



**Hrihorii Skovoroda**  
(1722-1794)

**By Dmitro Yavornitsky**  
*From Ukrainian Antiquity,*  
Album, St.Petersburg, 1900

Hrihorii Skovoroda, a Ukrainian philosopher, scholar, poet and artist, was once quite popular in all the sections of Ukrainian society, from the lord with a Western European education to the semi-literate peasant. He was born in the village of Chornukha under the Kievan Viceregency, Lubny County, where he lived with his parents who, being of simple Cossack rank, were, understandably, of poor means and had simple conceptions. Skovoroda could have justly said about himself: “Of the poor was I born, poverty my bedding, poverty my blanket.” We do not know who, how, and to what degree influenced little Skovoroda’s passion for lofty aspirations and learning. It is only known that from his earliest years the boy demonstrated a passion that spread equally to music, singing and learning. He often visited the church, stood beside the cantors, and joined in their singing. At this time his passion for music led him to play the fife, which he eventually changed for a flute. His eagerness for learning was demonstrated also very early in life, when he frequently sat in a corner of his house for hours on end, learning something from a book by heart. It is unknown who taught him to read and write. Sometimes he left his home and went into the thickest part of a forest where he gave himself up to reflection, solving various mundane and abstract problems in his own way.

His particular bend for learning made his father send him to study at the Kiev Theological Academy .The boy revealed extraordinary abilities and, moreover, a pleasant voice, which soon took him from Kiev to St.Petersburg to the court choir of Empress Elizabeth. At that time the choir was composed mostly of singers from Ukraine.

Skovoroda was a chorister for about two or three years, after which he appeared in Kiev again. In 1744, Empress Elizabeth visited Kiev, and among her court retinue was Skovoroda. He was granted leave from the choir with the rank of court registrant, which was awarded to the ablest singers. In this rank, he enrolled in the Theological Academy to finish his education. Here he studied Hebrew, Greek, Latin, oratory, philosophy, metaphysics, natural history, and theology. Although diligently studying all these subjects, Skovoroda was far from the thought of devoting himself to priesthood. He wanted to continue his studies outside the Academy by all means. Chance helped him in this respect, when Major-General Vishnevsky was dispatched to Hungary from St.Petersburg with various plenary powers. The general needed a cleric who was familiar with church rubrics, singing, German and Latin. Skovoroda was referred to the general, and thus he traveled abroad with his patron.

Skovoroda stayed in Vienna, Ofen (Buda), Presburg, and several other cities in Austria-Hungary, where he met with and attended the lectures of famous philosophers and scholars. Upon returning home, he learned that his parents had passed away.

Then he bid farewell to his native parts and moved to the town of Pereiaslav, where the Bishop Nikodim Srebnitsky had invited him to teach poetics. In this capacity, Skovoroda compiled *A Manual on Poetics*, introducing into it innovations which the prelate did not like. This caused mutual displeasure. The prelate demanded that philology be taught the old way, while the teacher, disagreeing, countered with a Latin saying: "*Alia res sceptrum alia plectrum, i.e.,* a pastoral scepter is one thing, while a lyrical song is something different, after which he resigned from his duties as teacher of poetics and became a home tutor to the son of the famous Ukrainian landowner, Stepan Tomar.

At first, Skovoroda did not get along with Sire Tomar, who, distinguished for his arrogance, rarely spoke to the home tutor. After a showdown with Tomar, Skovoroda left his home and went first to Moscow and then to the Trinity St.Sergius Lavra. Love for his country made him return to Ukraine, while the advice of friends and the persistent requests of Sire Tomar induced the philosopher to return as home tutor to Tomar Jr.. From that time on, a more or less human relationship was established between Tomar Sr. and Skovoroda. Enchanted by the beauty of the mellow Ukrainian nature, Skovoroda was fired with inspiration and wrote his first poem, *While Walking the Earth, Turn to the Heavens*. When he read his poem to Sire Tomar, the latter said with feeling: "My friend, God has blessed you with a gift of the spirit and the word." The elation of Skovoroda's spirit as well as his poetic writings and contemplative moods caused him to see various visions in his dreams. When he was asleep, he saw in his dreams "czarist mansions, magnificent garments, music, dancing; there, the enamored sang, or looked into mirrors, or ran from chamber to chamber, took off their masks, or settled on luxurious beds. From the czarist mansions a force took me to the common people. As they walked down the street, holding glasses in their hands, they made noise, amused themselves, swayed, and carried on their love affairs..."

Along with the gift for poetry, Skovoroda also began to show the qualities of an ascetic: he took his meals only in the evening after sunset, ate only vegetables and dairy food, not taking in any meat or fish whatsoever. He slept only four hours a day, rose at daybreak, went to bed at midnight, and for all that, he was always merry, hale and hearty, agile, temperate, in good humor, talkative, drawing morals from everything and being deferential.

After finishing his tutorage of Tomar Jr., Skovoroda left Ukraine for some time and moved to Kursk Province. He settled in a picturesque village, Staritsa, Belgorod County, located on the River North Donets. The village was surrounded by primeval, thicketed forests. Here he gave himself up to profound reflection. He began to study his own soul, and wrote several works of a philosophical content.

From the village of Staritsa, Skovoroda moved to the city of Kharkiv, where he made the chance acquaintance of a young landowner, Kovalinsky, and soon became his mentor and lifelong friend. The young man, previously educated by semi-literate school rhetoricians and partly by monks, began to listen greedily to every word of his new teacher. Some people had told him that happiness consisted in prosperity, attires and idle merriment. Skovoroda said that happiness is achieved through limitation of desires, restraint of will, and diligent pursuance of one's duty. In addition, his words accorded with his life and his deeds. The pupil studied with him his favorite authors of antiquity - Plutarch, Philo, Cicero, Horace, Lucian, Clement, Origen, Dionysius, Dionysius the Areopagite, Nilus, and Maxim the Confessor - as well as the modern writers.

Skovoroda's distinctive lifestyle, diverse talents, impeachable honesty, and exceptional asceticism soon made him the most popular citizen of Kharkiv both with people of the higher as well as of the lower classes. Enjoying the best favor of the local governor, Skovoroda could

have secured for himself a reliable position of a civil servant, but he was far from such a pursuit: now he gave himself up with particular passion to song and music, playing alternately the violin, traverse flute, *bandura*, psaltery, and fife. In playing the fife, he achieved not only artistic skill, but also virtuosity. Retiring to the groves in the evenings, he listened intently to the singing of birds and then imitated it on such a simple musical instrument as the fife. Life became his inseparable companion; traveling from town to town, from village to village, he always sang along the way or, taking his favorite fife out from behind his sash, he would play on it his sad fantasies and symphonies.

In 1776, Skovoroda, on the recommendation of the local governor, was appointed teacher of “the rules of good behavior” at the Kharkiv College. As a guide for his students, he wrote *The Initial Door to Christian Manners for the Young Noblemen of Kharkiv Province*. This work produced a great impression, but while some were enraptured by it, others were moved to indignation. The latter mood mounted more after the first lecture of the teacher. “The entire world is sleeping!” he declared. “Besides, it is sleeping not as it is said in the adage: ‘Should it fall, it will not break.’ It sleeps heavily, prostrate, as if knocked down! And the preceptors not only do not rouse it, but stroke it besides, saying, ‘Sleep, do not be afraid, it’s a good place for sleeping... Why beware of anything?’...” Both his written work and the lecture aroused a tremendous commotion among the teachers and the school guardians. Skovoroda was relieved of his duties and retired of his own free will to the remote forest manor of the lords Zemborskis near Kharkiv.

Skovoroda was not grieved over the loss of his office in the least. While staying at the apiary of the Zemborskis’ manor, he wrote two philosophical treatises, *Narcissus, Know Thyself* and *The Book of Self-Knowledge*.

After leaving the Zemborskis’ estate and visiting several villages and cities (among them Kiev), Skovoroda, in the end, returned to Slobodian Ukraine, currently Kharkiv Province.

“At that time, Skovoroda was already 53 years old,” one of his biographers wrote, “but he was just a careless, old child as he had been before, the very same eccentric and admirer of solitude, the same thinker and rolling stone. From that time on, his life took the form of constant wayfaring for hundreds of *versts* and short rests at the homes of the few people whom he loved and who were proud of his visits. He wandered throughout Ukraine in utter poverty, from one house to another, teaching children by his example of virtuous life and sophisticated guidance. His clothes were a gray *svita* mantle, his food of the coarsest kind. Women held no attraction to him, he bore all sorts of unpleasantness with the greatest indifference. After living for some time at one home, where he always passed the night in the garden under a bush in summer or in a stable in winter, he would take his Bible, pocket his flute, and set out on his journey again until he came across something different. At any time of the year no one ever saw him otherwise than moving by foot; also, the slightest attempt to reward him distressed his soul.”

Wandering about with staff in hand and a bag behind his back, and preaching everywhere – be it in a field, in villages, in bee gardens, or at landlords’ manors – Skovoroda passed away on October 29, 1794, in the village of Ivanivka, Kharkiv Province, Bohodukhiv County, at the estate of his friend Kovalinsky.

Even before his death, Skovoroda had willed to be buried on a rise near a meadow and a barn, and asked that the following inscription be made on the cross: “*The world tried to catch me, but failed.*”

Candid, disinterested, kindly, the most honest of men, independent, sincere, a poet and artist at heart and in deed, a thinker and moralist, Hryhoriy Skovoroda lived more for others than for himself. He told people the truth to their eyes and died without the slightest regret for his errant life. Ukraine’s common people highly appreciated Skovoroda: to them he seemed to be not just an exceptional person, but a preacher whose words, songs, and the charming music

of his life soothed the wounded souls and the hearts of the weak, the miserable, the offended and wretched. To this day, the common people, especially the blind *bandura* players, know Skovoroda well for his psalms and songs which are sung at fairs, markets, in the streets of cities and villages. Of all these songs the most popular is the one about the “customs and laws”:



**Monument to Hryhoriy Skovoroda  
in Kiev**

*Each city has its customs and its laws,  
Each head its own innate intelligence,  
Each heart seeks loving for its own sweet cause,  
Each palate savors through its own fine sense.  
Within my mind reigns but a single thought  
That never will depart or come to naught.*

*Peter, to rise in rank haunts Caesars door,  
Fedko, the merchant, gives dishonest measure,  
One builds in styles that were not known before,  
And one makes usury a source of treasure.  
Within my mind reigns but a single thought  
That never will depart or come to naught.  
One man makes buying land an endless race,  
And one buys foreign bulls in avid quests,  
Some homes train hunting dogs to suit the chase,  
And some, like taverns, always swarm with guests.  
Within my mind reigns but a single thought  
That never will depart or come to naught.*

*The judge expounds the law as suits his quirk,  
The student's head is split with argument,  
The minds of some are racked by Venus' work,  
And every brain with foolish thoughts is rent.  
Within my mind a single thought intense  
Seeks how to live, and die, in innocence.*

*One weaves a panegyric full of lies,  
Physicians lay their corpses row on row,  
One would with portly bigwigs fraternize, –  
To lawsuits and to weddings he must go.  
Within my mind a single thought intense  
Seeks how to live, and die, in innocence.*

*O fearful Death! Thou Scythe that slits all life!  
Even the heads of kings thou sparest not,  
Alike to czar and peasant comes thy knife,  
Devouring all, like straw in blazes hot.  
Only that man her sharp steel need not fear  
Whose conscience, at his death, is crystal clear.*

But Skovoroda was not only a bard, nor simply an artist or poet. For Ukraine of those days, he was a combination of Pythagoras, Origen, Leibnitz, and, above all, Socrates at one and the same time. “Where is paradise in this world? Paradise is in heaven. Paradise is heaven, and heaven is God...sinner! And where is God then? Or do you also want to give Him your daring like to a king, to a caliph, or to a great Montezuma? God is everywhere, and everywhere

where there is God, there is paradise, and where there is no God, there is no paradise...Thus, there is paradise on earth, because God, too, is on earth. And where is He on earth? Where there is goodness. And where is goodness? The whole world, the entire universe is one single great goodness, because it was created by the all-gracious Creator. You will find it everywhere. Do not look for it beyond India, do not look for it on the Upper Nile, be neither a grandee nor a usurer, a giant nor a pygmy. Be a human! Love God, love Him with the same love that you love your fellow man, all the living, the dead and the unborn. They all are your brothers, your kin, your happiness, your hope, your prayer, your crown, love all and everyone and God, and you shall have paradise.”

The role and activity of Skovoroda are compared to those of Socrates: both Socrates and Skovoroda taught that the main condition for man’s knowledge and perfection must be self-knowledge. Both Socrates and Skovoroda did not limit themselves to place, time or age in teaching wisdom to anyone they met. Socrates regarded common sense as the source for explaining the nature of man, while Skovoroda exalted the revelation of heavenly reason. And here lies the difference between the teachings of Socrates and Skovoroda: “Socrates taught proceeding from the reason of man, while Skovoroda from the Holy Scriptures.”

Since Skovoroda was mainly a “conscious preacher of morality,” he can be justly called a philosopher-moralist. “He created from himself a lofty moral ideal and preached it to others, waging a struggle against materialism which was the plague of the society of his days. He understood the importance and significance of Western European civilization, but armed himself against the utilitarian direction of the human minds stifling the highest needs of the spirit. The answers to these highest needs he found in the Bible and in the classical philosophy of antiquity. His acquaintance with the philosophy of antiquity and the classical world helped him create a moral ideal common to all mankind, as he took his guidance above all from Socrates... Just like Socrates, Skovoroda made the maxim “Know thyself” the basis of his philosophy, and wrote a series of dialogues and discourses on this theme. In Plato and Aristotle he found profound speculative philosophy, in the Stoics he found the outlines of a moral ideal common to all mankind and the desire to realize it in life. He was especially attracted by the Roman Stoics... But the completion of the lofty moral ideal he saw in Christianity.”

The role of Skovorda-the-peacher did not pass in vain. He left a deep mark on the history of education in ... what was called Slobodian Ukraine. Containing within himself an entire academy of sciences, traveling through hamlets, villages and cities, where he visited the homes of landowners, well-to-do burghers, and highly placed clerics, he roused in them a spirit of inquisitiveness and instilled in society humanistic ideals. Skovoroda laid the groundwork for the subsequent collection of 618,000 rubles in Slobodian Ukraine for the foundation of a university in Kharkiv. Due to his preaching, landowners alleviated the lot of the serfs in many parts of Ukraine. Besides, Skovoroda influence had a beneficial effect on some people who took up writing. Thus, Kovalinsky, one of the pupils of the Ukrainian Socrates, wrote a brief, yet extremely interesting “life” of Skovoroda which was included in a large book published in Kharkiv in 1894 under the title *The Writings of Hrihoriy Savvich Skovoroda*.

**Translated (slightly revised) by Anatole Bilenko**

*Ukraine* illustrated quarterly No. 2, 1992

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\* Song X and following verse  
are from Skovoroda’s *The Garden of Divine Songs*  
quoted from *THE UKRAINIAN POETS*, 1189-1962  
Selected and translated into English Verse by  
C.H.Andrusyshen and Watson Kirkconnel  
University of Toronto Press, 1963

# SKOVORODA: GARDEN OF DIVINE SONGS

## SONG XIII

Ah, grainfields soft in vernal greens  
And meadows pied with flowers rare!  
Ye valleys and ye deep ravines,  
Ye vaulted mounds and hillocks bare!

Ye streams of water running clear!  
Ye grassy banks that softly lie!  
Ye leafy branches rising sheer  
From forests underneath the sky!

Above the fields the lark will sing,  
In orchards chants the nightingale;  
The one flies warbling on the wing,  
One mid the branches tells her tale.  
When daylight dawns, the birds confer;  
All feathery sprites are full of songs;  
The air with music is astir,  
And every copse the notes prolongs.

And when the sun begins to rise  
The shepherd takes his sheep to graze;  
A trembling trill in ancient wise  
Upon his pipe of reeds he plays.

Begone, all travail of the head,  
And teeming cities, loud and hot!  
With but a humble crust of bread  
I'll gladly die in such a spot.

## SONG XVIII

Beware, O yellow-breasted bird,  
Build not your nest too high aloft!  
Let grassy meadows be preferred  
And pastures where the sward is soft.  
Look, where a hawk above you hovers!  
Eager to clutch, he closer draws!  
He in your blood his food discovers,  
And sharpens for your flesh his claws!

The maple stands upon the hill  
And nods its lofty forehead still,  
But tempests come, with loud alarms,  
And break the mighty maple's arms.  
While far below, the willows shake,  
Lulling me into gentle slumber;  
A nearby streamlet threads the brake,  
So clear, its pebbles you may number.

My mother bore me in a village –  
Why should that thought my comfort pillage?  
Let those their origins despise  
Who seek above their rank to rise!  
So shall I in calm peacefulness  
Live out by life's delightful span,  
So shall I shun all dark distress,  
Down through the years a happy man.



**Monument to Hrihoriy Skovoroda  
in Pereyaslav-Khmelnitsky,  
Kiev Region**

# HRIHORIY SKOVORODA OUTSTANDING UKRAINIAN PHILOSOPHER AND POET OF THE 18th CENTURY

Hrihoriy Skovoroda, outstanding philosopher, poet and enlightener, was one of the most brilliant personalities in 18th-century Ukraine. His philosophic and literary works are closely linked with the epoch of European Enlightenment. Like his contemporaries Schiller, Goethe, Rousseau, Voltaire and Lomonosov he tried to provide the answers to the most burning social questions agitating Europe's public mind of that time: in what way and how should society develop? what was necessary to make it reasonable and just? what should be the moral and esthetic ideal of man? what were man's most suitable qualities assisting him in his natural development, in his eternal and intrinsically irresistible urge for the expedient and the beautiful?

After a lengthy period of the Counter-Reformation, a new social upheaval ripened, culminating in the French Revolution. These events were a powerful factor in freeing man from medieval fetters. The attempts to find a solution to the above-mentioned questions under these circumstances was a rather notable feature in the ideological quests of the great humanists of that time.

At the age of 16 Skovoroda, the son of a landowner Cossack, entered the Mohila Academy in Kiev, which was then the only higher educational establishment in Ukraine. The Academy also enrolled students from Rumania, Moldavia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece, and the countries of the Middle East. Skovoroda studied at the Academy from 1738 to 1741, and then from 1744 to 1750. He received a sound education in the humanities — classical and modern European languages, antique philosophy, literature, history, and the modern philosophic system of Descartes, Leibniz, Voltaire and other thinkers. As a member of an ambassadorial mission he traveled abroad (Hungary, Bohemia and Poland), and upon his return lectured in poetics at the Pereyaslav seminary. From 1759 to 1764 and in 1768 he was lecturer in poetics and Greek language at the Kharkiv Collegium, from which he was expelled for his freethinking. During the twenty-five following years Skovoroda roamed through Ukraine, disseminating his ideas among the common people and the liberal petty gentry.

From the outset of his creativity Skovoroda was famous as a poet and fable writer. His main philosophic treatises appeared in the 1770s and 1780 and were circulated in manuscript copies. Some of them he wrote in Latin. Many of his maxims and aphorisms were recorded by his contemporaries and disciples, or passed by word of mouth. A number of his verses became folk songs.

Skovoroda's *Weltanschauung* was shaped under the influence of the ideas of the European enlighteners, his study of the Scriptures, antique philosophy, and Ukrainian folklore. All this left an imprint on his philosophic views and in many ways determined their contradictory nature.

On the whole Skovoroda advocated pantheism. He thought God to exist as a "spiritual source" of things, as a primary cause of everything living. Skovoroda rejected the literal understanding of the biblical miracles, since this contradicted the natural regularity of everything living in the world. He developed a theory of "three worlds":

the macrocosm (consisting of a multitude of small worlds), the microcosm (the world of man), and the symbolic world (the Bible). Each of these he considered as comprising "two natures" — the visible and the invisible. The visible nature is only a shadow of the eternal "tree of life," its perishable shell, while the invisible nature represents the spirit, i. e. the vital foundation of the changing material world which is eternal and infinite, as eternal and infinite as the spirit itself.

The symbolic world (the Bible), which functions as a link between the invisible and visible natures, occupied an important place in Skovoroda's philosophic system. Under the influence of the teaching of Clement of Alexandria and Origen, Skovoroda tried to disclose the symbolic meaning of many biblical parables and principles. In line with the quests of the rationalists and enlighteners of his time, the Ukrainian thinker extolled the might of human wisdom and spoke on the role of natural sciences, particularly the teaching of Bruno and Copernicus, in the cognition of the world.

But the main core of Skovoroda's world outlook was the concept of man and the idea of the harmonious development of the individual.

The famous thesis of French 18th-century materialism, that man cannot be happy if his activity contradicts his personal natural development and the nature of man generally (this thesis was more profoundly expounded in Rousseau's *Emile ou De l'éducation*) was a composite part of the Enlightenment. On the whole Skovoroda shared this thesis. Besides, the socio-economic conditions in Western Europe and Russia (serfdom, the dominance of a religious ideology, persecution of freethinking, violation of elementary human rights) were in many respects similar and virtually harbored the same "combustive material."

It should be noted, however, that the weak point of the above-mentioned thesis was the abstract view on man and almost complete lack of class and social analysis of the existent social relations. This question attracted close consideration only after half a century by the French historians of the Restoration — Mignet and Guizot. That is why the solution of the problems of man's free development, without the consideration of his socio-economic relations, proved in the end to be theoretically deficient and hardly differed from all sorts of Utopian and egalitarian theories.

The enlighteners of the 18th century maintained that man is not free because his life is regulated by corresponding political and legislative norms and institutions. Skovoroda shared this view, yet he did not profess the thesis of "back to nature." He also did not accept the principle of the early Enlightenment when man was considered an essentially lonely and isolated individual.

Casting his "lot with the destitute," the Ukrainian thinker acted counted to the notorious "Robinsons" of the 18th century. Save perhaps Rousseau, the majority of outstanding thinkers and writers of that time viewed the common people as an inert and passive phenomenon which in many ways defied their idols and therefore needed wise rulers of their destiny. It was Marx

and Engels who were the first to speak scientifically on the "healthy vandalism" of the people who were the basis of material production and a motive force of historical progress. But the time these conclusions were made was yet to come. What concerns Skovoroda, he sought in the people a support for his ideas, striving to plant in their midst morally pure and noble conceptions.

The thinker was perfectly aware of the intellectual poverty and the moral narrowmindedness of the ruling feudal class. He saw that their basically antihumanitarian culture, moral, and "truths" impeded the development of man and his natural faculties. Even though in an abstract way, Skovoroda posed the vital question of man's existence: how and where to live in this unjust world of slavery? Not in the manor house, he answered, not in the monastery cell, and not in the "rich burg" governed by vanity, egoism and lust.

According to Skovoroda's philosophy, man, both in his being (epistemologically) and in his attitude to the world (gnoseologically), constitutes a part of nature, its "microcosm." Notwithstanding man's "divine" nature, this nature does not remain unchangeable. Skovoroda held that kindness, wisdom, love, and, consequently, happiness do not exist ready-made, but become shaped in the process of life and, mainly, through work. Wisdom is not an innate quality, but rather a life experience illuminating the paths of man. To this effect he wrote: "We are born without it (i. e. wisdom — Ed.), yet for it."

Skovoroda sounded quite modern when he tried to substantiate the principle of unity between nature and man as a life of work by vocation, in which is personalized "the large in the small." "I believe and I know," he wrote, "that everything existing in the large world exists in the small, and what is possible in the small world is also possible in the large."

Analogous to Socrates' method, in which a thesis is opposed to an antithesis, Skovoroda saw in everything a polarity of phenomena, an opposite unity ("the world dies and does not die," "lie in a truth," "light in darkness," etc.) which essentially determines man's attitude toward himself. That is why Socrates' famous formula "know thyself" sounds in Skovoroda's philosophy as a manifestation of spiritual freedom: "The perishable idol is restricted, confined by occlusion. A spiritual man, though, is free. In height, in depth, in breadth he lies boundlessly. Neither mountains nor rivers, neither seas nor deserts obstruct his path. He projects the remote, probes the concealed, looks back to the past, and penetrates the future."

Skovoroda considered that the main thing in man's life is the principle of *Scio te ipsum* which is realized through activity by vocation. Man's innate aptitude for this or that type of activity, he thought, helps him most of all to develop himself and his individual qualities, provided he engages in an activity he likes. However, this is impossible without work. In his philosophic treatise *Grammar of the Universe*, he wrote: "Work is a live and indefatigable motion of a machine which functions till it results in a thing that weaves for its creator a wreath of joy. In other words, nature

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By Prof. Olexandr Lysenko, Ph.D.

inspires to activity and fortifies in work, making work sweet."

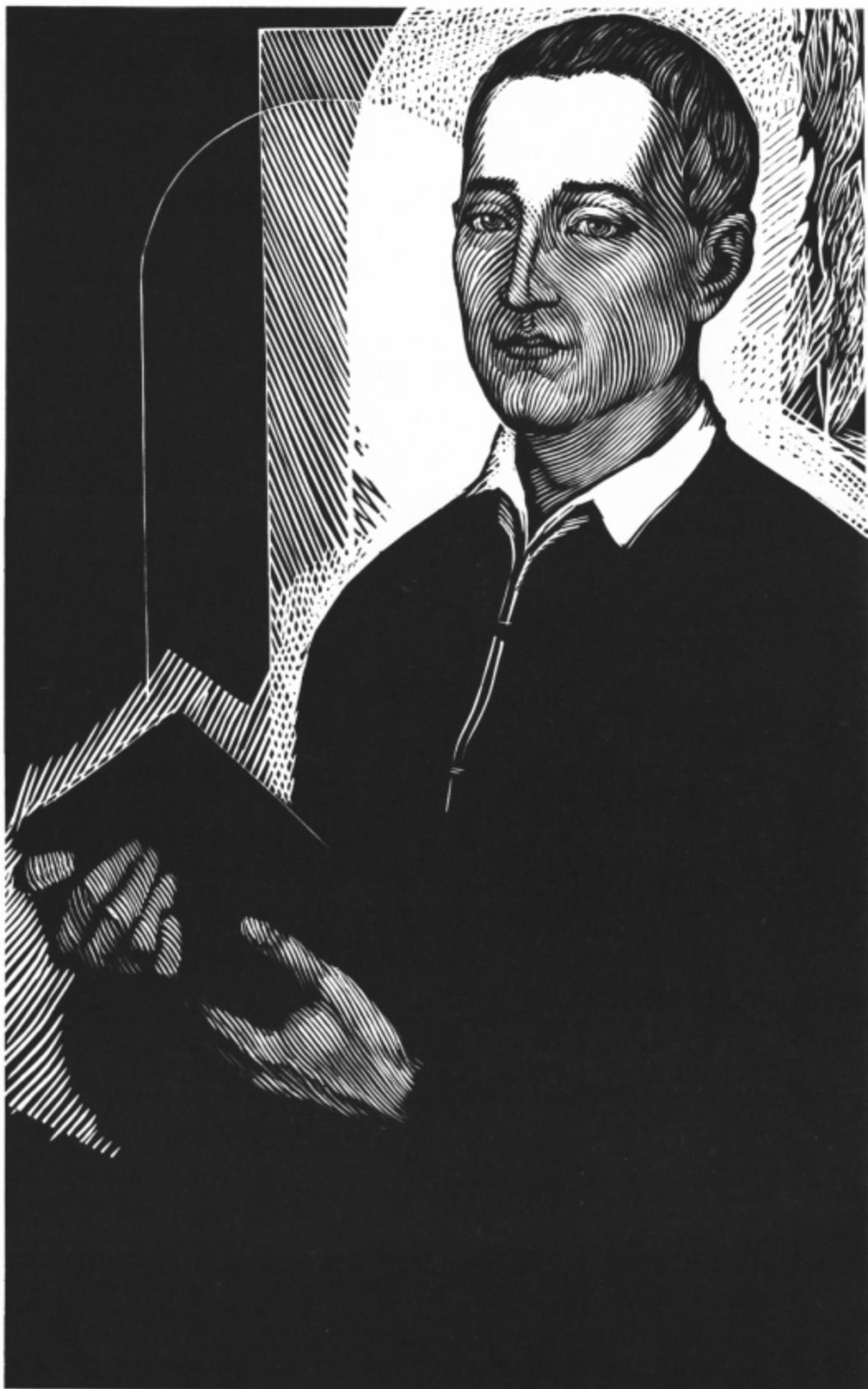
Nonetheless, the socio-ethical ideal of man in Skovoroda's philosophy was historically limited. His idea that honesty, peace, charity, friendship and work must be the basis of society's development remained an Utopia. His good intentions of somehow improving society through moral perfection of the individual could not, of course, lead to positive results. Yet there is one point in Skovoroda's Utopism which must not be underrated: his passionate preaching of the ideas of individual freedom, work by vocation, and the happiness of apprehending the world were not addressed to the powers-that-be, but to the lower classes of society.

Scholarly writings on Skovoroda note the relation between the views of the Ukrainian thinker with those of Epicurus. Skovoroda's epureanism and his reference to the famous Greek philosopher in substantiating the concept of happiness as spiritual tranquility (*ataraxia*) had a positive meaning. But there is a certain difference in the views on happiness, which the two thinkers advocated. Skovoroda held that man's aspiration for a sensible joy in life and, thereby, for his dream for mental equilibrium must "through industriousness be asserted." Epicurus, however, did not relate the problem of happiness to the role of work in the life of man and society as a whole.

Skovoroda's personal life and his distinctive and figurative writings had a great influence on his contemporaries and on the generations to come. His works engendered a new Ukrainian literature and a new philosophic tradition in which the sense of man's being was viewed from the standpoint of his spiritual freedom.

But the dreams of the outstanding Ukrainian philosopher could not be realized during his lifetime. The attempts of the other representatives of the European Enlightenment in solving the problems of man were also doomed to failure. Their noble intentions, their appeals to the upper strata of society, and some timid practical efforts of implementing the principle of "equal freedom" and activity by vocation in the midst of the people were easily paralyzed by the rather stable system of feudal social relations. That is why Skovoroda found himself in a spiritual impasse during his late years.

Today Skovoroda's works and ideals are as relevant as ever. His name of a philosopher, poet and humanist, who opposed the existent law and order of his day by his own concepts of virtue and justice, has not been forgotten. In our turbulent and restless age of intensifying social antagonisms, when man is under the danger of becoming a blind and obedient instrument of a "technocratic society," the wise and profoundly humanistic philosophy of Skovoroda seems to warn the new generations of the possible tragic consequences mankind will bear if it buries in oblivion the elementary moral norms of human community which have been developed throughout many centuries. His philosophy brings home a firm belief in the inevitability of virtue's victory over vice.



HRIHORIY SKOVORODA

Linocut by V. Chebanik