality of the Baroque era features of *heterogeneity* and *polyvalence*. In particular, S. Krymskyi analyzes the Baroque not only as a certain artistic style, but also as a cultural era that combined Antique (mythological) and medieval symbolism, refracting them through the prism of the traditions of Kyivan Rus, the ideas of the Reformation, and the ideals of the national liberation struggle with its desire for freedom (Krymskyi, 2008).

The mentality of Ukrainian people and individual Ukrainian ethnic groups was formed in the context of various natural and geographical, geopolitical, socio-psychological and cultural conditions. The main natural factors of different regions of the country (more or less fertile land; a large number of rivers, lakes and arid areas; mild and dry climate, rich natural resources and their lack; lowlands and mountains) indicate the need to apply the category of ambivalence to the analysis of the peculiarities of the mentality of certain regions. For example, in the mountainous regions of Ukraine, the population had a significant fortification advantage over the conquerors: the nature itself protected people. This fostered attachment to a small homeland and did not encourage the search for “better lands”.

The next rise of the Ukrainian “volksgeist” occurs in the era of Romanticism. In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, for many European countries arose the problem of national identity which led to the national liberation movements. At that time, Ukraine was divided between two empires, so it experienced these processes especially dramatically. Thus, considering historical facts, we have every reason to study at least two mentalities of the era of Romanticism, turning to a moderately Nominalist paradigm. However, at the current stage our research remains within the framework of Realist approach. We will summarize the results of these studies.

The issue of national identity in the era of Romanticism has its own philosophical basis. Authoritative studies indicate that the basis of the Romantic worldview is the philosophy of Neoplatonism (Kashuba, 2008). This philosophy became consonant with the Romantic search for the ideal, attention to the inner spiritual world, religious and transcendent, flair for sensuality, vulnerability, sentimentality, subjectivism. Ye. Onatskyi

(Onatskyi, 1956) considers exactly these features to be the components of “Ukrainian soul”. Thus, the Romantic worldview corresponds to the features of Ukrainian mentality. In the era of Romanticism, they were vividly embodied in philosophical thought, literature, and art.

The sensuality of a person in the era of Romanticism is associated with the “personification of nature”, which originates in the pagan beliefs of proto-Ukrainians and is preserved in the ethnogenesis of our people, – believes M. Kashuba (Kashuba, 2008). The Romantics focused their attention on the emotional, sensual nature of a person, his/her inner spiritual life, unique identity, subjectivity, individuality. Sentimentalism and subjectivism of the Romantic worldview contributed to Ukrainians’ search of for their own identity, identification of feelings with nature, and the glorification of simple life of the peasantry.

Romantics recognize folk art as the highest artistic creation and example of a harmonious worldview. The result of increased attention to folklore was the publication of collections of folklore and historical materials and the stylization of authors’ own works as folk. Examples are “Zaporozhskaia starina” by I. Sreznevskyi (1833–1838), the collections of Ukrainian folk songs by M. Maksymovych (1827, 1834, 1849), O. Bodianskyi “About the Time of origin of the Slavic Writings” (1855), “Chronicle of the Eyewitness”, “History of the Rus”.

O. Bodianskyi, M. Maksymovych, M. Kostomarov laid the scientific and ideological foundations of Romanticism in literature: awareness of national tradition, study of folk art and history, formation of the concept of “national spirit”. They separated Ukraine from the Russian world and gave it an independent status. One of the most famous works of M. Kostomarov “Book of the Genesis of Ukrainian People” (1847) presents the ideology of the Cyril and Methodius Brotherhood (1845–1847) – a programmatic document written under the influence of A. Mickiewicz’s “Books of the Polish People and the Polish Pilgrimage” (1832). M. Kostomarov’s “Book of the Genesis” became “a manifesto of Ukrainian spiritual sovereignty, a call for democratic reforms, a sermon on the Ukrainian historical mission” (Bahan, 2011, p. 43).

Historians Ya. Kalakura, O. Rafalskyi, M. Yurii determine that all components of Ukrainian

mentality have undergone changes. The poet proposed a new view of the existence of Ukrainian people, based on faith in the future of Ukrainian nation, in the inexhaustible powers of people, their wisdom, freedom, and the awakening of dignity. In the work of T. Shevchenko, extroversion gradually replaces introversion, the idea of a collective “we” becomes a new model of Ukrainian self-consciousness (Kalakura, Rafalskyi, & Yurii, 2017).

The next category of Ukrainian mentality, which developed in the era of Romanticism, is the “philosophy of the heart”. It was analysed by P. Yurkevych, P. Kulish and D. Chyzhevskyi. T. Bovsunivska notes that the study of the category of “heart” in Ukrainian Romanticism began independently of Western phenomenology, thanks to the analysis of the “philosophy of the heart” in works by H. Skovoroda, and later by P. Yurkevych (Bovsunivska, 2019).

This concept reveals the specificity of Ukrainian mentality in contrast to the Western European one. In latter there is the pendulum-like dynamics, when the extremes of rationalism give way to the extremes of sensualism, and absolutist rationalism is supplanted by irrationalism, etc. The concept of “heart” in Skovoroda’s teaching is not a manifestation of feelings or reason alone. In this concept, the philosopher synthesizes reason and feelings under the guidance of a spiritual, religious principle, which is concentrated in the human heart. That is why Ukrainian mentality, in the eyes of the leading national thinker, avoided extremes and strove for a sense of proportion in combining rationalism and sensualism in the context of a religious worldview.

In P. Yurkevych’s philosophy, the symbol of “heart” also has a spiritual meaning. It denotes the sphere of a person’s spiritual state. D. Chyzhevskyi also uses the category of “heart” in his works. P. Kulish wrote about the “heart” as the highest national value, crucial for the existence of a people (Chyzhevskyi, 2005).

Thus, we can see that Ukrainian mentality of the Baroque era was studied using a more extensive system of methodological approaches, while the mentality of the Romantic era is still explicated mainly in the categories of the Realist paradigm.

Conclusions. The analysis of the features of Ukrainian national mentality allows us to conclude that studying of both the mentality of Ukrainian people as a whole and the features of the mentality of individual Ukrainian ethnic groups are

necessary. It is worth talking about both ambivalent features and the phenomenon of polyvalence. The mentality of Ukrainian people and individual Ukrainian ethnic groups was formed in the context of certain natural and geographical, geopolitical, socio-psychological and cultural conditions. The main natural factors were relative fertility of land, wet or dry climate, quantity and quality of natural resources.

In the geopolitical aspect, the formation of Ukrainian national mentality took place under the influence of the poles of tension between the West and the East, which affected the specifics of the religious mentality, everyday practices, customs, active or contemplative life position, and meaningful life values.

In the socio-psychological dimension, the trait of freedom-loving is associated with individualism, in particular, with the desire to do everything as an individual chooses and the unwillingness to obey another person or state structures. This trait noticeably weakened in the mentality of Ukrainians during the totalitarian Soviet era. Then there was a strict weeding out of freedom-loving people. However, independently-minded persons became

active again after the collapse of the USSR. At the same time, as a result of individualism, the struggle for freedom acquired a multi-vector character.

Each historical era had its own influence on the mentality of Ukrainians. For example, in the Baroque era, a person realized him- or herself as God's creation, part of the Universe. Heart-centeredness is a specific feature of the Ukrainian mentality, unlike the mind-centered Western European one. Heart-centered thinking (comparable with the emotional intellect) involves the synthesis of the rational and the sensual under the guidance of the heart as the spiritual center of a person. The "Philosophy of the Heart" by H. Skovoroda was further developed in the works of P. Yurkevych, P. Kulish, and D. Chyzhevskiy.

In the era of Romanticism, sensuality, emotionality, sentimentality, and subjectivism of human perception of the world were clearly manifested in both literary works and in national mentality. We see the prospect for further research in studying the peculiarities of the national mentality during the period of Ukraine's independence in relatively stable times (before 2014) and under conditions of Russian aggression (after 2014).

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