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**A.V. MIKHAILOV'S THEORY OF  
THE BAROQUE IN HIS  
"KULTURWISSENSCHAFT"**

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## **A.V. MIKHAILOV’S THEORY OF THE BAROQUE IN HIS “KULTURWISSENSCHAFT”<sup>2</sup>**

This study aims to present that A.V. Mikhailov’s historical method is systematic. Special attention is given to historical-anthropological dimension of the A.V. Mikhailov's theory of the baroque. The article shows that Mikhailov's historical anthropology should be viewed as a constitutive part of his “Kulturwissenschaft”, opposed both to the literary science and to the positivist historiography by means of commitment to historize human sciences through the notion of «new historicism».

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Alexander Viktorovich Mikhailov (1938 - 1995) was one of the most prominent Russian scholars of the late Soviet period, which joined in his work with a rigorous academic humanistic desire to overcome borders (internal and external), created by a totalitarian ideologies of the twentieth century. The theory of the European Baroque culture developed by A.V. Mikhailov reflects the special position of the literary science in the USSR and a difficult fate of this theory shows the specificity of the development of intellectual culture in post-Soviet Russia.

Unlike Mikhail Bakhtin and Sergei Averintsev (who was his colleague at the Gorky Institute of World Literature in Moscow), Mikhailov is much less known in the West. In Russia he's known primarily as a philologist, Germanist, specialist in German Romanticism and translator of M. Heidegger, but one of the major research interests of Mikhailov, who owned seven languages (including Latin and Greek), was the Early Modern period.

Despite the wide recognition of Mikhailov among literary scholars and philosophers who are interested in hermeneutics, he has not been considered at all as a baroque theorist. Meanwhile, Mikhailov's theory of the baroque allows for a historical parallel between the intellectual culture of Early Modern period and the Soviet reality. Moreover, the baroque novel concept reflects some hope for a renewal of man and society, which will clearly express itself in the period of Perestroika. "The Poetics of the Baroque", written by Mikhailov under the influence of Bakhtin's theory of the novel, can be attributed to historical and philosophical anthropology, rather than literary science: it deals with a man born in the Early Modern times, with all his internal contradictions and complexity. Moreover, it is a natural development trend away from an anthropological reductionism, as manifested in Soviet culture since the turn of the 1960s–1970s. Using the notion of «new historicism», Mikhailov seeks to open the way to a kind of new anthropology related to the search for a language on which one could adequately reflect on the changes that have taken place with the human personality for centuries. The knowledge of such a person implies the knowledge of his historical situation, which is comprehended through the hermeneutic method. Thus, Mikhailov linked the study of the culture of Early Modern times as a finale of the «*rhetorical culture*» with an attempt to rethink the culture of the late Soviet period – the rhetorical culture of a «*mot préparée*», which, on his opinion, was also in crisis. That's why the study of Mikhailov's baroque theory and his historical method is relevant both for the history of the historical knowledge and for the intellectual history in a broad sense.

A.V. Mikhailov's creative work, along with that of M.M. Bakhtin's and S.S. Averintsev's, belongs to a movement within the framework of historiography and philosophy of the humanities distinguished by a specific way of working with historical knowledge, which here acquires the

status of the ground and the substratum for theorizing. The key to understanding Mikhailov's research intentions is to be found in the language he develops. This language is on principle devoid of a definite structure, crystal-clear definitions, and an established terminological apparatus. This helps Mikhailov eliminate the difference between the theoretical and the "historic". To his mind, abstract theorizing, capable of producing only general and universal schemes and concepts, is opposed to problematizing the basics of humanist knowledge, understood here as historicization of its fundamental concepts. "For science, the existence of a *word* in history means, first of all, that it ought to stop being simple and putatively identical to itself and must reveal the historical specificity and the historical variability of its meaning, that is, its own inequality to itself and its irreducibility to just one meaning"<sup>3</sup>. In the end, Mikhailov always aimed at finding a language that would allow, by combining a historical and cultural (or, even, historical and literary) inquiry with a study of theoretical problems through hermeneutics of the "historic and cultural forms of a word" (that is, analysis of the historical transformation of a word's ontological status), reconstructing the "historical principles of the poetic sense" (in fact, the types of creative subjects). In terms of the two trends in the philosophy of *Geisteswissenschaften*, that emerged in the outgoing nineteenth century and may generally be classified as either hermeneutics of the social world (W. Dilthey, M.M. Bakhtin as the author of *Towards a Philosophy of the Act*, P. Ricoeur as the author of works on the philosophy of law, H.-G. Gadamer, V.L. Makhlin), or hermeneutics of words / language (E. Auerbach, K.-O. Apel), Mikhailov's creative work is beyond doubt an unadulterated expression of the latter. For him, the paradigm of the poetic language is an essential choice, and his unflinching focus on literature — his philosophical *credo*. Any activity aimed at comprehending is, to him, premised on a rationalistically justified conviction that the poetic word and literature are exactly the realm to provide answers to any questions about the historical world. This study aims to demonstrate how systematic A.V. Mikhailov's historic method is, based on his theory of the baroque.

Exactly in this sense, "literature" and "history" became for Mikhailov the foundation of humanist science. Mikhailov basically applies an extremely broad understanding of literature, typical of certain developmental stages of the moral-rhetorical system (which shaped the formation of pre- and early-modern knowledge), as in "everything ever *written*"<sup>4</sup> (Mikhailov here adopts Dilthey's expansive interpretation of "literature" as "representation, through language, of every expression of people's life that goes beyond practical and is of lasting significance"<sup>5</sup>), to the object

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<sup>3</sup> Mikhailov A.V. *Neskol'ko tezisov o teorii literatury // Idem. Izbrannoe. Istopricheskaia poetika i germenevtika*. SPb.: Saint-Petersburg University, 2006. P. 499.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* P. 498.

<sup>5</sup> Dilthey W. *Archive der Literatur in ihrer Bedeutung für das Studium der Geschichte der Philosophie // Idem. Gesammelte Schriften. Band IV*. Leipzig und Berlin, 1925. S. 555-575.

of humanist inquiry, so that in his works, the concepts of “Literaturwissenschaft” and “Kulturwissenschaft” become almost synonymous. The scholar considers the future of humanist knowledge in the context of re-configuring the relationship between “sciences of spirit” and history. Just like M. Heidegger replaced the question of existence/nonexistence with that of *meaning* in regards to being<sup>6</sup>, so Mikhailov reviewed the concept of the “word”. In order to understand *what* “literature” is as an object of humanist knowledge, one must explicate the axioms typical of this type of knowledge, that, unlike that of the self-centered mathematics, is closely related to “life” as a “historic and cultural act”<sup>7</sup>. To this end, one must analyze how the position of the researcher (“us”) correlates with that of the object of study (“our environment”) in terms of the “adjacent” — that, which constitutes the foundation of a specific science, describes its own axiomatic, and thus distinguishes it from all others. The thesis, that the discovery of the “axiomatic” and the “adjacent” takes place “in the field of pre-methodological,” points to Mikhailov’s rejection of Neo-Kantian “methodologism”. A potential for renewal is associated here with rejection of original premises, imposed by the conventional scholarly apparatus, as accidental and historically determined, in favour of a new way of looking at humanist knowledge — from the viewpoint of its *attitude to history*. This attitude is determined by historical process, defined as a succession and coexistence of different “languages of culture”, which are acquired through certain hermeneutic procedures<sup>8</sup> (such as “back translation”<sup>9</sup> or “slowing down”<sup>10</sup>). A new attitude to history thus implies conceptualizing the past as “*the past in the present*”, which is actualized *from* the future and *for* the future. Mikhailov clearly promotes the idea of “citing” history, first outlined by Walter Benjamin in his *Theses on the Philosophy of History*<sup>11</sup>. The “past in the present from the future” is an actualized past, removed from its specific hermeneutic space and *appropriated* by the recipient culture as its own. This newly discovered ability to perceive “the other” as “one’s own” or, in other words, the subjectivization of the past is exactly what Mikhailov suggested calling the “new historicism”<sup>12</sup>. In a way, from the viewpoint of history, this is an issue of acquiring a tradition — a renewal of one’s own cultural origins through acquisition of a language of the past. But there is also another — dialogical — dimension here. Acquiring the language of “the other” and accepting “the other”

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<sup>6</sup> Heidegger M. *Sein und Zeit*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2001.

<sup>7</sup> Mikhailov A.V. *Neskol’ko tezisev o teorii literatury*. Pp. 480-481.

<sup>8</sup> Mikhailov A.V. *Problemy istoricheskoi poetiki v istorii nemetskoï kul’tury // Idem. Izbrannoe. Istoricheskaia poetika i germenevtika...* P. 31.

<sup>9</sup> Mikhailov A.V. *Nado učit’sia obratnomu perevodu // Idem. Obratnyi perevod. Russkaia i zapadnoevropeiskaia kul’tury: problema vzaimosviazei*. M.: Yazyki russkoi kul’tury, 2000.

<sup>10</sup> Makhlin V.L. “Zamedlenie” kak zadacha obratnogo perevoda // *Literaturovedenie kak literatura. Festschrift for S.G. Bocharov*. M.: Yazyki slavianskoi kul’tury; Progress-Traditsiia, 2004.

<sup>11</sup> Benjamin W. *Über den Begriff der Geschichte // Gesammelte Werke*. Bd. 1. Frankfurt a.M.: Zweitausendeins, 1991. S. 701.

<sup>12</sup> Mikhailov A.V. *Neskol’ko tezisev o teorii literatury ...* P. 504.

(here, Mikhailov follows in M.M. Bakhtin's footsteps) apply not only to the past, but also to the present — they become a fundamental communicative problem.

The theory of the baroque has a place of honour in A.V. Mikhailov's theoretical construct. Moreover, its explication is a condition *sine qua non* for the understanding of his research project *in toto*. At the same time, the opposite is also true: it is impossible to consider Mikhailov's "poetics of the baroque" outside of the context of his philosophical and "methodological" premises. In the former, M. Heidegger's philosophy takes pride of place; in the latter, hermeneutics from W. Dilthey to H.-G. Gadamer. Let us note that we are only concerned with reconstructing Mikhailov's philosophical grounds insofar as they are related to his theory of the baroque.

It would not be erroneous to believe that Mikhailov intended to continue developing the so-called "hermeneutic turn", which in the Russian humanities had been initiated by M.M. Bakhtin. For Soviet literary studies, which provided the framework for this project, the "hermeneutic turn" meant that the study of literature shifted towards philosophy as part of polemics with formalists<sup>13</sup>. When A.N. Veselovsky founded his "historical poetics" in Russia, the crisis of philosophical knowledge compelled the emerging humanist disciplines to push for separation from philosophy by means of establishing their own objects of study and developing their own methods. Almost a hundred years later Mikhailov revived his opponent Veselovsky's project in his own way, by inscribing it into the newly formed philosophical hermeneutic tradition. Mikhailov complemented Heidegger's fundamental ontology with "fundamental philology" and hermeneutics. He replaced the central concept of "being" with "word", which, according to V.P. Vizgin, then became an "absolute frame of reference," "giving meaning to man, history, and culture"<sup>14</sup>. "Word" in its historical development, in the process of transitioning from being-in-itself to being-for-itself becomes for Mikhailov the true agent of historical process, and this is exactly what constitutes his "hermeneutic turn", resulting in the project of historicizing humanist knowledge, the many vectors of which have history as their "common core". The past ceases to be an object. Mikhailov's "new historicism" grows out of his critique of "moderno-centrism": he removes the opposition of the past and the modern, refuses to think of the current state of science as the "peak" of its "development" and, on these grounds, takes away its right to formulate a criterion of demarcation. Mikhailov objects to "moderno-centrism" permeating also contemporary historical science, because he does not problematize the contemporary, but takes it "for granted"<sup>15</sup>. This way of thinking contradicts the phenomenological objective of problematizing one's original premises and the automatic acceptance of whatever is given as "self-evident".

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<sup>13</sup> Popova I.S. *Istoricheskaia poetika v teoreticheskom osveshchenii*. M.: IMLI RAN, 2015. P. 45.

<sup>14</sup> Vizgin V.P. A.V. Mikhailov: shtrikhi k filosofskoi kharakteristike // *Filosofskii zhurnal*. 2010. №2(5). P. 36.

<sup>15</sup> Mikhailov A.V. Vilgelm Dilthey i ego shkola // *Idem*. *Izbrannoe. Istoricheskaia poetika i germenetika...* P. 228.

A rejection of premises is the most important condition of *understanding* (Verstehen), and this rejection is based on the desire to understand the text as it is, as it was conceived, and on the belief in the very possibility of this kind of understanding: “It is exactly because we would like to know things as they are in themselves, how the literary works and texts are of themselves, that we cannot allow ourselves to understand them only as determined by *our* notion of things ...”<sup>16</sup> On the contrary, an understanding of history achieved only through comprehending the language of the past as the language of *another* culture is possible only if we manage “to transform our conscience into that of other eras”, that is, if we master this language and learn to think in its own categories. A rejection of “modern-centrism” implies the necessity “to stop settling for *one’s own*”. This means that one ought to stop taking one’s “view of things for unhistorical and natural”<sup>17</sup>. One’s own position needs to be viewed critically; one must not allow oneself to insist on a specific opinion simply because it seems self-evident and agrees with common sense. “We can and must forbid ourselves to make statements, which almost suggest themselves, and to pass judgments automatically, just because we think so”<sup>18</sup>. In practice, a ban on hasty statements marks a shift of attention from an object of research to the researcher’s own premises, to one’s own “quest”, as a result of which, while unable to completely give up building on hastily adopted premises, we might at least realize the gap in our statements between what seems self-evident and what reflects *historical determination*. Mikhailov begins his study of the baroque precisely by problematizing the notion itself and by asserting an essential irrelevance of the traditional, commonly accepted view of the baroque in the context of changing genre forms as a simple deformation of the classical, regardless of how it is evaluated, positively or negatively<sup>19</sup>. Moreover, the scholar problematizes even the anthropological constant of modern man, established, in particular, in the literary sphere in conjunction with the spread of realism and psychologism in the second half of the nineteenth century.

By following the ban on automatic statements and not positioning himself as superior, who is authorized to ask questions from the past, but by “giving himself up to history”<sup>20</sup>, the researcher submits to an external logic of historical material. This “historicity of thinking” differs from the commonly accepted principle of historicism in that in the latter, the historian’s submission to the logic of her source material remains formal, since, by viewing herself as a subject, the researcher distances herself from her object and, more importantly, goes “beyond history’s reach”<sup>21</sup>. In

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid. P. 231.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. P. 231-232.

<sup>19</sup> For Mikhailov’s historiographic essay on conceptualizing the notion of baroque see: *Mikhailov A.V. Poetika barokko // Idem. Izbrannoe. Zavershenie ritoricheskoi epokhi. SPb: Saint-Petersburg University Press, 2007.*

<sup>20</sup> *Mikhailov A.V. Vilgelm Diltei i ego shkola. P. 232.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid. P. 233.*

contrast, Mikhailov's approach requires a *complete involvement* in research process and, *thereby*, in the historical process. For Mikhailov, overcoming one's own subjectivity means opening up to being, in turn, influenced by historical material and allowing for its re-actualization in contemporary context. To a positivist researcher, this program sounds almost too preposterous due to its incompatibility with established notions of what is truly scientific; but even this appearance of "non-science" or even "anti-science", supported by philosophical hermeneutics, is a *fundamental requirement, to reconsider the criteria of demarcation* by means of *historicizing* (understood as described above) scientific thinking.

What this idea means in practice and how to interpret A.V. Mikhailov's requirement to re-actualize the past, becomes clear when we turn to his theory of the baroque. Generally, it touches upon two basic aspects: 1) the specifics of constructing a baroque piece of art, and; 2) the specifics of human self-cognition, expressed through these pieces of art, or the baroque anthropology.

Before analyzing those in detail, one must take into consideration Mikhailov's periodization of the historical and cultural forms of consciousness and at the role therein of the baroque period. Notably, this periodization emerged in course of polemics between representatives of the two basic approaches to defining the object of literary studies focusing on "historical poetics". The key principles of the first, strictly philological approach were articulated by M.L. Gasparov in his programmatic 1986 article, *Historical Poetics and Comparative Prosody (The Problem of Comparative Scansion)*, which suggested a historical analysis of poetical "levels" in works of poetry: scansion and phonics ("the level of sounds"), style ("the level of words"), topics ("the level of images and motifs")<sup>22</sup>. Proponents of the second approach grouped around S.S. Averintsev, whose article *Historical Mobility of the Category of Genre: An Attempt At Periodization* was published in the same multi-authored monograph.<sup>23</sup> In this work, S.S. Averintsev suggested focusing on the historical analysis of such fundamental categories as "genre", "literature", and "authorship", with the latter two categories seen as derivatives and dependents of the first. Since, beginning with Bakhtin, one considered the major task of domestic "literature studies" to be the development of methods for studying transitional periods in the history of literature (this development went far beyond the scope of literary studies and, both in Bakhtin's and, later, Mikhailov's cases, turned into a fully-fledged philosophical worldview), the process of change in the system of genres (and, particularly, the evolution of *the novel* defined most broadly) immediately took centre stage<sup>24</sup>. Thus, Averintsev and Mikhailov, who researched these problems

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<sup>22</sup> Gasparov M.L. Istoricheskaia poetika i sravnitel'noe stikhovedenie (problema sravnitel'noi metriki) // Istoricheskaia poetika. Itogi i perspektivy izucheniia. M.: Nauka, 1986. P. 188—209.

<sup>23</sup> Averintsev S.S. Istoricheskaia podvizhnost' kategorii zhanra: opyt periodizatsii // Istoricheskaia poetika. Itogi i perspektivy izucheniia.... P. 104—116.

<sup>24</sup> Popova I.S. Ibid. P. 63.



on the material from different periods and different historical and cultural areas, came to a common conclusion, that fundamental transformations touching upon the very foundations of the category of genre (which interested Mikhailov only because he strove to uncover in them the outlines of evolution of human *self-consciousness* and *self-awareness*) occurred in human history extremely rarely and can conveniently be broken into three major stages, designated differently depending on the researcher's focus. Averintsev classified these stages as 1) "the period of pre-reflective traditionalism" (prior to the 5–4<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE), 2) "the period of reflective traditionalism" (4<sup>th</sup> c. BCE – mid-18<sup>th</sup> c. AD), 3) the period after the disintegration of the traditional genre system, characterized by the rise of the novel, liberation from the "fetters" of traditionalist rhetorical culture, and the freeing of individual creativity. This three-part periodization ended up becoming a commonplace in Soviet (Russian) literary studies. It received its final form in an introduction to another multi-author monograph dedicated to problems of "historical poetics", from 1994. A large foreword entitled *Poetic Categories in the Change of Literary Periods*, composed collectively by S.S. Averintsev, M.L. Andreev, M.L. Gasparov, P.A. Grintser, and A.V. Mikhailov, posits that three "most common and stable types of artistic consciousness" correspond to the three earlier named periods in the history of literature. These are: 1) "the archaic, or mythopoetic", 2) "traditionalist, or normative", 3) and "individually artistic, or historic (that is, based on the principle of historicism)"<sup>25</sup>. The authors kept the chronology proposed by Averintsev in 1986. The same book contained the first (and the only lifetime) edition of Mikhailov's *Baroque Poetics*<sup>26</sup>, wherein the author undertakes a fundamental study of the period designated as baroque, primarily on the material of German baroque drama and emblematic genre of the seventeenth century, as a final stage of traditional culture. In Mikhailov's own terms, the first two stages of this periodization are named *pre-rhetoric* and *rhetoric*, respectively. The baroque period interests him not as the time of transition, but, more so, as culmination of the rhetorical culture (and, therefore, an integral part thereof), when the moral-rhetoric system gains its final shape, impossible to move beyond, which results in the escalation of tensions and contradictions, eventually leading the system to collapsing from within.

In A.V. Mikhailov's interpretation, a piece of art created during the baroque period is distinguished by its special correlation with the knowledge of the world as it came to be within the framework of the moral-rhetoric system. A baroque piece (in particular, a German baroque drama as the main object of Mikhailov's analysis) includes the maximum amount of this knowledge,

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<sup>25</sup> Averintsev S.S., Andreev M.L., Gasparov M.L., Grintser P.A., Mikhailov A.V. Kategorii poetiki v smene literaturnykh epokh // Istoricheskaia poetika. Literaturnye epokhi i tipy khudozhestvennogo soznaniia / Ed.-in chief P.A. Grintser. M.: Nasledie, 1994. P. 4.

<sup>26</sup> Mikhailov A.V. Poetika barokko: zavershenie ritoricheskoi epokhi // Istoricheskaia poetika. Literaturnye epokhi I tipy khudozhestvennogo soznaniia ... P. 326-391.

including scientific information, philosophy, mythology<sup>27</sup>, and even biographic details of the author<sup>28</sup>, all of which often seems completely excessive from the viewpoint of contemporary norms of constructing a piece of art. At its most extreme, this desire to include the entire world allows us to view such a piece as a compendium of knowledge about the universe, an encyclopedia of sorts; the inseparability of art and science in the creative work of the seventeenth century takes the form of moral and rhetorical commonplaces, subject to endless interpretation, which, coming together within a work of art, represent the universe in its totality, “in the encyclopedic comprehensiveness of its topics”<sup>29</sup>. It is no accident that the most typical genre of the baroque period is an *emblem* — a concentrated indissolubility of the artistic, moral, and true, that contains them in a hermetic unity and is capable of absorbing, semantically, all of creation. Mikhailov dedicated to emblematics an entire chapter in his monograph, the *Baroque Poetics*. He treats emblematic as an instrument of artistic thinking in the baroque period, related to the so-called tradition of “significant speech” (Harms, Reinitzer)<sup>30</sup> — a tradition of endless allegorical interpretation of any phenomena or things that is an integral part of the moral-rhetoric system. Baroque emblematics, where verbal dominates over visual, is the best reflection of the period’s logocentrism, wherein *word* is “stronger, more important, more substantial even (and, ultimately, more valid) than real life, stronger even than the author, who encounters it as an ‘objective’ force barring his way; as author, he commands the word, but only to the extent that this word, which definitely does not belong to him, allows him to order it around as common patrimony or a reality in its own right”<sup>31</sup>. Mikhailov looks at the universally-representational nature of a baroque piece of art in the context of theory of literary periods changing along with historical types of creative consciousness. Besides, having given up trying to look at this special makeup of a baroque piece of art “from above”, the researcher attempts to conceptualize it according to its own logic by adopting a kind of presumption of innocence — in other words, by accepting the right of such attitude towards intellectual culture (as to be of strictly archeological interest to any “normal historian”) to exist *for us*. It is enough for him that this particular state of culture will eventually bring about the demise of the moral-rhetoric system. Mikhailov’s global purpose is to demonstrate a genetic kinship between a modern man’s way of thinking, the world, and their mutual relationship reaching its logical conclusion in their sudden *antagonism*. In Mikhailov’s interpretation, the inseparability of man and the world is original and therefore natural.

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<sup>27</sup> Mikhailov A.V. Poetika barokko... P. 126.

<sup>28</sup> “Everything ‘personal’ is subjected here to the same logic of mediation that allows ‘autobiographic’ material to easily penetrate a work of poetry, but presents this material as universal, detached from the actual carrier of life experience.” Ibid. P. 145-146.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. P. 127.

<sup>30</sup> Harms W., Reinitzer H. Einleitung // *Natura loquax: Naturkunde und allegorische Naturdeutung vom Mittelalter bis zur frühen Neuzeit*. Frankfurt a. M., 1981. P. 12.

<sup>31</sup> Mikhailov A.V. Poetika barokko: zavershenie ritoricheskoi epokhi // Mikhailov A.V. *Yazyki kul'tury* / Introduction by S.S. Averintsev. M.: Yazyki russkoi kul'tury, 1997. P. 117.

Rhetoric as a way of creative thinking of the period — in fact, the one and only way (which definitely does not make it restraining or limiting to one's freedom!), in its universality “takes possession of everything”: by default, upon entering a piece of art, everything *lifelike, historical, real* gets “processed” by rhetoric; it has no value in and of itself and *always* serves rhetoric<sup>32</sup>. In this period, it is easy for a man of letters to become a historian: medieval chronicles recede into the past, while a ciceronian notion of history seems to take full control of a “baroque” man's conceptualization of the past. Baroque is the time of the erudite and polyhistor. Significant in this respect is Mikhailov's analysis of historical ideas of a learned German seventeenth-century poet Sigmund von Birken<sup>33</sup>. The scholar draws attention to the three types of historical narrative present in Birken's writings. The annals, with their direct and sequential recounting of historical events, are the least popular among the genres of historical writing. Birken gives clear preference to “poetic history” (Gedichtgeschichte) and “historic poetry” (Geschichtgedicht), both deeply rhetorical. As Mikhailov shows, the notion of historical truth in the baroque period is closely related to the spheres of moral and poetic simultaneously. A rhetoric culture conceptualizes the past in a fundamentally uniform way: for it, truth depends on the categories of probable and possible. In Mikhailov's interpretation, a baroque poet thinks of the probable and possible in history as potentially real and creates one of the possible, potential worlds, which, in the framework of baroque thinking, by itself grants this world a status of being real and historical<sup>34</sup>. For this logic, an intertwining of real history with fantasy is not just a matter of fact. Not only does it not prevent one comprehending this “real” history, but it also facilitates it. Even Homer's poetry becomes here a source of “genuine” knowledge about the “real” past as understood in the rhetorical culture, with all sorts of information and accidental details added for good measure<sup>35</sup>. The moral-rhetorical system “builds on a peculiar conceptualization of *history*, wherein the sum of various, say, natural-scientific data and the knowledge of history have not yet moved so far apart as to prevent their unification into a ‘homogeneous’ whole”<sup>36</sup>. By scrupulously examining the indivisibility of scientific and other knowledge about the past in baroque pieces of art, Mikhailov aims to show how natural this understanding of the past is for a moral-rhetoric system. He also demonstrates that this understanding does not contradict the famous statement in the 9<sup>th</sup> chapter of Aristotle's *Poetics*, which gives poetry priority over history due to its “philosophical seriousness,” for poetry speaks of the universal (meaning, *real* in the moral-rhetorical view of reality), rather than singular, accidental (meaning, only *probable* and *possible*). “...For long centuries, people have commonly shared a

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid. C. 140-141.

<sup>33</sup> Mikhailov A.V. *Metody i stili literatury*. M.: IMLI RAN, 2008. P. 17-18.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. P. 18.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Mikhailov A.V. *Poetika barokko...* P. 153.

conviction that knowledge contained and delivered through poetry is moral, pertaining to human mores, the human nature in general. This knowledge links man to the superior, obligatory, prescribed, and the permissible — to the eternally permanent and axiologically normative<sup>37</sup>. Mikhailov's research program is clearly discernible in this conceptualization of the problem in question: rejection of the usual and self-evident notions of the real and the imaginary lays the groundwork for an attempt to understand why ideas about the past exist in a moral-rhetorical frame of reference.

This does not, however, exhaust Mikhailov's research plan. As we recall, the right researcher's position cannot be reduced to the right "methodology". By asking questions from the past, we pose them as persons involved in the continuous historical process determined by this same past. Therefore, the idea of history as it existed in the framework of traditional culture is of special significance for us today. A question thus posed and the idea of the past understood this way obviously stem from H.-G. Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics. He was the first to speak of history "in the tradition of rhetorical and humanist education", beginning at least with Cicero and understood as "a source of truth totally different from theoretical reason"<sup>38</sup>. Although this notion placed history and the historical narrative firmly below other sciences and genres, Gadamer emphasizes the positive side of this conceptualization, first actualized by Giambattista Vico: "Ultimately, it has always been known that the possibilities of rational proof and instruction do not fully exhaust the sphere of knowledge"<sup>39</sup>. Gadamer's thesis regarding a special connection, special link between humanist cognition, art, and "truth", and a certain kinship of these two variables, is an important starting point for Mikhailov. By showing how scientific knowledge about the world is inseparable in the baroque period from information embedded in a work of art, — which "contains within" an entire universe, — Mikhailov turns to this period as a source of historical material reflecting this mode of existence, a point of no return, from which emerges the science of the Modern Period, established by developing its own method and justifying its own object, that is, in fact, by ascertaining what it is not and breaking away from its connection to the "world". Thus, by analyzing how a baroque work of art is constructed and how closely it is entwined with scientific knowledge of the world, Mikhailov seems to wish to discover the roots of his own notions of science by re-thinking them in a paradoxical attempt at returning to this point of no return, which ought to take place as part of *self-realization* of humanist science. This self-realization is essentially not a project, but a necessity becoming obvious at a certain stage of scientific development<sup>40</sup>, and

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<sup>37</sup> Mikhailov A.V. *Metody i stili literatury...* P. 20.

<sup>38</sup> Gadamer H.-G. *Wahrheit und Methode. Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik // Idem. Gesammelte Werke. Bd. 1.* Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1990. S. 29.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* P. 66.

<sup>40</sup> Mikhailov A.V. *Neskol'ko tezisev o teorii literatury...* P. 482.

the researcher's job here is to respond to this challenge. Mikhailov argues that "there are sciences, in which a deposit of knowledge is impossible, unthinkable, and which provide no grounds for self-congratulatory possession of such"<sup>41</sup>. In this respect, his theory echoes that of an Italian historian of philosophy Mario Papini, who analyzed scientific treatises of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries (R. Descartes, T. Hobbes, B. Spinoza, N. Malebranche, G. Leibniz, G. Vico) and concluded that baroque science displays a peculiar feature best described as *conatività*<sup>42</sup>. This means that the seventeenth century saw a shift towards a new ontological mindset, wherein a concept of *conatus* ("effort") played a crucial role. The earlier "substantialist" concept, based in many respects on the fundamental categories of Aristotelian metaphysics, understood philosophical and scientific inquiry as a movement from a state of wonderment (*admiratio*) to a static state that is knowledge. According to Papini, the seventeenth century brought about an opposing concept of so-called "conativity", which strove to replace a cumulative notion of knowledge with "pure states of tension", integral to existence<sup>43</sup>. Thus, such contradictory concepts as "dynamic harmony" or "static movement", embodied in an image of vibration, are a perfect expression of the specifics of baroque thought. Papini speaks of *conatus* as a *modulo epocale* — a conceptual matrix of baroque thought, and illustrates his thesis by arguing that most of the key thinkers of the time eventually came up with an image of tension expressed either by the same term, or a number of its synonyms, or by giving their speech a certain logical and rhetorical structure reflecting this elemental state of tension<sup>44</sup>. We have no reasons to believe that Mikhailov was familiar with Papini's work; it is all the more interesting, then, to note the common intuition uniting a historian of baroque science and a historian of baroque literature in their attempts to conceptualize the specifics of baroque thought, that for Mikhailov combined with a requirement to re-actualize the experience of the baroque period for the contemporary "science of spirit" (see above quoted thesis from paragraph 14 of his work entitled *Some Theses on the History of Literature*). Both Mikhailov's thought and his scholarly language reflect this state of problematization of knowledge through a requirement of historicizing it by giving up one's own position in relation to the past. Mikhailov makes a point of ignoring such canons of academic writing as structure and clearly defined terminological apparatus (moreover, his rejection of the latter is based on *disregard for empty words* and a desire to speak as concretely as possible, which is difficult in the presence of generalizing categories like "baroque" or "classicism"). Nowhere do his theoretical grounds appear in a complete and explicit form, but they are construed in the process of working with historical material. It is for good reason that Mikhailov's special work intended to describe the present state of "the science of literature" (and

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid. P. 495.

<sup>42</sup> Papini M. Vicenda seicentesca di minimi e conati // Bollettino del Centro di Studi Vichiani, 1992. № 22-23. P. 131-170.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. P. 136.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. P. 140-141.

his only purely theoretical study) is composed of theses in the genre of a philosophical treatise. Mikhailov's hermeneutic approach is ultimately reduced to the fact that working with a source makes one see how best to work with it, rather than the opposite; if ever a theoretical construct is possible, it must emerge from historical material itself. Otherwise, if we do not master the language of the source and do not speak to it in *its own* language (that is, if we do not perform a "back translation"), all we will get is material customized to fit our preconceived notions, thereby reinforcing our misconceptions.

The peculiarities of construction of a baroque work of art as interpreted by Mikhailov and his thesis on the correlation between the transformations in the system of genres and the forms of creative consciousness lead us to wonder about the specific way of thinking typical of the baroque, in other words, about the historico-anthropological concept of the baroque. According to Mikhailov, not only does a piece of art in the baroque period have no significance in and of itself (since in its extreme form it strives to "embrace" the whole world), but it also loses its connection to any identifiable "self." Moreover, in no such piece of art do we find a "self" that would be aware of its exceptional singularity.

At the centre of Mikhailov's attention are literary works of German-speaking authors of the seventeenth century (A. Gryphius, J. Schaeffler, D. von Lohenstein, H. Grimmelshausen, J. Rist, M. Opitz, Ch. Weise). By analyzing the structure of a baroque drama and trying to answer the question of how a given work was perceived at the time, Mikhailov reconstructs an early modern person's way of thinking, his attitude to the world, time, existence, and the transcendental. In rejecting conventional ways of conceptualizing the baroque through categories such as "degeneration," "transition," and "divergence" (when the baroque is seen as a "deviation from the norm"<sup>45</sup>, regardless of whether this phenomenon is viewed positively or negatively), Mikhailov speaks of the baroque as an idiosyncratic "style of the time", simultaneously the climax and the demise of the rhetorical culture that had existed for millennia. The baroque is the finale of the traditional culture, a state of "instability and tension" in the moral-rhetorical system. In this sense the baroque, appearing at the boundary between the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period, marks the transition to a new way of thinking of a man as a personality and an individual. In his work *Time and Timelessness in German Baroque Poetry*, Mikhailov shows how during the Reformation and the Thirty-year war, pessimism begins to dominate poetry and eventually brings about rejection of an established worldview or, in W. Benjamin's words, a shift from an eschatological strife for salvation, when most important was "the futility of world events and the transience of the creature as stations

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<sup>45</sup> For a perfect example of this approach see the analysis of how scholarship treated the problem of conceptualizing the baroque and classicism and their correlation, in: *Shpinarskaia E.N. Klassitsizm I barokko: istoriograficheskiy analiz*. SPb.: TOO TK "Petropolis", 1998.

on the road to salvation”, to a “rash flight into a nature deprived of grace”, to immersion into the “hopelessness of the earthly condition”<sup>46</sup>. This, according to Mikhailov, leads to the so-called “transcendence of Christianity”, described in his work *The German Drama of the Seventeenth Century*: “the aspiration to reinforce Christian worldview seeks support in the system of images [of a baroque work of art], and the way, in which this system of images grows, begins to live its own life and, finally, turns into a special, flourishing world, is influenced by history and by lived experience — an experience of history as a disaster”<sup>47</sup>. Thus emerges a “trans-Christian baroque view of the world, time, eternity, history”, characterized by a stoic attitude to the world. However, goes on Mikhailov, “whatever ‘transcends’ Christianity, might ultimately break free of it. Stoicism might break away from the need to assert faith and become an ethic in its own right, a means of validating the special value of personality”<sup>48</sup>. According to this interpretation of the German *Trauerspiel*, this is exactly what occurs in the baroque period.

W. Benjamin’s significance for Mikhailov is much greater than is usually believed. In fact, Mikhailov’s historico-anthropological concept is polemically opposed to the notion of a sovereign as a key figure in baroque art, even though he never explicitly states so. Benjamin’s concept was formulated in course of his polemics with K. Schmitt. Benjamin criticized the German jurist’s “political theology” based on legitimizing the sovereign’s power with the help of a theory of a state of emergency, understood as necessary violence aimed at preserving social order. In his apology of non-violence, Benjamin tried to debunk Schmitt’s theory of sovereignty by appealing to the German baroque drama, which reveals the true face of a sovereign — a powerless baroque puppet, prone to affectation. Furthermore, Benjamin understood the realization of a state of emergency as the sovereign’s affective behavior, rather than as a temporary exception and exclusion of the rule of law for the sake of restoring the latter. In opposition to Schmitt, Benjamin rejects God’s will as a legitimizing power. To Benjamin, secularization is not about the loss of faith or the loss by God and powers that be of transcendental status, as they were for Schmitt. On the contrary, Benjamin argues that secularization only intensified religious feelings by turning a medieval person’s theologized thought towards the worldly and the ordinary<sup>49</sup>. According to Benjamin, the medieval worldview collapsed due to a growing gap between the signifier and the signified, the real and the ideal in the baroque period. This is clear from the art of this period that tried but failed to preserve the old authority of a sovereign, no longer viewed as a divine law-giver. To Benjamin’s mind, an irreversible process of “inflation of a sovereign’s position”<sup>50</sup> was reflected in the makeup and the

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<sup>46</sup> Benjamin W. *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* / Transl. by J. Osborne. London, New York: Verso, 2003. P. 81.

<sup>47</sup> Mikhailov A.V. *Nemetskaia drama 17 veka // Idem. Izbrannoe. Zavershenie ritoricheskoi epokhi*. P. 51.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Benjamin W. *Ibid.* P. 78.

<sup>50</sup> Chubarov I. Benjamin Shmittu ne tovarishch, ili oshibka Agambena // *Logos*. 2012, №5 (89). P. 52-53.

means of expression of the German *Trauerspiel*. Baroque drama attempted to fill the vacuum resulting from a monarch's loss of status by combining in the sovereign's figure features of a tyrant and a martyr. Thus a baroque character was born — one suffering from the discrepancy between the divine mission imposed on him and the actual state of things, which made him unable not only to declare a state of emergency, but also to rein in his own emotions<sup>51</sup>. In this manner, Benjamin pitted an artistic and philosophical interpretation of historical and cultural phenomena against Schmitt's politico-philosophical approach. Nevertheless, his concept, just like Schmitt's, had a sovereign at its core. In this sense, Benjamin's concept of baroque drama may be called *aristocratic*.

Mikhailov presents us with a very different picture: his focus is on the *spectator*, rather than the sovereign. Mikhailov's *democratic* concept of baroque drama is based on Bakhtin's theory of the novel and is a praise to man in all his contradictory uniqueness. It may also be seen as a reaction to anthropological reductionism, which spread widely in the twentieth century along with the assertion of a new anthropological type described by J. Ortega y Gasset as the "mass-man"<sup>52</sup>. A man of traditional culture and of the baroque as its final stage is capable of revealing his individuality only outside of the social roles imposed on him by the theatre of society — the roles, which blur his individuality and replace it with theatrical masks<sup>53</sup>. The metaphor of theatre, actively used by baroque authors as well, is of crucial importance here: the baroque capitalizes on the absence of individuality. There is no notion of "inner world" here: "by turning in upon oneself", writes Mikhailov, "one would find only God"<sup>54</sup>. A baroque man identifies himself through the roles imposed on him from without. This means that one can "find oneself" only by fully disappearing from this world, by refusing to play any one of the prescribed roles, that is, by refusing to exist as a simple *representation of the typical*. From here, there is only one step to the modern notion of human personality.

The question of how man is conceptualized is of primary importance to Mikhailov in the context of history of science. The answer to this question determines the "axiomatics" of science<sup>55</sup>, and we have already established that, to him, the discovery and justification of the new settings for the "sciences of spirit" are imperative. This lays bare the significance of the anthropological aspect of his theory. In the seventeenth century, we observe the early beginnings of the notions of individuality, personality, and "the inner world" of a human being, whereas the nineteenth century brings this process to a close: we see how the desire to conceptualize man as a whole, by making

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<sup>51</sup> Benjamin W. Ibid. P. 71.

<sup>52</sup> Ortega y Gasset J. The Revolt of the Masses. South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985.

<sup>53</sup> Mikhailov A.V. Poetika barokko... P. 145.

<sup>54</sup> Mikhailov A.V. Vremia i bezvremenie v poezii nemetskogo barokko // *Idem*. Zavershenie ritoricheskoi epokhi... P. 12-13.

<sup>55</sup> Mikhailov A.V. Problemy istoricheskoi poetiki v istorii nemetskoi kul'tury... P. 27.



him the measure of all things, becomes the dominant feature of intellectual culture. That is why Mikhailov calls the nineteenth century an *anthropological* period, an era of *historicism* and *psychologism*. However, the model of science that takes shape in the nineteenth century has, in Mikhailov's opinion, one systemic flaw: within its framework, man very quickly conceptualizes and exhausts himself. But, since humanist science, understood from the viewpoint of *historicism*, "still has to establish historical reality of the past, it cannot be satisfied by the fact, that only one and the same essence of man, as he understands himself now, finds expression within it... [Science] cannot be complacent, when within it, the essence of such a man encounters and recognizes itself"<sup>56</sup>. Exactly this statement gives rise to Mikhailov's insistence on realizing the limitations of a modern image of man and his research into baroque anthropology. On these grounds, Mikhailov calls to give up a naïve faith in "panhuman normalcy", which leads us to believe human consciousness to have remained the same over the course of centuries. Only in this case is it possible to remove limitations from historical thinking and form a more adequate image of man in different periods, grasp "the specific types of culture", and understand the various "languages of culture".

A *motif of returning* is what holds Mikhailov's theoretical construct together. This *return* is a re-discovery of man by himself, but also a re-consideration of the axioms of humanist knowledge that, to Mikhailov, would facilitate a qualitative renewal of the "sciences of spirit". We observe a realization of a hermeneutic project of establishing science's connection to man's "lifeworld" by means of historicization and *return* to the sources, to tradition. Mikhailov borrowed the motif of *return* from M. Heidegger's philosophy, more precisely – from his own contemplation of Heidegger's famous work *The Pathway (Der Feldweg)*<sup>57</sup>: Mikhailov acted as a translator and commentator of this text in his essay, *Martin Heidegger: Man in the World*. It is from *The Pathway* that Mikhailov borrowed his idea of *returning*, "which asserts itself as a worthy and triumphant conclusion of life, a final match between the "landscape" and the man, the path of life and the path home, the way home"<sup>58</sup>. Mikhailov's key innovation lies in developing an *historical* aspect of man's self-realization *in the world* as a space "where man finds his true place and meaning"<sup>59</sup>.

Mikhailov's theory of the baroque is a complete and detailed concept, a unique phenomenon in domestic humanist science. At the same time, this theory's euristic potential for historiography, as well as for philosophy, has yet to be realized. This is largely due to the sociopolitical and historical context, which has no call for the material of the Early Modern Period that Mikhailov based his research on. The theory of the baroque *as part of* Mikhailov's *overarching research project* has never before been formulated and explicated as such; other researchers of the baroque

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.* P. 27-28.

<sup>57</sup> Heidegger M. *The Pathway // Heidegger. The Man and the Thinker* / Ed. by T. Sheehan. Chicago: Transaction Publishers, 1980.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.* P. 430.

<sup>59</sup> *Mikhailov A.V. Martin Heidegger: chelovek v mire // Idem. Istoricheskaja poetika i germenetika...* P. 432.

have received only fragments of Mikhailov's legacy and considered them outside of the requisite philosophico-theoretical framework. For this reason, reception of A.V. Mikhailov's creative work in the Soviet and post-Soviet humanities (and especially as applied to the baroque) is a relevant question for future research, which may potentially shed light on pressing issues regarding the current state of humanist knowledge and the scholarly community.

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