
LITERARY CULTURE

ITS TYPES AND LESSONS

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Abstract

This paper, continuing and systematizing the earlier results, deals with the central theoretical aspects of the concept of literary culture. The first section discusses this phenomenon in the context of relevance to the modern History of science such questions as ‘intersecting streams of information’, strategies of culture, globalization, the dynamics of the so-called ‘meta-add-ins’ and patterns of transitivity states and periods. In the second part the paper focuses on the overall unity of the levels of literary culture, their functions and mechanisms of interaction with civilization. In this respect, our central perspective conclusion is connected with the hypothesis of gradual ‘ascent’ from sociological understanding of literary culture to philosophical (accumulating memory and information) and further, to ethical and axiological ones having a direct outcome onto an educational institution.

Keywords: literary culture, sociological function, mnemonic function, axiological approach

1. Introduction

In different periods of the history of civilization, the interaction of different components of human culture went on differently. At the same time, one way or another, there has always remained the undisputed unity of the three main levels of these processes: economic, political and spiritual [1]. The third of these levels was not only constantly based on the previous two, but also had its independent effect on them at the same time holding dominance over them.

In science, already up to the first decades of the 20th century, the explanation of these laws had led to the recognition of the crucial role of the phenomenon of the so-called ‘intersecting streams of information’. These information ‘streams’ act both individually and collectively, either on an antonymous basis or on the basis of subordination, or they have an equal dialogue. Out of philosophies, inheriting the tradition of the Eastern world view, the concept of Kitaro Nishida is a good illustration in this regard [2].

In the Russian scientific tradition the concept of a correlation between ‘capital’ (‘central’) and ‘provincial’ (‘peripheral’) aspects of culture have been

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and are developing in a parallel line [3, 4]. By the beginning of the 21st century the notions of culture strategies in the context of globalization have been evolving very intensely and fruitfully [5]. Such approach gives to the scientists an opportunity to talk about the phenomenon of the so-called ‘meta-add-ins’ in the cultural system.

A different vision of the problem of spiritual and cultural components’ dynamics is represented by the scientific hypotheses of transition as a strategy of culture. The well-known researcher R. Lachmann, writing about the cyclical development of culture, links the phenomenon of ‘transition/transitivity’ to the stage of changing cycles and the general laws of mnemonic processes in culture, which will be discussed further on [6].

The processes of globalization provide transitivity with new features. More confident are the scholars in humanities’ hypotheses of the origin and subsequent modifications of ‘pre-systems’ in culture in which certain artistic principles find their reflection though not yet in full capacity, but in the form of certain ‘trends’.

It is this phenomenon that most fully incorporates the defining patterns of transitivity states and periods. V.A. Lukov, a prominent Russian explorer of world literature and culture, offers in this regard the following classification of trends in culture, which are grouped ‘around’ the core of ‘pre-systems’:

- a) retrospective trends (related to the art systems either of the past or those that are declining);
- b) long-term trends (where everything is preconditioned by the phenomena that will develop in future);
- c) ‘pulsatory’ trends (growing or decaying, depending on the logic of the transitional stage at which they are) [7].

The multi-level phenomenon of literary culture is in the midst of all these briefly outlined processes and trends. We have already given an analysis of several specific concepts interacting in the literary culture on the example of the situation in the 18th century Russia [8]. The aim of this paper is to survey some theoretical results of our reflections.

2. Method

For the study of literary culture, synthesis and analysis of the data, it is necessary to use a whole set of scientific research methods. Firstly, the function of comparative methods is the most prominent. For this, using the comparative method the phenomenon of literary culture can and should be viewed in the context of other factors of civilization. One of the leading ones is the social structure of society and the adopted totality of traditions, canons and rules. This, in turn, preconditions the first function of literary culture itself, which will get a wider coverage below. Comparative-typological method focuses on creating a theoretical paradigm of the analysis. Employing it, we include into the study theories related in Science to the concepts of literary culture (for example, the hypothesis of ‘intersecting streams of information’ and several others). Along

with the methods of comparative analysis, it is essential for us to use the data of the genetic method. The main objective of this method is to consider the phenomenon in historical and evolutionary perspective, which means to identify and analyse the basic laws of its origin, development, current state and prospects. One of the main methods in the methodology of humanities is the historical and functional one which is widely used in the study. This method focuses on the study of the dynamics of socio-cultural life reaction at one or another process that occurred/is happening/will happen in culture.

Finally, a systematic method makes it possible to generalize and interpret holistically the obtained results and outline the prospects for future work (this aspect will be discussed in the final part of the article).

3. Key results - analytical picture of the main functions and mechanisms of literary culture impact

The evolution of literary culture is in the first place due to the changes that occur in History, Philosophy, Aesthetics and Ethics. One of the key roles in this case is fixed for the phenomenon of education, which is aimed, in an ideal model of social development, to harmonise economy, politics and spirituality [9, 10].

A set of literary culture factors generates the cultural artistic field (literary space), and then has an ever increasing pervasive influence on the art of words – belle letters, including the poetics of separate local literary works.

A second immutable point associated with clarifying the general structure of literary culture is that it is affected by the constantly intertwined internal and external influences.

External influences, in turn, may be represented, for example, by such planes as:

- a) spatial and geographical (the influences of other national cultures on the studied one, for example, in post modernistic trend, J.-F. Lyotard's observations are of interest [11]);
- b) interdisciplinary (one of the characteristic genres of syncretic nature is Russian ode of the early modern time [12]. The ode genre is based on the fusion of the data of History, Philosophy, Political sciences, and in some cases of Mathematics).

The internal influence in literary culture is composed by the dialectic interaction of the writing environment priorities and the reading public preferences [13].

3.1. Sociological functions of literary culture - typology, dialectic of the problems of modern state and mechanisms of influence

One of the main features of literary culture is sociological. From this perspective, literature is presented as a social institution of special nature, correlating both with the multi-layered economic and political systems of society and with the key features of social structure [14]. Literary culture as a result turns to be a mechanism of social ideology influence and a 'battlefield', where

the interaction of socio-political and literary-social programs is unfolding. It is not surprising that in the periods of state's centralized management of these areas, the whole set of trends manifests itself most clearly: in the space of Slavic cultures' dialogue in early modern time this is discussed in [15], for 'general cultural psychology' transformation at the border stages see observation in [16].

Sociological function focuses on human/person mostly as object of influence. Resulting from it are both the dynamics and mobility of the processes occurring at this level and their vulnerability. A negative illustration to it is some certain stagnation in the readers' interest on literature. For socially active groups of population classical libraries and bookstores often turn to be successfully replaced by various easily accessible resources of the global Internet. In addition, literary culture as a set of values and material and spiritual incarnation reveals the dependence on a number of factors that are not always positive.

The first among these factors is the system of household/domestic lifestyle of modern man, with constant time pressure, information of applied nature overload, at the same time without any sufficient influence of a clear system of ethical and aesthetic guidelines.

The second factor is the socio-political 'vertical', very effectively spreading onto culture due to the policy of mass media which all have a different orientation. It should be noted that in some cases, a person's vulnerability associated with domestic sphere, leads to a very undesirable process of 'replacing' cultural and literary-cultural components by 'simulacra' in the guise of the media propaganda. In this respect, it is difficult to overestimate the educational and social role of such a thing as preservation, enrichment and multi-level usage of home libraries. A home library is one of the essential conditions of a much better 'cultural start'.

The situation with the scientific 'layer' of literary culture is of an intermediate, transitional character. In principle, it is, of course, a subject of a special discussion. But for the sake of completeness it is necessary to specify briefly that the dynamics of the last decades in this area is quite pessimistic. The essence is, for example, that the circulation of publications of non-entertaining and non-fictional character has been considerably reduced and is insufficient. The reason is not only in the gap between the linguistic capabilities of those who write and those who read, nor in the commercial side of the issue but mostly due to the fact that the overall level of possessing literary culture values and skills has become abysmally low over the last years, being a kind of an 'outsider'. This ultimately puts a considerable burden of responsibility on such literary culture functions as mnemonic/didactic and axiological.

What is most significant is the need to represent literary culture at all levels of its roles/functions as a universal 'technology of activities'. From this perspective, it is a means of transforming the world, a means of communication, cognition, behaviour and life management, and evaluation of the system of values.

3.2. Mnemonic function of literary culture

A more complex function of literary culture is mnemonic. It is associated with the phenomenon of accumulation, preservation and modification of cultural and historical memory. In its turn, the types of the mnemonic role of literary culture can vary depending on the area to which they are directed/oriented.

Accordingly, modern scholars distinguish between:

- a) concepts of national identity in the larger, common generic phenomenon of the so-called 'national myths' [17];
- b) trends in national self-consciousness and self-assertion [18];
- c) the phenomenon of 'collective retro memory' and overall 'culture of memory/recall' [19]. A crisis of this component is typical for the transition periods, especially at the turn of the centuries [20, 21].

3.3. Axiological function of literary culture

The final position is occupied by the ethical-axiological function of literary culture which is associated directly with the laws of the return/response effects of verbal culture and everything that is correlated with it on society, on civilization. In today's ambiguous conditions of integration and globalization, it is at this level that there is a tendency that literary culture is approaching the peculiar role of a 'teacher' who has to solve the rapidly emerging challenges.

It worth mentioning, that the famous Tartu semiotic school was among the first to feel the tendency and to hold a special discussion forum [22].

It is this, in many respects final, function of literary culture that explains the increasingly relevant and prevalent axiological approach in culture and Science [23]. One of the starting points is as a rule the interpretation of the previous layers of literary culture, perceived as classic, i.e. time-tested and universal in terms of the possibility to be correlated with modernity.

Axiological function of literary culture is the most complex and multidimensional.

The first and one of the most important points is that at this level man/person begins to be perceived both as an object and as subject; the literal meaning of the term 'culture' that originates from the Latin 'cultivation' is realized in full. Personality, human factor appear in this respect as 'educated/cultivated /transformed and being improved' by (literary) culture, and as those creating culture.

The latter mostly focuses on the inner, immanent nature of cultural factors, in particular on literary culture. The interaction of two representations of this phenomenon is meant here. On the one hand, from a neutral objective position of culture and its system of values, orientation of values/attitudes can be represented as a huge collection of systemic signs - cultural codes that embody (encode) information contained therein. On the other hand, literary culture in the axiological approach is the focus of 'true humanity', authentic human existence, not just man's material existence.

Axiological approach identifies the core of literary culture - a set of the best creations of the human spirit, the highest spiritual values emanating from literature, and the related humanitarian spheres of culture. The axiological level 'triggers' the process of culture 'filtering'. In the course of this process, it becomes apparent that not every result of human activity can and should be called cultural heritage, but only that which is authenticated by the system of moral postulates and having acquired a positive spiritual and moral value. Axiological function of literary culture eventually connects the objective beginning that has been described above with the newly created subjective.

Finally, it is at the axiological level that a coherent whole of culture is defined in its dialectical interaction with the second main component of the Universe being – Nature. Therefore, the extended meaning of 'culture' is understood as synonymous with 'public', artificial/derived, while 'nature' means natural, primordial/primary. In the context of a number of other modern Social sciences and Humanities, such as cultural anthropology, axiological approach is mainly defined by the main laws of the methodology of its approach.

Literary culture can be viewed as the result of all previous human activities, the activities of mankind in various fields. The central meaning is that this new creation is regarded as multilayered hierarchy of spiritual and material entities important for the social organism. It is from here that one of the variations of the axiological methodology in literary culture is developing, that may be called 'methodology of activity'.

It is important to bear in mind two possible angles of viewing the problem. The first is aimed at the formation of ideas about the role of literary culture in the development of personality. For example, the first two centuries of modern time in Russian literary culture were permeated by the idea of service to a noble ideal of honour as the epicentre of all existence of the Universe. The second evaluative perspective characterizes the mechanism and the body of literary culture as a universal property of public life. Even in ancient times there appeared one of the ideals defining all structure of world literary culture – kalokagathia ideal, a harmonious combination of the ideas of truth, beauty and goodness.

Culture from the axiological point of view is significantly higher than the system of biological mechanisms envisaged by nature and commences to reverse the direction of its influence on the processes of stimulation, programming and people's social activity. The ideology of Renaissance in modern Europe can be regarded as a typical and compelling example. It is this culture system including literary culture in its borders that endows human activity in the world with internal and final integrity.

All these processes produce a special kind of focus of such activity. The main point is that culture is defined through the execution of its leading role, that is a method of regulation, preservation, reproduction and development of social life.

Turning to the question of the axiological landmarks effectiveness produced by literary culture one certainly cannot forget the concept of cultural

archetypes once formulated by C.G. Jung [24]. According to this well-known philosophical hypothesis, values and attitudes of a certain type of culture come from the collective unconscious into an ancient (pagan) consciousness, become sacred and are firmly ousted beyond any revaluations, criticism, or possible destruction thus providing a picture of the 'sacred values' as a reference point for culture.

The basis of the axiological function of literary culture is the concept of value. Value/values are viewed as most reliable and credible 'landmarks' in the process of identifying the general sense of the world. It can only be carried out by a community of people, and for this purpose they need a system of the so-called 'commonly shared' ideals, which further on should be consistently implemented in practice.

It is important to bear in mind that the phenomenon of values is defined differently. One can speak of at least three versions of understanding/representation of the concept of value. The first option relates value to the measure of 'useful truth' and equates it with some new idea, which acts as an individual or social landmark. The second option is already at a more significant level of generalization. According to this vision, value is dynamic in its prevalence subjective image or representation, having a humanistic anthropological dimension. Finally, the third option makes value synonymous to the system of cultural and historical standards as a certain whole.

In the associative-conceptual aspect value correlates with the type of behaviour that is recognized as worthy. To speak more broadly, it serves as a basis on which a certain life style can develop. A more detailed applied examination provides a possibility to state that value is denoted through certain life principles and is fixed by means of these principles.

And, as a certain result, the phenomenon of value in culture is revealed through a particular system of ideas. Here we approach another very significant theoretical aspect. The fact is that the value is correlated with the idea, but in any case cannot and should not be identified with it, nor equalized. Idea is associated with a certain type of thinking. The main criteria for the identification of its essence are effectiveness and truthfulness. Values orient human activity in a certain direction, not necessarily resulting in cognition. In many cases, value orientation in general can engage in a compelling contradiction with the objective postulates of scientific knowledge. For example, the concept of human mortality, impermanence of man's being in the systems of world religions is being constantly and consistently rejected. When characterizing the typological identity of values, it is important to take into account both those having personal and intimate value, value of individual character ('for me') and value of interpersonal universal nature. The latter allows talking about value as of a kind of highly sacred life orientation. In the history of mankind values are born, formed and developing as key spiritual supportive means that help people to resist the severe trials of life, frequently threatening their innermost identity, their essence.

The basis for the whole system of cultural values and the phenomenon of literary culture that is the area of our research appears to be certain moral concepts and ethical standards (Good – Evil, Beautiful – Ugly, and other classic antonymous pairs). Attitudes and beliefs that grow on this soil are phenomena of a different, secondary nature. In this case, we can talk about evaluative ideas which in their attitude toward life can be divided into optimistic and pessimistic, and according to the degree of manifestation of active transforming principle inherent in them into active-creative and passive-contemplating. In the philosophy of ancient Stoicism and its artistic treatises or, for example, in the world Masonic movement the last two of these types are in a dynamic correlation, contemplation being given higher priority.

Once man/mankind begins to correlate one or another evaluative idea with the programs/settings of life behaviour, a phenomenon of a third, derived order appears. This may be referred to as value orientation.

The mobile character of values is enclosed in their very nature. In relation to the ratio of the value phenomenon and the ‘outer’ world in modern time one can speak of such a conflict that determines much as a ‘dialogue-repulsion’ with a system of technocratic hierarchy. The three leading universal cultural values – Truth, Goodness and Beauty –in the ancient world view grouped initially mainly around the second category. In the modern time, just under the pressure of scientific and technocratic consciousness, the undisputed leader and even a kind of ‘dictator’ is the Truth.

In terms of the inner immanent essence the system of values also manifests its mobility. We are talking about such a significant and constantly occurring phenomenon as a change of value orientations within the culture. Such dynamics is quite apparent within the life of even one generation. Looking through verbal art in this case allows talking about a shift in the writer’s views in different periods of his life and work. Value expresses the human measure of culture. Likewise essential for its identification is that the value embodies and represents an attitude to the forms of human life, of human existence. Through its ‘prism’ value highlights the spiritual diversity of culture in the new system, oriented simultaneously to the human mind, will and feelings. As a result, not only ‘perceived’ but also, in the language of Philosophy, ‘existentially heartfelt’ being is built. At this stage, human values acquire a primary role. They are always based on the notion of communion of every person with the other by virtue of the universal cosmic vicinity. Finally, in direct correlation with the phenomenon of memory in culture, values suggest preservation, augmentation and development of the total spiritual experience of mankind.

4. Discussion

The results of research conducted by the authors of this article over a number of years have been repeatedly approbated.

The first results were presented in 2006 at the international scientific-practical conference ‘Poetry of Life’, held at Moscow Institute of World

Literature of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Two years later, one of the authors spoke at the international conference 'Culture of holiday in Russian literature of the 18th–21st centuries' in Germany at Giessen Institute of Slavic Studies of the University of Giessen.

In 2011-2012 we published the textbook 'History of Russian 18th century literature' in two parts for students of Philology departments. In surveillance and cultural sections of this book the questions of the genesis and evolution of the phenomenon of literary culture were considered on the material relating to the first century of the so-called 'New time' in Russia. In 2013, the authors of this article published a two-volume scientific monograph 'Phenomenology of Russian 18th century literature' in the German network of scientists Lambert.

The main historical and theoretical analysis results obtained by the authors and those immediately preceding this research were published in 2014 in the 'Life Science Journal' [8].

5. Conclusion - analysis prospects

Although by the present moment the concept of 'literary culture' is in the world Science at the position which is far enough from the lead, in our opinion, it is this topic that has a promising future.

Initially, by its very nature being focused on the interaction and synthesis of economic, socio-political and spiritual-cultural components, literary culture links the retrospection with prospect, equally perfectly explaining the phenomenon of transient phenomena in the socio-cultural sphere (the so-called 'pulsating trends' of which we wrote in the introduction to this article).

We implemented an analytical survey that showed another pattern of the dynamics of knowledge about mechanisms of literary culture in modern history of Science.

A more traditional sociological vision of the problem is in effect now. However, it is not a unique perspective in the conditions of globalization that civilization dictates to culture. It is rather the opposite: a set of ideas about literary culture as the social institution puts it in a fairly rigid dependence, largely eliminating its typological peculiarities and 'crushing' the picture of processes occurring in it into private episodes of a dialogue between culture and social structure in different periods of civilization.

Much more significant is accentuation of the mnemonic associated with the historical memory of civilization, the 'core' of literary culture. It is here that potentials of the multilayered philosophy, formation and evolution of a particular ideology, demanded by society are concentrated (beginning with the second half of the 20th century, for example, all the more dynamically developing are multiple concepts of the so-called 'national identity').

Finally, when literary culture has determined the direction of its influence, priority is given to axiological function of evaluative character, oriented toward the institution of education.

Revealing the presence of different functional levels of literary culture and interaction/subordination of these levels in the system, we come to the conclusion that it is necessary to support society and its ideology in the areas of literary culture. It is essential that these influences/support should not be arbitrary, spontaneous, but purposeful, in an ideal taking into consideration the three levels of literary culture functions specified in this article.

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