

MAXIMUM ABOUT "MAXIMS"

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Abstract:

The article is dedicated to "Maxims" of Lord Chesterfield as a remarkable document of the era, containing pedagogical ideas and recommendations that make one think and argue in an effort to resolve the eternal dispute between fathers and children. The author reflects on the place and significance of the genre of the maxim in general and in the work of Chesterfield, in particular, as the expressive power of a sentential utterance, which is the spark that is struck by the tension between the expressed and the implied, the designated and the undesignated. The author is convinced that the maxim is initially charged with personal potential, loaded with someone's living experience, and this experience continues to live in it, turning the maxim into an actively creative substance-subject.

Keywords: Maxim, genre, sayings, aphorism, universe, experience.

Introduction

Once the great Czech humanist thinker, philosopher, historian, and founder of modern pedagogy and author of the book "Didactica Magna" Jan Amos Comenius (1592-1670), reflecting on possible means of eliminating social vices and seeing a rationally organized education as one of the main such means, once noted: "My guides and everyone who wanders in the world are two: the audacity of the mind, examining everything, and the old habit of things, giving the appearance of truth to the seductions of the world. If you follow them with reason, then, whoever you are, you will see, as I do, the unhappy confusion of your generation, and if it seems to you the opposite, then know that the glasses of ordinary error have been placed on your nose, through which you see everything incorrectly" [19, c.75].

This thought of the great Czech thinker has a direct relation to one of the interesting enlighteners of England Philip Dormer Stanhope Chesterfield (1694-1773) and his "Letters to his son" - a remarkable document of the era, containing pedagogical

ideas and recommendations that make one think and argue in an effort to resolve the eternal dispute between fathers and sons, which Jan Amos Comenius pondered more than a century before the birth of the lord. "Letters to his son" by the English writer, publicist, moral philosopher Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield, the great freethinker of the French Enlightenment Voltaire called a very instructive book, the best of all that has ever been written about education. Today, as readers of this book, we are struck by many things in these letters from the point of view of another environment and another era, but at the same time, we understand perfectly well that this book is extraordinary in its content and that it receives a timeless status precisely because it is an excellent reflection of the era that it was born of, probably because at all times and eras, a father always remains a father and whose only goal and meaning in life is to invariably raise his son as a worthy person and continuer of family traditions.

A very reasonable question may arise: what do maxims have to do with it? The fact is that, turning the pages of a truly unique book called "Letters to his son," written by Chesterfield for his young traveling son, one is subtly imbued with the thought of how many sayings, maxims, aphorisms there are, bursting out from the depths of the soul like pearls of the language of a father's heart, giving insight into something new in instruction and, at the same time, allowing continuity to be preserved even in the gaps that form human experience. From this follows the conclusion that the expressive power of a sentential utterance is the spark that is struck by the tension between the expressed and the implied, the designated and the undesigned. And this fact is worthy of deeper research. We know well and accept as an axiom the maxims of the philosophers of ancient Greece, the sayings of the eastern sages and the aphorisms of old China, but we do not always think about the semantics of this true pearl of folk and literary-philosophical thinking.

Research Methodology

The theoretical and methodological foundations of such research, as a rule, do not appear in the form of a priori principles, but are developed, as we see it, as we turn to various components of the cultural universe. In addition, we considered various collections of moral sayings and aphorisms in the East-West aspect as an independent methodological source in the article, therefore, reflection on the maxims is largely determined, directed and adjusted by the content of these works.

Discussion and Results

In the history of European literature, one can observe three metamorphoses of the maxim genre, and one of these dates back to the era of classicism (18th century), which gave birth to aphorisms-maxims, where the primary, unspoken understanding is directly introduced into the structure of the utterance, thanks to the play on the semantics of words. At the same time, it turns out that in the maxim, the arrangement of the words themselves relative to each other is most significant [1, p. 16].

In one of the letters to his son dated December 12, 1749 (Letter LII), Lord Chesterfield separately wrote "Maxims" especially for his son, which were sent to him along with the letter.

This prompted us to the idea of deep search into the semantics and content of the word "maxim".

Maxim (Lat. maxima sententia – the highest principle) is a short saying that formulates a moral or everyday rule in a clear form (17, p. 758). A maxim often has an edifying character, encouraging specific actions. The Shorter Oxford Dictionary (SOD) defines it as a sentence (in aphoristic or sentential form) expressing some general truth of science or experience; The Oxford dictionary of philosophy [18] gives a more specific definition as a simple, easy-to-remember life rule or guideline.

In literature, a **maxim** is related to an aphorism - a saying that expresses a generalized, complete thought in a laconic form.

The emergence of the term "maxima" in the European cultural tradition is usually associated with the name of François VI de La Rochefoucauld (1613-1680), who called "Maxims" a collection of his aphorisms and sayings, published in 1665. In subsequent times, many books were published with titles or subtitles such as "Maxims and Aphorisms", "Maxims and Thoughts", "Maxims and Reflections" by such authors as Luc de Clapiers Vauvenargues (1715-1747), Sebastien-Rocq de Chamfort (1741-1794), Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860), Charles Augustin de Sainte-Beuve (1804-1869), Philip Chesterfield (1694-1773), etc.

The spiritual life of a person, as is known, takes place at different levels. These can be reflections on the most global problems - on the origin of the universe, on the forces that govern the Cosmos, supporting its existence. These can be reflections

on the fate of the human race, its place in the Universe and purpose. Finally, these can also be thoughts of a specific person about one of the representatives of the human race, personally about himself - a living, unique and inimitable "I". And if far from every individual in the past, as now, was concerned with problems related to the beginnings of the universe as a whole, then the problems of one's own personal existence, one's special place in the structure of the universe have never left anyone indifferent.

It is legitimate to ask the question: in what elementary thought forms is human life experience conceptualized? From what "bricks" does he lay out the building of his personal spiritual culture? It seems that the choice here is more than wide, and this suggests that there is something missing in this niche, that any of these is missing something, that there must be a concept that would synthesize the content of all the above-mentioned concepts and at the same time not be reduced to them, not be decomposed into them without a remainder.

The logic of the presentation suggests that this is a special kind of philosophical thought, concentrated in a small linguistic clot - a maxim.. The assessment of morality from the point of view of its purity and consequences is carried out in accordance with ideas, and following its laws - in accordance with maxims. And although this concept is often encountered in philosophical and humanitarian literature in general, its significance as a component of the universe of culture is still far from being realized. The concept of a maxim has not yet been the focus of theoretical research and is often ignored even by compilers of fundamental reference works on philosophy and cultural studies. A maxim is a rule that connects an action with the causes of the action, i.e. motivation (goal or context).

Maxim, as understood by Chesterfield, is an edifying rule of conduct or a basic principle by which a person should be guided in his actions. Maxim, in his interpretation, is such a form of human existence in a culture that, being filled with an edifying role, is constantly also loaded with the ideological content of the teacher's own way of thinking. Chesterfield's maxims are not just instructions and exhortations of a moral and pedagogical nature, they are, if one can put it this way, pieces of a huge life and state experience as being a great statesman and political figure, Chesterfield at the same time does not forget that he is a father, whose responsibilities include caring for the development of his child, his future in the broadest sense of the word.

In “Letters to his son” one can clearly feel a burgeoning, lively interest in the inner experience of man, in the problem of moral choice so characteristic of the New Age, when detachment from former sacred things and even possible rebellion against them, partly reminiscent of the turn to humanitarian rationalism in Europe of that era.

Being one of the means of gaining a harmonious and balanced worldview, maxim is simultaneously a formulation of a certain aspect of the purpose and meaning of human life, based on the accumulated rich life experience. However, one should not attach special importance to the terminological side of the matter. The word “maxim” may simply be unfamiliar to a person who is quite consciously guided in his life by certain rules and principles, but does not know that these are maxims that expressed in prose. Therefore, there is every reason to characterize as maxims such sayings and principles that appeared in cultures where Latin terminology was not used or did not play a noticeable role in the language.

In this sense, the **maxims** will also include the sayings of the Greek Eastern sages, the aphorisms of Confucius, Lao Tzu and Zhuang Tzu, or the maxims of the famous Chinese writer Pu Songlin, “Tales of Liao Zhai about the Extraordinary,” as well as “Jawahir al-asmar” (Pearls of Conversations) by Imad ibn Muhammad an-Naari (XIY c.). In this series, the “Hotamname” or “Maqama” of Abu Muhammad al-Qasim al-Hariri (1054-1122) are worthy of attention, as are the sayings in the genre of zuihitsu - classical Japanese prose of the 11th-14th centuries, “Notes at the Pillow” of Sei Shonagon (966-1017) - instructions on life and morality, which is reminiscent of Confucius with his judgments and conversations, or a significant number of maxims from the book “Uninvited Tale” (XIY c.) created by a maid of honor of the imperial court named Nijo; maxims are used wherever there is talk of conceptualizing the author's life experience, of the generalizing nature of statements, where the task is to indicate the signs and guidelines of a righteous, virtuous, worthy life for a person. At the same time, it should be noted that the overwhelming majority of authors of maxims do not ask, as a rule, the question of the philosophical and cultural status of this genre of reflection. In their works, one can find much that is valuable not only in the substantive-axiological sense, but also in the purely theoretical-cognitive aspect, when the author makes the form of his thoughts the subject of reflection, which becomes, in essence, the form of his existence in culture.

What do **maxims** teach us? Maxims are a form of human existence in culture that, while playing an instrumental, technological role, is constantly loaded with worldview content. Being one of the means of acquiring a harmonious and balanced worldview, maxims simultaneously turn out to be a formulation of a certain aspect of the purpose and meaning of human life. By mastering the art of maxims, realizing them as not just “existing” norms, but also as true ones, the cognizing subject invades new spheres of existence - higher in comparison with the reality of the available empiricism (morals, customs, traditional regulations). By means of maxims, the reality of the due is revealed, not reducible to the existing, although erected on its basis. It is this ontological reality that is reflected in imperatively formulated statements, which in form do not have any “objective” correlates. One thing is certain: only a norm that has been assessed and has passed the test of compliance with what is due becomes a maxim.

The truth that is revealed to people through **maxims** is essentially simple, elementary, and clear. A certain minimum of rich life experience and education and a willingness to honestly, without hypocrisy, look into oneself, to see one's "Ego" - that is all, in our opinion, the conditions for its "revelation".

The **maxim** is initially charged with personal potential, loaded with someone's living experience, and this experience continues to live in it, turning the maxim into an actively creative substance-subject. Penetrating into the depths of the author's thought, we begin to accept its self-integrity and self-worth, for it is valuable to us insofar as we consider it our own, grown within. At the same time, the personality of the creator of the maxim does not disappear in it, but pulsates in it: everyone who addresses it, as if sees a look directed at him, which limits his arbitrariness. The dimensionality of the maxim, i.e. harmony and balance between the semantic-cultural quality and quantity of the maxim as a verbalization character of information, acts as the condition that gives it energy and ensures durability.

The dimensionality is the necessary attribute that protects the maxim from excessive attention. Thanks to this quality, the maxim becomes a form of accumulation of moral knowledge and enrichment of intellectual potential for those whose spiritual needs are inexhaustible. In the spiritual universe of such thinkers there will always be enough room for a new worldview truth, and they do not have to move the pearls of value in order to free up the capacity for newcomers.

This is exactly what Lord Chesterfield does, turning to the **maxim** as such an elementary form of spiritual life, in which the indissoluble unity of the subjective and objective principles is preserved in the fluidity and discreteness of the inner, spiritual and esoteric life of man: it changes, and at the same time preserves that principle, that substance, which is not subject to change. At the same time, there are such structures in consciousness that allow us to photograph the ever-changing reality, to stop moments. In their elementary form, these are, generally speaking, those forms of thinking that are known in logic under the name of judgments, but if we speak specifically about various moments and aspects of human life, then we will be dealing with maxims. Since the maxim is such a logical form, where the subjective and objective are welded into an inseparable unity. The maxim indicates, advises, prescribes, as someone does, who is outside our consciousness, i.e. someone outside, objective in relation to us as subjects, but at the same time invisibly close and pointing us in the right direction.

Conclusion

"Letters to his son" and "Maxims" remain applicable to our lives to this day. Little tricks of communication and great wisdom of etiquette, seasoned with satirical English humor - all this is not at all like a count's upbringing, from which you expect boring paternal instructions. This is what makes Chesterfield interesting as the author of "Letters to his son" to this day. Written simply and in an accessible language in the style of the manual "How to raise a decent and well-mannered person", it is easy and very interesting to read.

It remains to say that the love for the genre of maxims has not disappeared with time, and people still turn to it today. And in the XXI century, writers and philosophers have not ceased to feel the need for direct spiritual ethical and philosophical communication. Something in this genre is dear to thinkers of all times. But, apparently, not only to them.

It remains to note one more, now quite obvious, property of the maxim – its philosophical and didactic nature. Since the maxim reveals or implies the presence of the “other” and, thus, the ethical distance between man and the world, the speaker of maxims inevitably takes the position of a teacher, even if he, as the embodiment of truth not in its final instance, is not entirely sure what he teaches, and, moreover, cannot directly transmit anything to others. And Chesterfield proves

that the English maxim was never just the fruit of detached reflection: it always maintained a living connection with the wisdom of life and practice, communicated the unity of experience and imagination.

We conclude the article with the words of the medieval Japanese writer and poet Kenko* - the author of the famous Japanese classical prose of the XI-XII centuries "Notes from Boredom" - that "Everything in the world has a special charm in its beginning and in its end ... and yet it is impossible not to talk about the same thing again and again." How rightly this is said, and all this fully applies to the "Letters to his son" and "Maxims" by Lord Chesterfield.

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* Yoshida Kenko (Japanese: 吉田 兼好 Yoshida Kenko or Kenko-Hoshi is his monastic name (hoshi is a monk, literally: one who guides in the dharma,

Buddhist teaching), and his real name is Urabe Kaneyoshi (Japanese: 卜部 兼好), 1283-1350) - Japanese writer and poet of the Kamakura and Muromachi periods, the author of the zuihitsu (essay) "Notes from Boredom" (Tsureszuregusa, Japanese: 徒然草, 1330-1332). He was also famous as a poet under his real name Urabe Kaneyoshi, nicknamed "one of the four heavenly poets".

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