

BULGARIAN LITERATURE IN SEARCH OF THE MAN OF MODERN TIMES

THE MODERN MAN OF THE BULGARIAN REVIVAL.
THE EDUCATOR MODERNIZER RAYNO POPOVICH.
TRAVELOGUES AND PROJECTS BY IVAN BOGOROV

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Although centuries later, the Bulgarian Revival is the successor of both Renaissance and Europe's New Age. "*The epoch of the Bulgarian Revival in its essence is accepted as a period of assimilation of modernity in its various dimensions - historical, philosophical and aesthetic*" (Nikolova 2003: 134). The specific historical conditions under which this process takes place make possible the long coexistence of elements of the dying and the emerging era, combining features of medieval culture, traditional folklore practice and modern European cultures.

The history of the Bulgarian people during the transition to the values and stereotypes of the Modern Age has been the subject of in-depth scientific research for more than half a century, as a result, an extensive corpus of publications dedicated to the transformation of Bulgarian society into a modern European one was formed¹. But the concept of *modernity* turns out to be too complex and it allows for more interpretations than those inherent in the meaning of the lexeme. It is one of the concepts whose senses often contradict each other and whose interpretations enter into complex, even conflicting relationships. Only the perspective chosen gives an advantage to one of the interpretations. The diversity of potential perspectives determines the existence of different ideas of the concept of *modernity*.

Modernity - the 'problematic' definition

The current talk does not aim to completely exhaust the topic of modernity. However, it is clear that addressing the different processes during the Bulgarian Revival requires extensive research. That is why we focus on several important Revival notions of modernity particularly how the Revival educators Ivan Bogorov and Rayno Popovich contribute to *Revival modernity*.

Faces of Revival modernity

An important declaration of the modern mentality is "*addressing the ancient and eastern civilizations as a source of wisdom in the formation of the modern moral code*" (Danova 2003: 18). This emblematic call for turning back to Antiquity is also observed among Bulgarians, although it is significantly less intense, less frequent and less profound (Metodieva 2018: 103). This view of the problem implies defining as *modern* those structures, phenomena and social entities which have been absent up until this moment but are connected to what we define as modern and what brings Bulgaria closer to European values - this is the new Bulgarian school, which is the main modern need of Bulgarian society during the Revival. To support this statement we examine the literary work of Rayno Popovich.

¹ Because the research literature on the topic is vast, the present text mainly cites fundamental publications, encyclopedic articles, and more recent articles on the subject.

The biography of this prominent Bulgarian teacher is presented in detail by N. Balabanov (Balabanov 1921). Popovich's pedagogic and literary work are undoubtedly the best examples of his ceaseless efforts in the service of the Bulgarian education and in the proliferation of *modern European values* among Bulgarians. In his life's work there can be found fascinating reflections about the spiritual emancipation and the transforming mental attitude of the Bulgarians in the process of adopting the modern European values.

Following the spirit of the times, Rayno Popovich was interested in the humanities. The dominant role of the humanities during the Bulgarian Revival is determined by an ideological prerequisite - these sciences outline the place of ethnicity in the cultural world history and civilization (Mihova 2001: 117). An example of this are the words of Gavril Krustevich about his teacher Rayno: *"I still remember, his teaching was always very skillful, pleasant and clear, and with all the historical, philological and other necessary explanations accompanied."* (Penev 1976: 394).

In this respect, the of great interest is the Renaissance textbook *Христоповѣ или Благонравіе присовокупена съ Исторіитѣ на които са помануватъ въ нея за полъза и оупотребленіе на Болгарското юношество, и секому, който люби да са полъзова*, in short *Hristoitiya (Manual of Good Behavior)*, which Rayno Popovich publishes in Constantinople in 1837 in the printing house of Tadeya Divitchiyan. For the translation of *Hristoitiya* Rayno Popovich sets a clear goal: *"to the readers, with many wise teachings as to enable them to learn, and to enrich their lives, so that people become considerate and benevolent"* (Metodieva 2018: 102).

Upon examining the preface to the *Hristoitiya* the translator shows that the ancient authors mentioned by name, together with quotations from their works, address some of the main themes that *"excited anyone who sets out on the path of learning about the world and self-knowledge, which is an important goal for the man of the Enlightenment"* (Metodieva 2018: 103). The following words are also in the spirit of the Bulgarian teacher's ideas about Enlightenment: *"Our mistake is the great coldness towards teaching and the great disdain for reading, which creates ignorance, stupidity, and a great eclipse of all virtues."* (Metodieva 2018: 107).

In other words, his conclusions on the subject are personal because they are shared with the author of the original textbook, and on the other hand, coincide with the idea of the modern man of the time.

Rayno Popovich's *Hristoitiya* ends with a short prosopography of the social group of historically important figures whose names are mentioned in the book. Found there are biographical data on Aristotle, Diogenes, Isocrates, Homer, Plato, Pythagoras, Zeno, Socrates, as well as their most popular quotes or anecdotes, concerning the topics of teaching, knowledge, ethics, friendship, etc., with which they are remembered (Metodieva 2018: 102). This information is also in accordance with the European ideas of the Enlightenment where the pursuit of encyclopedism is expressed in the *The Remarkable Sayings, Apothegms, and Maxims of the Eastern Nations* published by the French orientalist Antoine Galland (1694) (Danova 2003: 12). Thus, the enlightened scholar, who settled in Karlovo, never missed the opportunity to present accessible knowledge to his students and readers, knowledge about the most brilliant names of Hellenic Antiquity, which represents practically the first such attempt in Bulgarian literature².

The set limitations prevent us from further commenting on the other features of *Hristoitiya*, but in this case it is important to emphasize that the handling of Antiquity is a clear example of the contribution to the popularization of Greco-Roman antiquity in Bulgaria during the 19th century, and of the benefit that such knowledge brings to those who have

² It is these types of texts that provide information about everyday behaviour and practices, but also about what modern times demand of men - becoming a citizen. See (Mihova 2003: 170-171).

embarked on the path of modernity. It is teachers like Rayno Popovich who show that Bulgarian culture has moved closer to the modern European world and values that pass through the insight in classical antiquity. There is a very clear Enlightenment idea that man forges his own destiny, which is rooted in enlightened secular knowledge.

The merits of the teacher from Karlovo are not limited to the translation of *Hristoitiya*. The interest in Antiquity is complemented by an interest in other significant works that are widely distributed. Such is the extensive extract of Aesop's fables, which Rayno Popovich translated in 1854. The translation of Aesop's fables can also be seen as a manifestation of the tendency to join the large cultural community of Europeans who have already adopted such works. And it gives grounds to assume that continuity and compatibility is possible between the universal European educational project and the Bulgarian processes. The development of the fable genre aptly illustrates the role of translations in the emergence of original works and in the formation of genre features. The presence of translation in the history of Bulgarian literature is fundamental for determining the genre genesis and development of the individual genre forms in the old Bulgarian and modern Bulgarian literature. Popovich's name is also associated with the publication of *Mladago Robinsona - sluchai* from 1857 - the first translation of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* in Bulgaria.

A testimony of the magnitude of the teacher Popovich and the scope of his activities is the great number of eminent students: G.S. Rakovski, G. Krastevich from Kotel, Ivan and G. Shopov, G. Zolotavich, St. Uvaliev, D. Nestorov, N. Ivanov from Kalofer, K. Hamadzhiev from Sopot, D. Todorov from Tulcea, S. Filaretov from Zheravna, brothers Evstati, Hristo and Stefan Geshov from Plovdiv, Botyo Petkov, Iv. Bogorov, Hr. Popvassilev, Br. Hadjigenov, D. Popov, M. Tantylov, At. Madjarov, Evl. and Hr. Georgiev, Iv. and Dim. Geshov, the brothers Pulev from Karlovo and others.

The manuscript *Opisanie na Karlovo* [Description of Karlovo] from 1842 should also be added to Popovich's contributions. Thus, Rayno Sabev Stoyanov became an enlightener for the entire Bulgarian people, especially in the southern territories of then Rumelia. It is because of this that historical science is indebted to this unjustly neglected teacher, whose rich legacy provides a foundation, thanks to which, he should be permanently inscribed in the historical memory of all Bulgarians, and in this aspect, be one of the most emblematic figures in the face of the gradually modernizing European culture. And all this with the clear understanding that the school, and the school alone, is the only reliable means to unite the Bulgarian ethnic consciousness into a unified whole.

Modern Revival Periodicals

The other significant process of the legitimation of modernity during the Bulgarian Revival era is defined in the field of periodicals. The pages of the press raise questions about whether the modern is useful, whether the modern is good. This synchrony between Bulgarian culture and that of European modernity is most vividly noticeable in the periodical, and since periodicals are dependent on the pragmatic dimensions of life, they offer particularly interesting manifestations of the adoption of modernity in a given cultural context, which cultural context is distinctly present on the pages of the publications. The newspaper becomes an institution that suggests the possibility that thinking operates with abstractions for the progress of everyday life. "*The presence of the periodical itself in Revival society forms habits, satisfies interests, teaches lessons on general knowledge of the world, which already places the newspaper in the formation of the Revival notions of modernity*" (Getova 2009: 48). Reflections of these phenomena suggest the innovative models, which crystallized in the activity of the Karlovo student and 'innovator' Ivan Bogorov.

Ivan Bogorov

Dr. Ivan Bogorov's life is multifaceted, almost unfathomable, and filled with constant travelling. As early as 1841, Bogorov began his literary pursuits with the publication of lithographs of the Bulgarian rulers Ivan Asen and Ivan Shishman from Hristofor Zhefarovich's *Stemmatographia*. A year later he compiled and published the first folklore collection of *Balgarski narodni pesni i poslovitsi* [Bulgarian folk songs and proverbs].

From 1846 onwards, Ivan Bogorov devoted himself to the newspaper business, "without letting the ceiling fall" on him (Mihova 2001: 100) and guided by the understanding that: "All the peoples around us have raised their heads and have seen what is happening in the world and know what they should do... Shouldn't we at least mutter a word before the kingdoms of the nations of the world?... And we Bulgarians should start to feel like a nation that has the same rights as other European nations!" (Bogorov 1846: 1). In 1848 Dr. Bogorov created the longest-running newspaper during the Revival - *Tsarigradski viestnik* [Constantinople newspaper]. Bogorov was not only the pioneer of Bulgarian journalism, but he also defined the genre of journalism, whose main task is the presentation of "the news as daily current information" (Mihova 2001: 101). As emphasized, the presence of the periodical itself in the culture of the Revival society forms habits, satisfies interests, teaches lessons on general knowledge of the world, which already places the newspaper in the formation of the Revival notions of modernity (Getova 2009: 48), because the newspaper is a product of modern culture. Due to its functional premise - to unite and civilize, the newspaper gradually shapes the image of the modernizing Revival society. As a consequence of Bulgarian's financial stability and confidence, the role of periodicals in everyday communication is increased. Therefore, the newspaper becomes one of the main tools of communicating new cultural ideas and *forms of urban life* - one of the **essential characteristics of modernity**. That is why one of the main definitions of the newspaper is that it is the *difference between the world yesterday and today* (Kardouni 1993), through it the community is not only informed. Through the newspapers, society is not only formed and informed, but this also places the newspaper in the context of modern times.

Another area in which the impact of Enlightenment ideology can be clearly detected is the *problem of language*. The problem of what the national literary (standard) language should be, in terms of meaning, exceeds the limits of an ordinary philological exercise. In line with these ideas, in 1844 Ivan Bogorov published his most significant linguistic work, the famous *Parvichka balgarska gramatika* [First Bulgarian Grammar]. As a passionate defender of linguistic purism, Bogorov's ideas are clearly expressed in the pamphlets *Upatvane za balgarskiya ezik* (1870) [Guidelines for the Bulgarian Language] in three issues, as well as the magazines *Chistobalgarska nakovalnya za sladkodumstvo* (1878 - 1879) [Pure Bulgarian Anvil for Eloquence] and *Branilnik* (1880) [Defender]. It should be noted that Bogorov remained a strong advocate for the preservation of the Bulgarian language from foreign influences until the end of his life. The introduction of the vernacular language in literature is a crucial step on the path of modernization, as it ensures that more layers of society have access to literacy and education. It is also worth noting that Bogorov 'forged' a new conceptual system and managed to introduce words such as *pratenik* [messenger], *belezhka* [note], *chakalnya* [waiting room], *deynost*, [activity] *obnoski* [manners], and dozens more. Thus Bogorov fulfills Paisii's testament: "Know your own kind and your own language."

Bogorov also applies the spirit of modernity in texts related to didactic education. "He puts forward a self-aware status of the modern meaning of the state system" (Getova 2009: 14-15). He achieves this through the national territory. It is known that the Revival notions of the native somehow "naturally reconcile the fundamental duality of the model of a modern nation" (Getova 2009: 14-15). This is a model of a complex unity between the modern data about geography and description in general, as a priority for exploring worlds, and the inner

motivation, and the preservation of the native, in terms of traditions and conservative resources. That is why he publishes *Kratka geografiya* [Short Geography] with the clear goal: “*that it is decent for everyone to know the place where they live, better than others, and therefore in this book as much as possible is written about the Turkish kingdom, whose description might be extended over time.*” (Bogorov 1851: 1).

Bogorov understood well the benefits of *knowledge about the native land*, so he “*aimed to multiply*” over time the description of the Turkish kingdom, because it was mainly inhabited by Bulgarians (Mladenov 2003). The product of these ideas is the first published travelogue in Bulgaria - *Nyakolko dena razkhodka po balgarskite mesta* (1868) [A Few Days of Walking Around Bulgarian Places]. As mentioned in his book “*[the] main idea of this journey was to help the development of the sense of leadership among the Bulgarian people, so that it might be easier for them to recognize the path of their self-enrichment, on which their well-being and prosperity depend. For this reason our remarks in this booklet apply more to industry.*” (Bogorov 1868: 4).

Despite the stipulation of the purely pragmatic purposes of the work, Bogorov’s *Walk* is “*distinguished by a fine observation and skill in describing local customs, habits, dress and life*” (Nikolova 2009: 291). As a conclusion to each of his travelogues Bogorov expresses his opinion for a future better economic and commercial development. Such is the case of Bogorov’s tour of Plovdiv, where he writes:

“It is therefore time to run to produce other springs of profit, i.e. to set up a factory for weaving stuffs, and especially for cotton, for which Plovdiv, by its location in the middle of the country, provides the most resources and skill of making things; and by this means we shall not only entice the foreign merchants to come to us again, but we shall also obtain for them endless wealth, the source of all prosperity... and every Bulgarian student who finds profit and livelihood in his dear motherland will not go to waste in foreign places to seek sustenance, to go far away from relatives and friends, to go out of the country and to toil so much, that often his bones remain there.” (Nikolova 2009: 214-215).

During his stay in Plovdiv³, in the 1860s, Bogorov saw that the people “*had more need of craftsmanship (industry)*” than of medicine. When Ivan Bogorov decided to deal with “*craftsmanship*”, i.e. with the economic prosperity of Bulgarians, Europe had already witnessed unprecedented industrial progress (Getova 2009: 135), which Bogorov had the opportunity to experience in Paris⁴, Leipzig⁵, and Constantinople. The journalist realized that the industrialization of the Bulgarian lands and the specialization of knowledge would be the most certain way to integrate Bulgarians into the bourgeois values of modern Europe and published the first economic magazine *Zhurnal za nauka, zanayat i targovia* [Journal of Science, Craft and Trade] in 1862, alongside his work as a doctor in Plovdiv.

³ Bogorov stayed in Plovdiv many times, longer in the 1860s and 1870s. In Plovdiv he managed to combine his medical practice with the publication of the *Zhurnal za nauka, zanayat i targovia* [Journal of Science, Craft and Trade] and the *Osnova za napravata na edna fabrika da prede i tache pamuk v Plovdiv* [Bases for the Making of a Factory to Spin and Weave Cotton in Plovdiv], as well as other publications. See in more detail (Nikolova 2009: 291).

⁴ After his stay in Paris, Bogorov became an outspoken follower of English and French economic classicism in the person of Smith and JB Say. In the spirit of this school, hereinafter Bogorov will pay close attention to the economic factor of social development. See in more detail (Kanev 2002: 175-177).

⁵ When Bogorov was in Leipzig he had the opportunity to catch the pulsations of manufacturing, the railways, book publishing. At that time Leipzig was the centre of trade between East and West. See in more detail (Kanev 2002: 175-176).

The point of the *Journal* is stated from the beginning: “*Science has for its object the development and dissemination of wealth in society and the masterful life of a people[...] The knowledge of natural laws constitutes science, the use of these laws constitutes masterful skills...*” (Bogorov 2015: 158).

First, according to Bogorov, we have to learn to make money, which is done with hard work, industry and trade. The European experience has already proved that “*agriculture, industry and trade constitute the main sources of the wealth of nations*” (Kanev 2002: 180-181). In other words, his conclusions on the matter are personal and, on the other hand, coincide with the ideas of the Enlightenment:

“Wealth is everything that can serve us for something, everything that can be useful to us.[...] Everyone will learn, from the writings in this book, about the great resourceful and skillful craftsmen, and by using these observations the desire and needs of Bulgarian craftsmanship, progress and prosperity will be made stronger” (Bogorov 2015: 2).

In order for trade to flourish, we have to industrialize, to replace our crafts “*with those that civilization has honored*” (Kanev 2002: 181). Without this “*accumulation of bourgeois consciousness*” (Kanev 2002: 181), the Bulgarians’ rise on the path to Europeanization would not have been possible. It is not necessary to study in detail the articles that appeared in the issues of the *Journal* to get a sense of its scope and intentions. In this case, we will refer to a few emblematic passages, leading us to the idea of the modern man of the Bulgarian Revival:

“From the study of craftsmanship we can say that the value and yield of the objects made is obvious: 1. by the natural forces; 2. by man’s mental forces and by work; finally, most often, by the union of two elements. For this, wealth and education rest today on the accumulation of the instruments of work such as: machines, produced by the aid of the mind and the various sciences[...].” (Bogorov 2015: 2).

On the basis of the above, it can be assumed that already in the middle of the 19th century the *Journal* affirmed two modes of establishing modernity - through scientific progress and through the high supra-revival economic reality that could only exist as part of European modernity. An insight into Bogorov’s texts reveals the love with which he speaks about Bulgarian modernization processes, what sadness overcomes him when he remembers the beautiful words of his native tongue, and what faith enlightens his spirit when his eyes behold the pure language, uncorrupted by foreign words. In the process of modernization Bogorov has a faith that is selfless, for its truths he fights with all the strength of his journalistic and artistic words.

The above examples give reason to speak of new trends already emerging in the spiritual life of the Bulgarians, which due to the marked specifics in the development of Bulgarian society - the slowing down of the establishment of the bourgeoisie and the gradual integration into modern secular education - are beginning to make their way. The multiplicity of potential approaches to the topic determines the possibility of the existence of different notions and evaluations of the historical paradigm. It can only be added that it is in this change of attitude towards the phenomena belonging to education, economy, and news that one of the most essential elements in the process of modernization, unequivocally affirmed by Rayno Popovich and Ivan Bogorov, is expressed. Thus, their figures travel through time as some of the first ‘modernizers’ in the new Bulgarian history. In this respect, they also set a

rare example - with their idealism and their persistence. Their generation is one of the greatest and most prolific that the Bulgarian Revival has known.

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