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### **HRYPHORY SKOVORODA: THE TIMELESS WISDOM OF A UKRAINIAN PHILOSOPHER**

Hryhory Skovoroda (1722–1794) was a remarkable Ukrainian philosopher, writer, poet, teacher, and composer whose ideas continue to resonate across generations. Often referred to as the “Ukrainian Socrates,” he was a visionary thinker who sought to uncover the deeper truths of life, emphasizing the importance of self-discovery, moral integrity, and harmony with nature. Skovoroda’s works, particularly his fables, offer profound reflections on human nature, wisdom, and ethical living, making him one of Ukraine’s most influential intellectual figures.

Unlike many of his contemporaries, Skovoroda chose a life of asceticism, rejecting material wealth and comfort in favor of spiritual enrichment and intellectual freedom. He spent much of his life traveling across Ukraine, engaging with people from different social classes, and sharing his philosophy through conversations, poetry, and fables. His belief in “сродність” (kindred work) – the idea that every person has a natural calling and must follow it to achieve true happiness – became one of the central themes of his teachings.

Even today, Skovoroda’s legacy remains a cornerstone of Ukrainian culture and education. His fables and philosophical writings are included in school curricula, helping students develop a deeper understanding of morality, self-awareness, and personal growth. His works have also influenced generations of scholars, writers, and artists, ensuring that his ideas remain relevant in the modern world.

Despite the hardships Ukraine has faced, including the destruction of the Hryhory Skovoroda Literary Memorial Museum during Russia’s invasion in 2022, his teachings endure as a symbol of resilience and intellectual independence. Skovoroda’s message of self-knowledge, ethical living, and the pursuit of wisdom continues to inspire individuals seeking meaning in an increasingly complex and uncertain world.

#### **A Life Devoted to Wisdom and Freedom**

Hryhory Skovoroda was born in 1722. From a young age, he displayed a deep love for learning, eventually studying at the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy. However, he did not conform to traditional academic or clerical life. Instead, he chose the path of a wandering philosopher, rejecting material wealth in favor of intellectual and spiritual pursuits.

Skovoroda’s unconventional lifestyle reflected his philosophy. He walked thousands of kilometers across Ukraine, engaging with people from all walks of life and sharing his wisdom. He believed that happiness could be achieved through self-knowledge and by following one’s natural vocation – a concept he called “сродність” (kindred work).

His rejection of materialism, focus on inner harmony, and dedication to teaching earned him both admiration and criticism. Some saw him as a sage, while others viewed him as a threat to established norms. Nevertheless, his teachings profoundly influenced Ukrainian

literature, philosophy, and education.

### Skovoroda's Fables: Lessons for Humanity

Skovoroda's fables, particularly those in *The Kharkiv Fables* (*Байки Харківські*), serve as allegories about human nature, morality, and wisdom. Using animals and symbolic characters, he conveyed deep philosophical messages. Below are some of his most famous fables and their meanings:

#### 1. "The Bee and the Hornet"

In this fable, the Bee represents a wise and diligent individual who finds purpose in honest labor, while the Hornet symbolizes those who live off the work of others without contributing to society. Skovoroda emphasizes the importance of meaningful work and self-sufficiency, teaching that true happiness comes from a life of integrity and purpose.

**Moral:** The meaning of life lies in creative work that benefits others. Honest labor leads to fulfillment, while idleness and exploitation bring ruin.

#### 2. "The Dog and the Wolf"

This story contrasts two dogs, Levkon and Firidam, who live in harmony, with a wolf who tries to befriend them. The wolf, despite his similar appearance, harbors ill intentions, illustrating that friendship is built on trust and sincerity rather than superficial similarities.

**Moral:** True friendship is based on honesty and shared values. Deception and cunning cannot replace genuine bonds.

#### 3. "The Eagle and the Turtle"

In this fable, a turtle desires to fly like an eagle but ultimately fails. The eagle explains that the turtle was not meant to fly, highlighting Skovoroda's belief in "**kindred work**" – the idea that each person has a natural role in life.

**Moral:** A person should follow their natural calling rather than pursue an unsuitable path. True success comes from understanding oneself.

#### 4. "Frogs"

This fable warns against excessive greed and reliance on material wealth. The frogs, once living in luxury, find themselves in hardship when their water source dries up. The lesson is that wealth is temporary, but honest labor and resilience provide lasting security.

**Moral:** Fortune is fleeting, but knowledge and craftsmanship endure. True wealth lies in wisdom and self-reliance.

#### 5. "A Diamond and an Emerald"

Skovoroda contrasts false wealth with true virtue. A fake diamond may appear valuable,

but only true gems – symbolizing wisdom, morality, and integrity – hold real worth.

**Moral:** True honor comes not from status or appearance but from inner virtues like education, kindness, and justice.

Hryhory Skovoroda's fables, particularly those in *The Kharkiv Fables*, continue to offer profound moral lessons that remain relevant today. Through simple yet powerful allegories, he explored essential aspects of human nature, work, friendship, integrity, and self-discovery. His stories emphasize that true happiness and fulfillment come not from wealth or status, but from living an honest life, embracing one's natural abilities, and contributing to society with sincerity and purpose.

The wisdom embedded in Skovoroda's fables transcends time, serving as a guiding light for individuals seeking meaning and truth in an often chaotic world.

Skovoroda's legacy endures not only in Ukrainian culture and literature but also as a universal source of wisdom that continues to inspire generations worldwide. His timeless message reminds us that knowledge, integrity, and the pursuit of one's true calling are the greatest treasures of all.

### Skovoroda's Influence on Ukrainian Culture and Education

Skovoroda's teachings remain fundamental to Ukrainian intellectual history. His works are included in school curricula, ensuring that generations of students engage with his philosophical insights.

Hryhory Skovoroda's influence on Ukrainian culture and education is profound and enduring. His philosophical ideas, fables, and literary works remain an essential part of Ukraine's intellectual heritage, shaping national consciousness and inspiring generations. As a thinker, writer, and teacher, Skovoroda emphasized self-knowledge, morality, and the pursuit of wisdom – principles that continue to guide Ukrainian society.

In **Skovorodynivka**, a village named in his honor, the **Hryhory Skovoroda Literary Memorial Museum** was established in 1972. This museum, a significant cultural heritage site, housed Skovoroda's manuscripts and personal artifacts. Unfortunately, in May 2022, the museum was nearly destroyed by a Russian missile strike. Despite this attack on Ukraine's cultural memory, many exhibits were saved, and the philosopher's statue miraculously remained largely intact – a powerful symbol of resilience.

Hryhory Skovoroda's influence on Ukrainian culture and education is immeasurable. His works remain a foundation of Ukrainian literature, philosophy, and pedagogy, while his ideas continue to shape national identity and intellectual discourse. Despite attempts to destroy his legacy – whether through imperial oppression in the past or missile attacks in the present – Skovoroda's wisdom persists, offering a guiding light for Ukraine's future.

His teachings remind us that knowledge, integrity, and self-awareness are the keys to true freedom and resilience. As Ukraine rebuilds and reaffirms its cultural identity, Skovoroda's legacy will continue to inspire generations, proving that philosophy and wisdom can withstand even the harshest trials.

### Skovoroda's Relevance in the 21st Century

Skovoroda's philosophy is more relevant today than ever. In a world driven by materialism, social pressures, and constant change, his ideas provide a path to self-awareness and fulfillment. His emphasis on self-discovery, ethical living, and intellectual freedom offers guidance in an era of uncertainty.

**Self-Knowledge:** Skovoroda's idea of "*know yourself*" encourages introspection and authenticity in a world full of external influences.

**Moral Integrity:** His teachings promote ethical decision-making in an age of misinformation and superficial values.

**Harmony with Nature:** As the world faces environmental crises, his philosophy on living in accordance with nature offers wisdom on sustainability.

Despite political, economic, and social turmoil, Skovoroda's wisdom continues to inspire resilience, reminding us that **true wealth is found in knowledge, kindness, and a life lived with purpose.**

### Conclusion

Hryhory Skovoroda's legacy transcends time and borders, remaining a guiding force in literature, philosophy, and education. His fables and philosophical writings continue to inspire individuals in their pursuit of truth, happiness, and moral integrity. Through his works, he taught that self-awareness, ethical living, and alignment with one's true calling are the foundations of a fulfilling life. His reflections on human nature, wisdom, and virtue remain deeply relevant in today's fast-paced and often turbulent world.

Even in the face of war and destruction, Skovoroda's ideas remain unshaken, proving that wisdom, knowledge, and culture cannot be erased. His legacy endures not only in literature but also in Ukraine's national consciousness, serving as a symbol of resilience, intellectual freedom, and the pursuit of enlightenment. The attempted destruction of the Hryhory Skovoroda Literary Memorial Museum in 2022 only strengthened the determination to preserve and celebrate his contributions, reaffirming his importance in shaping Ukraine's cultural identity.

As Ukraine defends its sovereignty, language, and heritage, Skovoroda's teachings serve as a reminder that the soul of a nation lies in its thinkers, artists, and educators. His philosophy, rooted in both ancient traditions and modern aspirations, continues to influence generations of scholars, students, and leaders, guiding them toward personal and societal growth. His emphasis on spiritual wealth over materialism, on inner harmony over external validation, and on knowledge as the highest form of power makes his work timeless and universally relevant.

In an era of uncertainty and rapid change, Skovoroda's wisdom continues to provide valuable lessons on how to live authentically, embrace one's true nature, and seek deeper meaning beyond superficial success. His words, ideas, and fables will remain a source of inspiration for centuries to come, ensuring that his voice echoes through history as a beacon of truth, resilience, and enlightenment.

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