

IMMORTALITY AS A SOCIOCULTURAL CONTRIBUTION: MILAN KUNDERA'S NOVEL AND RUSSIAN PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHT

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on a study of Milan Kundera's vision of immortality as the possibility of overcoming death through one's creative activity and social work during a lifetime. Having analyzed Kundera's *Immortality* (1991), we argue that the novel is strongly aligned with the philosophical hypothesis that considers immortality as the everlasting influence of people's life and creative work upon the minds and actions of succeeding generations. Touching on the eternal questions about the essence of life and death, Kundera thus arrives at a conciliatory solution to the temporality of human nature: an individual's sociocultural contribution to the spiritual consciousness of humanity, according to which immortal personalities are divided into major and minor types—the artists or creators, and the statesmen or political figures. The scale of a contribution has a wide range and is not equal for different contributors. In the same way, immortality can be of a greater or smaller caliber.

The aim of this article is to study what is immortality from the philosophical perspective of Milan Kundera, as it is reflected in his novel *Immortality*. Referring to philosophical, psychoneurological, psychological and physical concepts, classical literary works and personalities in the course of the interdisciplinary research, we argue that Milan Kundera's views on immortality could originate from Russian philosophical thought of the second half of the 19th—the beginning of the 20th century, particularly represented by Leo Tolstoy and Fyodor Dostoevsky. We also argue that Milan Kundera's novel *Immortality* could artistically illustrate a philosophical theory of one of the most prominent but unfairly forgotten pioneers in the subject, the Russian psychiatrist and neurologist Vladimir Bekhterev. Bekhterev founded the St. Petersburg Psychoneurological Research Institute in 1907 and presented his hypothesis of immortality in 1916 in a speech titled "Immortality from the Scientific Point of View"⁽¹⁾.

KEY WORDS: sociocultural immortality, Kundera, Bekhterev, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky.

1. INTRODUCTION UNDERSTANDING IMMORTALITY

"I refuse to die with this day and its cares, I wish to transcend myself, to be a part of history, because history is eternal memory" (Milan Kundera, *Immortality*).

The notions of death and life, along with multiple theories of overcoming mortality, have been studied by scientists, philosophers and artists since time immemorial. Understanding of these notions has undergone various changes across all the existing cultures. In the current research, *life* is understood as "the characteristic property of living substances or things; it is associated with either a capacity for mental activities such as perception and thought (*mental life*) or physical activities such as absorption, excretion, metabolism, synthesis, and reproduction (*physical life*)" (Audi, 1999: 504). Life is synonymous to existence in contrast to

non-existence or death. This vision of life is very close to its biological component that stands for "such a means of the existence of systems, which presupposes metabolism, irritability, ability to self-regulate, grow, reproduce and adapt to the environmental conditions"⁽²⁾. Therefore, *life* in natural sciences is juxtaposed to death. In its turn, *death* is defined as "natural and irreversible termination of a vital activity of a biological system"⁽³⁾ (Gritsanov, 2003: 100).

Tightly connected to *death* and *life*, the notion of *immortality* is generally understood as "the overcoming of mortality and forgetting of a human being and humankind"⁽⁴⁾ (Ibid.). Overcoming death and achieving immortality has always been desired by humans, apart from the very recent time when philosophers start seriously questioning and undermining the benefits of staying forever immortal (see Belshaw, 2015; Rowlands, 2015). On the other hand, the thought "that we might never fully

reconcile with mortality” and experience “existential terror”, as well as fear of being forgotten, if we believe that the afterlife is non-existent, is a very strong argument for the natural human inclination to desire immortality (see Bradley, 2015; Ferrero, 2015). Belief in an afterlife, along with the desire to obtain immortality, plays a role of a unique psychological mechanism at the level of routine life, as well as at the level of human values and beliefs. The possibility of obtaining immortality ensures psychological protection of humans from a fear of a wide array of unknowns having to do with death and offers the opportunity to live a fulfilling life in spite of awareness of the inevitability of the cessation of life.

Although the recent scientific achievements in the area of the attainment of personal immortality offer a tempting diversion from the subject at hand for discussion, this research focuses on another kind of immortality, which is seen by its believers as a more practical and realistic mode of aspiring to immortality, – an individual’s sociocultural contribution. This type of immortality had become a long-held theme of Russian philosophy and literature since the second half of the 19th century (see Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Berdyaev and others). In a profound manner, it was first discussed by Vladimir Bekhterev in his speech “Immortality from the Scientific Point of View” (originally presented in 1916). In the world literary canon, we can find references to the mentioned interpretation of immortality from ancient times until the present day, but the most elaborate literary illustration of it can be noticed in Milan Kundera’s novel *Immortality* (1991).

2. METHODOLOGY

The current research mainly employs an interdisciplinary approach to text interpretation with a focus on philosophy and psychology, as well as the elements of cultural poetics. The study of Milan Kundera’ novel is executed through the lens of philosophical, psychoneurological, psychological and physical concepts. The methodology is conditioned by the research aim, which is a detailed scrutiny of the philosophical foundation of the novel. There are no records that Milan Kundera was aware of Vladimir Bekhterev’s views on immortality, but we assume that unintentional closeness in the - interpretation of some core philosophical themes could originate from Kundera’s lifelong dialogue

with Russian writers, especially with Leo Tolstoy and Fyodor Dostoevsky.

3. IMMORTALITY AS AN ETERNAL THEME OF RUSSIAN PHILOSOPHICAL AND ARTISTIC THOUGHT

Russian philosophy is known for its continuous searches for the sense of human life, the meaning of death and the possibility of afterlife existence. In the spiritual quest of Russian writers, the question of immortality was in the center of their continuous search. In this quest, the so-called higher values were contrasted to personal well-being (e.g., refer to Leo Tolstoy and Fyodor Dostoevsky). In Tolstoy’s philosophical treatise *On Life* (1888), he meditated on the notions of life, death, immortality, and spoke directly about the necessity of accomplishing “one’s task of life” and establishing a new loving “relationship to the world” in order to live a meaningful life and hope for immortality in the afterlife:

Man whose life rests in submission to the law of reason, and in the manifestation of love, sees, even in this life, on the one side the rays of light from this new centre of life towards which he goes; and, on the other, the action which this light, in passing through him, produces on those by whom he is surrounded; and this gives him an indubitable faith in the stability, immortality, and eternal growth of life” (Tolstoy, 2009: 138).

In other instances, Tolstoy supported the idea of a non-existence of death because of the biological transformation of organisms (Steiner, 2011). Tolstoy put the following words into Tushin’s mouth in his drafts to *War and Peace* (1865–1869): “Every organism transforms into another kind of organism, the higher one, and never cease to exist, therefore that means that a person will not disappear either and will become a higher kind of organism”⁽⁵⁾ (Tolstoy, 1949: 367-368).

Dostoevsky, in his turn, developed the idea of the continuity of human earthly life through both posterity and a memorable social contribution. During his military service in Siberian exile, Dostoevsky met the diplomat, lawyer, archeologist and memoirist baron Alexander Wrangel, who served as a prosecutor in Semipalatinsk at the time and who later became Dostoevsky’s life-long friend. In one of his letters to Wrangel, Dostoevsky wrote:

They say that a man gets destroyed and dies *entirely*. By this time, we know that it does not occur entirely because of the fact that a human, giving birth

to a son, transfers to him a part of his personality, and because he mentally hands over his memory to people; in other words—the part of his former personality, living in the earth, enters the future development of the mankind”⁽⁶⁾ (Dostoevsky, 1996: 714-717).

Scanlan named this idea of Dostoevsky about immortality “the argument from the law of the preservation of organisms” (Scanlan, 2000; compare to Bekhterev’s theory). Fyodor Dostoevsky influenced Milan Kundera, notwithstanding Kundera’s demonstrative criticism of Dostoevsky’s artistic “universe where everything turns into feeling; in other words, where feelings are promoted to the rank of value and truth” (Emerson, 2011). Indeed, Kundera sarcastically referred to Dostoevsky’s *The Idiot* (1869) throughout his entire *Immortality* (1991). This is not the first case in literature when Dostoevsky, being severely attacked, was found to greatly influence his passionate critics (see the case of Vladimir Nabokov in Seiden, 1972). Dostoevsky’s impact on Kundera’s work can be noted not only in the Dostoyevskian polyphony of Kundera’s novels (see Emerson, 2011), but at a deeper level – in Kundera’s philosophical quest, including the question of the afterlife and immortality. Of course, it is worth mentioning that Kundera’s *immortality* does not contain the religious component immanent in Dostoevsky’s interpretation of this matter.

Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, along with a number of classical Russian writers and thinkers (A. Pushkin, V. Zhukovsky, N. Gogol, K. Leontiev and others), understood immortality from the religious perspective, originating from Orthodox Christian tradition “as a special form of inwardness that we can enjoy as members of a Christian community” (Kotelnikov, 1994). According to the “Theories of Immortality” (1942) by A. D. Ritchie, the abovementioned community of souls, is created by God, and immortality is a gift of God; therefore, the immortality of the soul can be given or withheld (Ritchie, 1942: 124-125). That is why the concept of *death* in Christianity is at times ambiguous; apostle Paul, for example, referred to *death* as “the dissolution of the body, the common meaning”, and in other cases as the “destruction of the spirit” (The Holy Bible, 1 Corinthians 5: 5, 11: 30, 15: 54, 2 Corinthians 3: 18; 5: 1-5, 8; Philippians 1: 21-24).

The Russian thinkers tightly connected their understanding of immortality to the meaning of

life and responsibility under the condition of the inevitability of death (Sabirov, 2000). The Russian philosophical tradition primarily focused on the combination of the pursuit of physical and spiritual personal continuity and the idea of the eternality of a soul. This led to the assertion that immortality could be achieved. The explanation of this thesis was carried out in two directions (Klenina & Peskov, 2013: 115]. Firstly, physical death, interpreted as a destruction of all obsolete elements, was not excluded, but it took on a positive value as a condition for further improvement of individuality (refer to the theories of L. Karsavin, V. Soloviev, A. Platonov). Secondly, it was typical to study the question on an actual victory of a human over death (see N. Fedorov’s theory). Later, in the 20th century, the development of immortological ideas in Russian philosophy led, on the one hand, to the search for a positive meaning of death as a factor in the development of the personality, and on the other hand—to the redirection of the subject into the field of natural sciences, predisposing a unique physical-and-neurological theory of immortality developed by Vladimir Bekhterev.

3.1. VLADIMIR BEKHTEREV’S THEORY OF IMMORTALITY

The name of the Russian scientist Vladimir Bekhterev is commonly related to the fields of psychiatry and neurology; and very few have heard about his theory of immortality. Western scholars mainly heard of Bekhterev as the person who gave a name to spondylitis (an inflammatory disease that affects the joints in the spine), and his scientific contributions had not received acknowledgement and decent place in history (Lerner et al., 2005: 225). Bekhterev founded the St. Petersburg Psychoneurological Research Institute in 1907. In 1925, the institute was renamed after him. He died under strange circumstances in 1927, after he had unofficially examined Stalin and diagnosed him as a paranoiac (Kesslerling, 2011). In his speech, which was presented in an official meeting of the St. Petersburg Psychoneurological Research Institute in 1916, published in the Russian language in 1928 and translated into English as late as in 2006, Bekhterev claimed that “at such moments in history as the present, when almost every day brings us news of the death of hundreds, even thousands of people on the battlefields, questions concerning ‘eternal’ life and immortality of the human personality arise

with particular persistence” (Bekhterev, 2006: 74). This statement was conditioned by the context of WWI and was common in the Russian philosophical thought of that time. But what Bekhterev said later gave him the name of a path-breaker in the theories of immortality in the first half of the 20th century.

Bekhterev opened his speech with a question addressed to himself and to each of us: “After all, if our intellectual or spiritual existence really was terminated at the moment our heart beat its last; if death only transformed us into nothingness, into inert matter subject to decay and transformation; what would life itself be worth?”. Then Bekhterev brought up a physical law of conservation of energy, according to which energy “can be subject to transformation, but is neither spent nor diminished in the process” (Bekhterev, 2006: 74-75). The same principle the scholar applied to the conservation of matter and its transformation into energy. That is how the notion of *life* became identical with the notion of *energy*.

Therefore, biological death discussed above can also be considered as the transformation of energy. According to Bekhterev, “when a person dies, his body decomposes and ceases to exist: this is a fact”, but it is also a fact that the process of “the decomposition of the organism into simpler elements” is accompanied with the release of energy which later serves “as the basis for the growth of vegetation” or “as a nutritive matter for other life forms” (Bekhterev, 2006: 78).

The next question Bekhterev raised was related to the eternal duality of human nature: if a body transforms into natural energy, what happens to a soul or an individual consciousness of a human being? Referring to the law of the conservation of energy, Bekhterev proclaimed a revolutionary statement: “This law can be restated to read: not one human action, not one step, not one thought, whether expressed verbally or non-verbally; none of these disappears without trace” (Ibid.). Bekhterev’s contemplation on the meaning of human life and death was concluded with the possibility of achieving immortality through intravital social connections that allow the dead “to exist in all those people with whom he made contact, even indirectly, and thus is preserved in posterity for as long as there is life on earth” (Bekhterev, 2006: 79). Bekhterev insisted that we were dealing “with the immortality of a ‘spirit’”, and this individual ‘spirit’ could influence other

individuals through immediate personal relations, as well as subsequent generations—through educational and cultural institutions (Bekhterev, 2006: 80).

Furthermore, Bekhterev spoke about the “collective human personality”, in which “everyone is connected in an intricate relationship, such that no single event can occur without having widespread repercussions. One heroic gesture breeds another, just as one crime inevitably brings another in its wake”. Speaking about contribution to a common “spiritual culture”, Bekhterev highlighted the idea that people’s lifetime contribution is not equal; it can be greater or lesser and may bring a positive or a negative impact to mankind (Bekhterev, 2006: 79-80).

Exploring the meaning of life and the termination of human existence by the stopping of heartbeat⁽⁷⁾, Bekhterev referred to Tolstoy’s understanding of spirit as a bearer of life in opposition to the body, and then abandoned the Christian doctrine, returning to his strongest argument – Mayer and Helmholtz law of conservation of energy: “this law states that energy can be subject to transformation, but is neither spent nor diminished in the process” (Bekhterev, 2006: 74-75). The same principle he applied to conservation of matter with possibility of its transformation into energy; thus, the scholar considered “all natural phenomena” as “the product of one universal energy” (Bekhterev, 2006: 77). Bekhterev understood biological death as disintegration with further transformation into new organisms, which was opposed to a common perception of death as ultimate destruction.

Contemplating what happens to a human spirit after biological death of a body, Bekhterev arrived at the main point of his philosophy – sociocultural immortality:

The human individual, as an amalgam of personal and inherited experience, does not terminate his existence with the termination of his life. On the contrary, he continues to exist on all those people with whom he made contact, even indirectly, and thus is preserved in posterity for as long as there is life on earth (Bekhterev, 2006: 79).

Hence, Bekhterev discovered an already operational process, comforting the mankind with its eternal unsuccessful attempts to achieve personal immortality. Bekhterev’s discovery is greater than what humanity was seeking for – it is the “collective human personality” and inevitability of its immortality through

individuals' contribution and influence of each member upon the others.

4. MILAN KUNDERA'S NOVEL *IMMORTALITY* (1991) ABOUT IMMORTALITY

Milan Kundera wrote his novel *Immortality* in Czech in 1988, around 70 years after Bekhterev's theory of sociocultural immortality was officially publicized. The first publication of the novel was in French in 1990, followed by its English version in 1991. Most of the critics believed that the title *Immortality* mainly referred to fame and the afterlife of famous people in the memory of their posterity (Sanders, 1991: 107-108). Kunderian characters in *Immortality* (1991), as attributable to the author's style, are schematic and vague. Sherlaimova accurately notes that Kundera, whose characters are known for being poorly drawn, accentuates the age of his heroes. This artistic trait acquires an important role in the context of philosophical and ethical concepts of the novel (Sherlaimova, 2014: 145). The age of characters in *Immortality* bears a special meaning in relation to the current research, which will be explained later.

In *Immortality*, Kundera more than usually accentuated the shift from the forefront shadowy heroes to the background philosophy, which became so condensed and colorful that the novel could actually exist without Agnes-story and its hastily drawn characters. Sanders named Kundera's characters "a pretext" with the function of making reading "an abstract pleasure" (Sanders, 1991: 108). The structure of the novel, with its intertwined "story" and "philosophy", did not only guarantee an abstract pleasure, but also provided the reader with the shortest way to the meaning. Kundera's mortals – Agnes, Laura and Paul – were intentionally exposed as fictitious; they slightly touched this world with their tender steps and had to disappear forever. On the other hand, the immortals, Goethe and Hemingway, whose presence in the novel might be seen as accidental and momentary, were the real subjects of Kundera's philosophical journey.

4.1. KUNDERA'S TYPES OF IMMORTALITY

Scholars classify Milan Kundera's *Immortality* as a meta-novel (Kosková, 1998: 138-139; Zuseva-Ozkan, 2012: 210; Sherlaimova, 2014: 148). In this novel, Milan

Kundera illustrated Bekhterev's idea that "everyone can achieve immortality to a smaller or greater degree, of shorter or longer duration" and suggested the whole range of immortality types illustrated by himself with vivid historical examples (see Kundera, 1991: 54). Based on the principle of inequality of people, he claimed that people, who achieved *minor immortality*, continued living in the memory of people who knew them personally during their actual lifetime. Meanwhile, *great immortality* presumed the afterlife continuity of a person in the minds of people who never knew them personally (Kundera, 1991: 55). The most desirable by many, or the great immortality, in Kundera's opinion, was to the highest degree achievable by artists and statesmen. Comparing the artists and statesmen, Kundera insisted that the artists could acquire a greater immortality than those who served to the state: "Those who *create* (statues, poems, symphonies) deserve more respect than those who *rule* (over servants, officials or whole nations); that creativity means more than power, art more than politics; that works of art, not wars or aristocratic costume-bells, are immortal" (Kundera, 1991: 233).

Discussing the eternal human desire for immortality, Kundera brought up the story of a Moravian village mayor, who kept an open coffin at home and lied down in it in his happiest moments of life visualizing his funeral and contemplating his own immortality (Ibid.). The ironic effect of this story was intensified by the next description of one more immortality type in Kundera's classification— *ridiculous immortality*. This type of immortality was presented in light of the story of a great astronomer Tycho Brahe, who passed away "as a martyr to shame and urine" because his bladder burst as he felt too ashamed to go to the restroom during the dinner at the emperor's court (Kundera, 1991: 56).

The range of Kunderian immortality types is concluded with another type, *immortality through suicide*, via indirect reference to one of the characters—Laura, the sister of the main heroine Agnes. In one of the novel's chapters, which is titled "Suicide", Laura, being rejected by her lover Bernard in his villa, thought of committing a suicide there, so that her image would forever stay with Bernard when he would later find her dead (Kundera, 1991: 195). It was Laura's sister who understood that Laura, if she committed suicide, would become immortal in the memories of those who knew her and who

would consider themselves guilty for her death. Agnes noted to Paul: “She doesn’t want to *vanish*. She is thinking of suicide because she sees it as a way to *stay*. To stay with him. To stay with us. To engrave herself for ever on all our memories. To force her body into our lives. To crush us” (Kundera, 1991: 198-199). Laura was ready to immortalize herself in people’s memory through suicide, but changed her mind.

The polarity of the perspectives of two sisters on their bodies, apart from highlighting Agnes’ spirituality opposed to Laura’s naturalism, illustrated the possibility of achieving immortality through a memorable death, the shortest way to which is committing suicide. The older sister, Agnes, took her aging body as a burden; she did not identify herself with her body; she felt ashamed of it. Laura, on the contrary, saw herself as a body; she was inseparable from it. For her, thoughts about suicide were not liberating, comparing to Agnes’ intuitive unperceived desire to set herself free from her body. For Laura, suicide meant the ultimate end of everything; for her, there was nothing beyond biological death. That is why for Laura suicide because of unhappy love meant raising the beloved one to the highest throne, the substruction of which would be Laura’s immortality through deadly self-sacrifice.

4.2. CAPTIVES OF IMMORTALITY

4.2.1. GOETHE AND BETTINA

In Kundera’s novel, the story of two fictitious characters, Agnes and Laura, is intertwined with the story of relations of two personalities, who became known far beyond their epoch, culture and field of activities. This is the German thinker, philosopher, writer, inventor and statesman Johann Wolfgang Goethe (1749–1832) and a writer and social activist Bettina von Arnim (1785–1859). The plotline of Goethe and Bettina opens the second part of Kundera’s *Immortality* (1991) and has the same title as the whole novel. After Goethe’s death, Bettina published their letters, in 1835, under the title *Goethe’s Correspondence with a Child*. When the original autograph version of their correspondence was published in the 1920s, the reader discovered that Bettina “had changed dates to efface long pauses in the exchange, deleted Goethe’s reprimands to her, and considerably expanded his letters, as well as her own” (McAlpin, 2005: 294-295). What was her aim?

Answering this question, Kundera depicts their relations through the lens of Bettina’s

longing for immortality. Motivated by the potential of becoming immortal, if related to Goethe, Bettina, as we read in Kundera’s novel, tried to make this relation look as solid and strong as possible. In her attempts to reach immortality, Bettina connected herself personally, when possible, or in her writing (which is positioned as documentaries but in fact had a profound fictitious component) with “the long march of European history”: Clemens Brentano, Johann Goethe, Achim von Arnim, Count Hermann von Pückler-Muskau, Karl Marx, Franz Liszt, Karl Blechen, Karl Alexander, Friedrich Wilhelm, Wilhelm Schlegel, Ludwig Mieroslawski, and Sandor Petofi (Kundera, 1991: 181-182). Kundera claimed that she was only interested in famous men, and all her love affairs with them were nothing else but a bridge into godly heights, in which immortals dwell after life (Kundera, 1991: 184).

Having the aim of facing immortality with the impeccable image and imprinting her name bound with Goethe, Bettina tried to present their relation as more significant than it really was. Married and pregnant, even then Bettina did not give up her “battle for immortality” (Kundera, 1991: 72). Although some scholars disagree with Kundera’s understanding of Bettina’s image as a “parasite who feels neither love nor even true regard for the man she claims to worship”, arguing that she was striving for writerly fame of her own (see McAlpin, 2005: 295), Kundera’s point of view is more convincing. In the light of finding real letters of Bettina von Arnim and Goethe that appeared to be severely edited by Bettina in her book published in 1935 (before the real letters were found), we believe that Bettina spent her life establishing her own image as Goethe’s lifelong great love (Kelling, 1969). We can find the following statements in Kelling: “Judging from Goethe’s entries in his journals, he was much less impressed by her than she would have her readers believe”, “His letters show restraint and coolness. He ignored her many requests and frequently bold advances, or cleverly changed the subject when Bettina became too presumptuous” (Kelling, 1969: 74). On the other hand, Kelling noted that Bettina’s feelings to Goethe were sincere and she genuinely worshiped her idol.

Kundera insisted that there was not a sincere attachment of Bettina to Goethe: “What was at stake between them was not love. It was immortality” (Kundera, 1991: 69). Goethe, as

depicted by Kundera, understood Bettina's desire to immortalize herself through forcing her image upon the life path of the immortal artist; and he became very careful in his utterances and deeds, taking care of his immortal image. Kundera justly blamed Bettina for being self-centered and intellectually limited, as the Goethe-Bettina correspondence gave almost nothing to historians, culturologists, or literary critics. In Kundera's opinion, she could have asked Goethe so many questions: "About his books. About the books of his contemporaries. About poetry. About prose. About paintings. About Germany. About Europe. About science and technology" (Kundera, 1991: 214-215). To Kundera's disappointment, even discussing music with Goethe, instead of asking him questions, "she does the instructing!" (Kundera, 1991: 215). It is hard to imagine Goethe enjoying these conversations. The reason he tolerated Bettina for so long was his concern in protecting his immortal image, as Bettina, if rejected and upset, could have polluted his public persona with the anger of the rebuffed woman. When Goethe felt the breath of death, he let himself undertake something he would not dare before – he named Bettina in written an "annoying gad-fly" (Kundera, 1991: 81). Saying so, in narrator's opinion, Goethe stepped beyond his own immortality – freed and let himself express his attitude to Bettina in the written word, not thinking much of how it might be interpreted later.

4.2.2. GOETHE AND HEMINGWAY

Adding to the image of Goethe facing his immortality, Kundera presented imaginary dialogues between Goethe, the German Romantic writer, and Hemingway, the American modernist. Their dialogues happened beyond time, space, historical and cultural contexts. We can conclude that they met in their afterlife in the year 1988, which is "one hundred and fifty-six" years since Goethe's death and approximately the time when Kundera's novel was being written. They walked around, talked, and laughed in a so-called *otherworld* ⁽⁸⁾, eternity, where the great minds "live" after the actual death. The first question, which naturally arises when Goethe and Hemingway appear, walking and conversing in Kundera's novel, is "how is that possible?" Indeed, what brings them together? Why did Kundera choose the figures of Goethe and Hemingway to be those writers who conduct the dialogues about immortality in the imaginary time and space? Our scrutiny of

this matter could bring some light on Kundera's choice and its meaning in the artwork.

Predicting the reader's question why the writer chose to contemplate on the dialogues between such different personalities as Goethe and Hemingway, Kundera noted:

Hemingway and Goethe are receding down the roads of the other world and you ask me what was the point of bringing the two together. After all, they don't belong together at all, they have nothing in common! So what? With whom do you think Goethe would like to pass his time in the other world? With Herder? With Hölderlin? With Bettina? With Eckermann? (Kundera, 1991: 95).

And then he brought up the example of Agnes who, if she was given a choice, would not have liked to see her husband Paul and daughter Brigitte in the afterlife. Kundera mentioned that Goethe did not choose his contemporaries, like we do not choose our parents or children, but he "was fascinated by America throughout his life" and would have liked "someone who wasn't like the band of pale-faced Romantics that came to dominate Germany towards the end of his life" (Ibid.).

In our turn, we can dwell on Goethe's relation to the main theme of the novel – immortality, which originated from the fact that Goethe was one of the prominent achievers of *great immortality*. Besides that, following Spinoza's version of determinism, Goethe believed that the nature itself had godly essence and all the effects in nature were interdependent (Yourgrau, 1951: 69). This concept is of our special concern, as its correspondence to Bekhterev's theory is evident. In the course of his botanical studies, Goethe coined the term "morphology", which he understood as a branch of physiology. Goethe thought about transformation of organic bodies and the unity of humans with nature (Yourgrau, 1951: 71.) He spoke about the nature obliged to provide an active spirit with another form of existence, or immortality, subject to that spirit's (monad's) activity (Schaub, 1932: 476). This Goethe's "conditional immortality" is analogous to Bekhterev's and Kundera's views of inequality of social contribution (activity) made by different humans and, as a consequence, acquisition of lesser or greater immortality.

Goethe, the philosopher, was engaged in thinking about the relations between an individual and the world. In one of the most famous of Goethe's works, a tragic play *Faust* (1829), which among other themes explores the matter of immortality, "we see expressed throughout his work that comprehensive interest

in the whole of existence and the true values of human life which also characterize the philosopher” (Hendel, 1949: 157). As noticed by Hendel, “Faust has to die to enter upon his immortality” (Hendel, 1949: 167). At the end of the tragedy, Faust is taken to heaven because he repented. Thus, Goethe made the path for Faust’s salvation in a traditional Christian way (Hendel, 1949: 168). In a personal level, Goethe thought of immortality analogously to what we found in Bekhterev’s theory: “I am so fully convinced that the soul is indestructible, and that its activity will continue through eternity. It is like the sun, which seems to our earthly eyes to set in night, but is in reality gone to diffuse its light elsewhere” (Eckermann, 1839: 108).

First of all, Goethe thought of the immortality of a soul explained with “a [Christian] legend” as a weak one; on the other hand, belief in the eternal life of a human soul, in his opinion, went in line with “the wants of his [human] nature” and proved by the intrinsic desire of activity which cannot disappear with death once it is accumulated in the lifetime: “To me, the eternal existence of my soul is proved, from my need of activity; if I work incessantly till my death, nature is pledged to give me another form of being when the present can no longer sustain my spirit” (Eckermann, 1839: 270).

Apart from Goethe’s correspondence to Bekhterev’s ideas, his views relate to Kundera’s Agnes and Laura: the embodiment in Agnes’ character juxtaposition of body and soul is contrary to the unity of body and soul as depicted in Laura’s character. Contemplating about the “nature of the Divinity, immortality, the existence of our own souls, and their connection with our bodies”, Goethe expressed disappointment in the achievements of philosophy of that time. Goethe acknowledged that “Fichte went somewhat farther, and extricated himself more skillfully from the dilemma” of a body and soul as he admitted that “so closely combined whole could not be separated”. In Goethe’s opinion, “Kant has given more satisfaction than others” accepting the idea that a limited human intellect must leave “at rest the insoluble problems”. Finally, Goethe concluded this conversation á la Goethe the character in Kundera’s novel: “But we are not all, in like manner, immortal; and he who would manifest himself as a great Entelecheia to future ages, must begin now (Eckermann, 1839: 320–321).

Immortality is impossible without death, and here we can see the connection between the motif of Goethe’s *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774) and the end of Ernest Hemingway’s life – both are immortal suiciders. Contemporary researchers, having the latest diagnostic advancements in psychology, suggested that Hemingway suffered from “bipolar disorder, alcohol dependence, traumatic brain injury, and probable borderline and narcissistic personality traits” (Martin, 2006: 352). These diseases were unknown in that time, and perhaps that’s why Hemingway’s treatment was not very successful, and he took his own life a couple of days after he completed one of his therapeutic courses.

Hemingway said very little directly about immortality. In Hemingway’s “Introduction” to the edited collection of war short stories, he wrote: “When you go to war as a boy you have a great illusion of immortality. Other people get killed; not you. It can happen to other people; but not to you. Then when you are badly wounded the first time you lose that illusion and you know it can happen to you. After being severely wounded two weeks before my nineteenth birthday I had a bad time until I figured out that nothing could happen to me that had not happened to all men before me. Whatever I had to do men had always done. If they had done it then I could do it too and the best thing was not to worry about it” (Hemingway, 1979: XII). This realistic acknowledgement of one’s own mortality goes as a golden thread through the entire Hemingway’s oeuvre.

Among very few of Hemingway’s direct utterances about immortality, we have found one which is aligned to Kundera’s vision of Hemingway as it is presented in *Immortality* (1991):

You make something from things that have happened and from things that exist and from all things that you know and all those you cannot know, and you make something through your invention that is truer than anything true and alive, and if you make it well enough, you give it immortality (Brucconi, 1986: 129).

Returning to the novel, we can see that Goethe’s immortality, in Kundera’s understanding, “has nothing in common with religious belief in an immortal soul. What is involved is the different, quite earthly immortality of those who after their death remain in the memory of posterity” (Kundera, 1991: 54). This kind of immortality

has been definitely achieved by both Goethe and Hemingway, which is proved by their never-fading fame and popularity. As it was wittily noticed by Kundera's Hemingway, they were "condemned to immortality for the sin of writing books" (Kundera, 1991: 238).

In the first imaginary dialogue of Goethe and Hemingway, the latter starts complaining to Goethe about people's accusations against him: "Instead of reading my books they're writing books about me". He says he is being accused of big and small things: not loving his wives, not paying attention to his son, punching a critic in a nose, being a liar, macho, self-abuser, and disobeying his mother. Goethe, in his turn, replies that this is what immortality is: "Immortality means eternal trial". Hemingway claims that if it is a trial, there should be a just judge, not "a narrow-minded schoolteacher with a rod in her hand" (Kundera, 1991: 91). Hemingway desired immortality for his books, not for himself. He avoided immortality as a person – moved to Cuba and did not go to Stockholm to receive the Nobel Prize. As he said in Kundera's novel: "When I realized one day that it was holding me in its clutches, it terrified me more than death itself. A man can take his own life. But he cannot take his own immortality". At the end of this dialogue, we can see Kundera's voice, claiming that it is impossible to get rid of immortality once it is achieved; and Hemingway's immortality gave birth to "an army of university professors all over America" who were building their names and careers "classifying, analyzing, and shoveling everything into articles and books" (Kundera, 1991: 92).

The fourth chapter of the Goethe-Hemingway dialogues stands separately from the three previous. In it, Hemingway, "strolling down a road in the other world", saw a young man and hardly recognized Goethe himself. Goethe decided to change his appearance to the younger one and enjoy this look before his voluntary departure to non-existence. Hemingway said their books will soon be forgotten, "but people will never stop prying into your life, down to the smallest details" (Kundera, 1991: 238–239). Goethe concluded that "to be mortal is the most basic human experience and yet man has never been able to accept it, grasp it, and behave accordingly. Man doesn't know how to be mortal". Lastly, Kundera acknowledged the imaginary nature of these characters and their dialogues, putting his words in "Goethe's"

mouth: "At this moment we are but the frivolous fantasy of a novelist who lets us say things we would probably never say on our own". This was their last meeting as after that Kundera's Goethe decided "to go to sleep" and "enjoy the delights of total non-existence" as he became tired of his immortality (Kundera, 1991: 240–241).

4.3. THE GESTURES OF IMMORTALITY

A chain of interconnected gestures (movements of hands) goes through the entire texture of Milan Kundera's novel. These gestures play structural and content-related roles; they embrace individual chapters and unite them into a single artistic whole. A scene, describing one certain gesture, sets the novel in the artistic frame. It opens with the gesture performed by the aged woman, Agnes, who is born in the author's imagination out of this gesture, and closes with the same gesture performed by Agnes' younger sister, Laura, who borrowed not only this gesture of Agnes, but also took her place beside Paul, her sister's spouse, after Agnes' demise. Another gesture appears in the story of Goethe and Bettina.

4.3.1. THE GESTURE OF AGELESSNESS

The opening "gesture of agelessness", which frames the novel, originates from the description of so-called ordinary immortality, human agelessness which can be observed every day in each of us. Kundera claims that "ordinary immortality" is shaped by simple behavioral elements, like a smile or a gesture. After that Kundera unfolds the charm of the gesture of agelessness performed by a sixty or sixty-five-year-old woman in a swimming pool. Kundera's omnipresent narrator explained:

She walked around the pool towards the exit. She passed the lifeguard, and after she had gone some three or four steps beyond him she turned her head, smiled, and waved to him. At that instant I felt a pang in my heart! That smile and that gesture belonged to a twenty-year-old girl! Her arm rose with bewitching ease. It was as if she were playfully tossing a brightly coloured ball to her lover. That smile and that gesture had charm and elegance, while the face and body no longer had any charm. It was the charm of a gesture drowning in the charmlessness of the body. But the woman, though she must of course have realized that she was no longer beautiful, forgot that for the moment. There is a certain part of all of us that lives outside the time. Perhaps we become aware of our age only at exceptional moments and most of the time we are ageless (Kundera, 1991: 3–4).

Comparison of the opening and the final “gesture episode” suggests itself. “The gesture of agelessness” in the final scene also took place in the swimming pool during the meeting of three men – the narrator, Professor Avenarius and Paul: “She suddenly turned her head towards our table and lifted her arm in the air in a movement so light, so graceful, so fluent, that it seemed to us a golden ball had risen from her fingertips and remained poised above the doorway” (Kundera, 1991: 382). This gesture, after we have read the entire novel, stands for the notion of immortality in general, Agnes’ immortality, the recurrence of matter in nature, the transformation of energy and continuity of the human condition. Agnes, perhaps when she was a young girl, unconsciously learnt this gesture from someone. And this someone was her father’s secretary, “a woman of about forty”, who was probably his mistress as her visits to the house were “accompanied by a mysterious tension” (Kundera, 1991: 40). Agnes, after she had become aware of this gesture, tried to avoid it; and then it suddenly appeared again, twenty-five years later, when Agnes waived to her father at the same gate-way as did that woman so many years ago. Agnes was astonished as she felt that “it was as if two distant times had suddenly met in a single second, and two different women in a single gesture”. It seemed to Agnes that “those two women might have been the only ones he [her father] had ever loved” (Kundera, 1991: 42). And then Agnes’ sister Laura, younger by eight years, after she had learnt the gesture from Agnes, continued the story of *the gesture of agelessness* the same way in perhaps the same swimming pool.

4.3.2. THE GESTURE OF LONGING FOR IMMORTALITY

With a great portion of sarcasm directed at Bettina’s life-time desire to associate herself with the name of Goethe, Kundera brought up an imaginary scene describing Bettina’s *gesture of longing for immortality*:

“And she placed both hands on her chest in such a way that the two middle fingers touched the precise midpoint between her breasts. Then she gently inclined her head, put a smile on her face and threw her hands energetically and yet gracefully upwards. During this movement the knuckles of her hands touched and only at the end did her arms mover apart and her palms turn forward” (Kundera, 1991: 182).

Further in the novel, this gesture is explained by Kundera in detail, sealing Bettina’s

motivation of immortalizing herself through artificial attachment of her name to Goethe’s through a hand-made story of long years of a love affair between Goethe and herself:

“The gesture of longing for immortality knows only two points in space: the self here, the horizon far in the distance; only two concepts: the absolute that is the self, and the absolute that is the world. The gesture has nothing in common with love, because the other, the fellow creature, the person between these two poles (the self and the world) is excluded in advance, ruled out of the game, invisible” (Kundera, 1991: 236).

Through this gesture Kundera accentuated Bettina’s disregard to her so-called beloved one, Goethe, who was excluded from the circle formed by her “gesture of longing for immortality”. Marina Tsvetaeva, who spoke about Bettina as a serious woman-poet who was not properly understood by Goethe, later uttered an idea similar to the one expressed in *Immortality*. Drafting her thoughts with regard to Rainer Maria Rilke, Marina Tsvetaeva wrote about Bettina von Arnim:

“Love cannot tolerate the third one. Bettina cannot tolerate the second one. Goethe for her – an obstacle. To love – alone. To love – all by herself. To load onto herself the entire mountain of love and carry it herself. So that it won’t be easy. So that it won’t be less”⁽⁹⁾ (Tsvetaeva).

Those words of Marina Tsvetaeva leave no ambiguity about Bettina’s motivation for trying to associate herself with Goethe the great.

CONCLUSION

The idea of achieving immortality through sociocultural contribution can have a wider application—not only at the individual level, but at the level of humankind as a unified whole. Vladimir Bekhterev insisted that “not one smile ever disappears without trace” and everything is preserved in the capacity of energy. He believed that individuals, mutually influencing each other, form “a general spiritual personality” within a certain context, which can be called a “spiritual personality of a nation”; and a number of “spiritual personalities of the nation” comprise “the universal spiritual personality” (Bekhterev, 2006: 79). Here we reach the point when Bekhterev formulated one of the main concepts of his immortality theory. Bekhterev believed in the attainment of the immortality of the nation through the continuity of its sociocultural

achievements which prevail over biological continuity through posterity or political continuity of the state. “The universal spiritual personality” is of a broader nature and unifies the whole of humanity across different national contexts. Thus, “the sociocultural immortality of the nation”, of each nation, comprises “the universal sociocultural immortality”.

The notion of “the universal sociocultural immortality” is close to Samuel Scheffler’s “the collective afterlife”, with the difference that the latter is self-defining and does not provide the path to attainment of the collective immortality (see Scheffler, 2012). In this instance, Milan Kundera is again acknowledged to reflect Bekhterev’s philosophy in his literary work. As an émigré and European writer, Kundera did not emphasize his national belonging. His “mortal characters”, Agnes, Laura, Paul, Bridgette and others, exist beyond their Frenchness and country borders, yet it is evident that they are Europeans and the citizens of the world. Kundera’s “immortals”, Goethe, Hemingway and Bettina, are too individualistic, personalized and outstanding to represent a certain nation. But what is the most important is that Kundera’s “immortals” embody the idea of a great inequality of human beings which results in the inevitable inequality of their achievements or sociocultural contribution to the “spiritual culture of humanity”.

Milan Kundera’s understanding of immortality gives hope to humanity to overcome death through artistic and social contribution to “the universal human spiritual personality”. This interpretation of immortality could originate from Russian philosophical thought of the second half of the 19th – the beginning of the 20th century, especially from the views of Leo Tolstoy and Fyodor Dostoevsky. By means of literature, Kundera unknowingly depicted Bekhterev’s philosophical theory of preservation of the universal energy and individual contribution to the “spiritual culture of humanity” and thus achieving immortality of greater or lesser significance. Kundera classified immortality into *minor*, *great* and *ridiculous immortality*; he also mentioned *immortality through suicide* and brought vivid examples for each type. Therefore, philosophical supposition and artistic interpretation of immortality have met in one point – the sociocultural theory of overcoming mortality.

Bringing Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Bettina von Arnim into the novel, Kundera

masterfully and ironically exemplified the inborn human desire for immortality and the tendency of great immortals to take special care of their immortal image once they achieve glory. Contrary to the great immortal Goethe, Bettina von Arnim was presented by Kundera as a second-rate creator who earned her immortality by purposely building the image of herself as a lover and muse of the great Goethe, whose promised immortality became evident at that moment. The chapters about Goethe-Bettina’s relations are full of irony, which is at times put in Goethe’s utterances and the attitudes expressed.

In his novel, Kundera went further and brought together Goethe and Hemingway in their imaginary afterlife. Among other reasons for putting together these so disparate authors, is their undeniable relation to the theme of immortality. Their fantasied dialogues in Kundera’s novel, especially the final one, in which Goethe declared his decision to go to oblivion, non-existence, attacked a common trend to air the dirty laundry of the artist and neglect his creation. Kundera’s Goethe preferred non-existence to immortality because he desired immortality for his oeuvre, but not for his personality and private life that had been anatomized by innumerable scholars and common readers. And here the character of far-sighted Bettina returned on the stage: she knew this would happen – she knew that the interest to this immortal’s life would overtake the genuine interest to his work. That was the reason she took so many strenuous efforts to be associated with Goethe as his life-long love affair.

In one of the chapters, Kundera described Bettina’s gesture which he named “the gesture of longing for immortality”. Apart from achieving a comical effect, Kundera explained how Bettina eliminated Goethe from the circle shaped by this gesture and thereby laid an emphasis on her attitude to Goethe as a bridge to her own immortality. “The gesture of longing for immortality” is central in a row of gestures that go through the novel. Another one, “the gesture of agelessness”, frames the novel and gives birth to the main heroine—Agnes. These gestures importunately lead to the notion of “the universal sociocultural immortality”, which can be achieved through the collective sociocultural contributions of humankind to “the universal spiritual personality” or the accumulated artistic and social achievements of humanity. Kundera, unintentionally following Bekhterev’s theory,

stressed upon the inequality of those contributions, just as if we compared Goethe's and Bettina's works. But regardless of the scale of contributions, they all build, according to Bekhterev, a "spiritual personality of a nation", a number of which comprises "the universal spiritual personality".

NOTES

(1) Original title of the speech in Russian: «Бессмертие человеческой личности как научная проблема».

(2) hereafter original quotations in the Russian language are brought for a reference; translation into English is mine. – О. В.): «такой способ существования систем, который предполагает обмен веществ, раздражимость, способность к саморегуляции, росту, размножению и адаптации к условиям среды».

(3) «естественное и необратимое прекращение жизнедеятельности биологической системы».

(4) «преодоление смертности и забвения человека и человеческого рода».

(5) «организм всякой превращается в другой, высший организм, и никогда не исчезает, так значит и человек не исчезнет и превратится в высший организм».

(6) «Говорят, человек разрушается и умирает *весь*. Мы уже потому знаем, что не *весь*, что человек, как физически рождающий сына, передает ему часть своей личности, так и нравственно оставляет память свою людям..., то есть входит <в рукописи: входят> частично своей прежней, жившей на земле личности, в будущее развитие человечества».

(7) In 1968, human death was redefined from the stopping of the heartbeat to the death of a brain; this fact can be contemplated in support of Bekhterev's theory.

(8) *Otherworld* is synonymous to *irreality*, *double-world* and *dream reality*. See Alexandrov, V. E. (1991). *Nabokov's otherworld*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

(9) «Любовь не терпит третьего. Беттина не терпит второго. Ей Гёте – помеха. Одна – любить. Сама – любить. Взять на себя всю гору любви и сама нести. Чтоб не было легче. Чтоб не было меньше».

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الخلود كإسهام اجتماعي وثقافي: رواية ميلان كونديرا الفلسفية والفكر الفلسفي الروسي

الخلاصة

تُرَكِّزُ هذه المقالة على دراسة رؤية ميلان كونديرا للخلود، حيث يرى أن الخلود هو إمكانية التغلب على الموت من خلال النشاط الإبداعي والعمل الاجتماعي الذي يقوم به الفرد خلال حياته. ومن خلال تحليل فكرة الخلود لدى كونديرا (1991)، نرى أن الرواية تتماشى بقوة مع النظرية الفلسفية التي تُعْتَبَرُ أَنَّ الخلود هو التأثير الأبديّ لحياة الناس وعملهم الإبداعي على عقول وأفعال الأجيال المقبلة. وبالتطرق إلى مسألتَي الحياة والموت الأبديتين، يتوصّل كونديرا في نهاية المطاف إلى حلّ توفيقٍ لطبيعة الحياة البشرية المؤقتة وهو مدى مساهمة الفرد اجتماعياً وثقافياً في الوعي الروحيّ للبشرية، والذي بموجبه يتم تقسيم الخالدين إلى نوعين رئيسيين وثانويين - الفنانون ورجال الدولة. وبما أن الإسهام ذو نطاقٍ واسعٍ ولا يتساوى بين المساهمين المختلفين، كذلك يمكن للخلود أن يختلف في مدى عظّمته.

والهدف من هذا المقال هو دراسة نظرية الخلود كإسهام اجتماعي ثقافي من المنظور الفلسفي لميلان كونديرا كما ينعكس في روايته *الخلود*. وبالعودة إلى المفاهيم الفلسفية والنفسية العصبية والنفسية والجسدية، والأعمال الأدبية الكلاسيكية والشخصيات في سياق البحوث المتعددة التخصصات، يمكننا القول إن آراء ميلان كونديرا حول الخلود مُستَمَدَّةٌ من الفكر الفلسفي الروسي في النصف الثاني من القرن التاسع عشر وبداية القرن العشرين، والذي يُمَثِّله بصفة خاصة كلُّ من ليو تولستوي وفيدودور دوستويفسكي، ومن الممكن القول إنَّ هذا الفكر يُوضِّح بصورة فنية النظرية الفلسفية لأحد أبرز الروّاد في هذا الموضوع، وإن كان منسياً بصورة غير عادلة، وهو الطّبيب النفسي وطبيب الأعصاب الروسي فلاديمير بيختيريف، الذي أسس معهد القديس بطرسبرغ للبحوث النفسية العصبية في عام 1907 وعرض فهمه للمسألة في عام 1916 في خطاب بعنوان "الخلود من وجهة النظر العلمية".

الكلمات الدالّة: الخلود الاجتماعي الثقافي، كونديرا، بيختيريف، تولستوي، دوستويفسكي.

پوخته

ئەم توپۆزىنە وەيە تىشك دەخاتە سەر لىكۆلېنە وە لەسەر تىپروانىنى مىلان كوندېرا بۇ نەمرى وەك چارەسەرېك بۇ زالبوونى تاك بەسەر مردندا لەپىگەى داھىنانى ھزرى و كارى كۆمەلايە تيە وە لەماوہى ژيانىدا. دوای شىكردنە وەى رۆمانى (نەمرى) كۆندېرا، كە لە سالى (1991) دا چاپكراوہ، توپۆزەر بروای وایە رۆمانەكە بە تەواوى لەگەل گرىمانە فەلسەفییەكەدا ھاوئاھەنگە. بەپىي گرىمانەكە نەمرى كارىگەرىيەكى ھەمىشەيى لەسەر ژيان و كارى داھىنەرانەى خەلك لەسەر مېشك و كرده وەكانى نەوہكانى داھاتوو دادەنېت. بە ئامازە كردن بە پرسىارە ھەمىشەيەكانى دەربارەى ناوہرۆكى ژيان و مردن دەكرېت، كۆندېرا دەگاتە چارەسەرېكى قايكەر بۇ سروشتى كورتخايەنى ژيانى مرؤف: بەشداريى كۆمەلايەتى كولتوورى تاكەكەسە لەلايەنى وىژدانى رۆحى مرؤقايەتيدا، كە بەھۆيە وە كەسايەتییە نەمرەكان دابەش دەكرېن بەسەر جۆرى سەرەكى و لاوہكىدا - ھونەرمانەند يان داھىنەرەكان و پياوانى دەولەت يان كەسايەتییە سياسىيەكان. لەبە ئوہى قەبارەى بەشدارىكردن مەودايەكى فراوانى ھەيە و يەكسان نىيە لەنيوان بەشداربووہ جياوازەكاندا بۆيە دەكرېت زۆرى و كەمى گرنكى نەمرى لە يەككە وە بۇ يەككى دىكە جياواز بېت.

ئامانجى ئەم توپۆزىنە وەيە ئەوہيە، كە لىكۆلېنە وە لەوہ بكات، كە لە روانگەى فەلسەفى مىلان كۆندېرە وە نەمرى چىيە و چۆن لە رۆمانى (نەمرى)دا رەنگى داوہ تەوہ. بە ئامازە كردن بە چەمكە فەلسەفى و دەروونى و فیزیاییەكان و كارە ئەدەبىيە كلاسىكییەكان و كەسايەتییەكان لە ماوہى لىكۆلېنە وە فرە زانستییەكاندا، دەتوانىن بلىين، كە تىپروانىنەكانى مىلان كوندېرا سەبارەت بە نەمرى لەوانەيە لە بىركردنە وەى فەلسەفى روسى نيوہى دووہمى سەدەى نۆزدەھەمە وە سەرەتای سەدەى بىستەم سەرچاوہى گرتبېت، بەتايە تىش لەلايەن لىو تۆلستوى و فيودور دۆستويفسكىيە وە ئامازەى پىكرابېت. ھەر وەھا باوہرمان وایە، كە رۆمانى (نەمرى) مىلان كوندېرا دەتوانېت لەرووى ھونەرىيە وە بىردۆزىكى فەلسەفى يەككە لە ديارترين و پېشەنگەكانى ئەو بوارە نیشان دەدات، ئەويش دەروونزان و پزىشكى دەمارى روسى قلاديمير بىختېرېف، كە بەشيوہيەكى نادادپەرمانە لەبىركراوہ. بىختېرېف لە سالى 1907 پەيمانگای توپۆزىنە وەى دەروونى سانت پىتەرسبېرگى دامەزراند و لە سالى 1916 لە وتارىكدا بە ناوئىشانى "نەمرى لەروانگەى زانستییە وە" گرىمانەى خۆى دەربارەى نەمرى پىشكەشكرد.

كلىلە وشەكان: نەمرى كولتوورى و كۆمەلايەتى كۆندېرا، بىختېرېف، تۆلستوى، دۆستويفسكى.