



# COMMENT ON “SPIRITUAL CONTINUITY OF ABAI’S AND BLAISE PASCAL’S IDEAS (ABAI’S *WORDS OF EDIFICATION*, B. PASCAL’S *THOUGHTS*)”


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## COMMENT ON “SPIRITUAL CONTINUITY OF ABAI’S AND BLAISE PASCAL’S IDEAS (ABAI’S WORDS OF EDIFICATION, B. PASCAL’S THOUGHTS)”

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In the realm of philosophy, it is imperative to acknowledge the indelible influence of social and pedagogical endeavors, particularly the profundity of Abai’s intellectual contributions and his lyrical mastery within the context of Kazakh culture. His scholarly and spiritual inheritances perpetuate, catalyzing stimulating intellectual curiosity across multifarious facets of the humanities, including philosophy, religious studies, literary history, philology, psychology and pedagogy. This discourse offers a scientific elucidation of the synergy underpinning the philosophical bedrock and categorical frameworks proposed by Abai and B. Pascal, accompanying an in-depth exploration of their ideological disparities and stylistic modes of expression. Yeszhanova and Esim (2024) effectively achieved their stated objective, which involved discerning the consonance of Abai’s and Pascal’s viewpoints concerning the categorical apparatus, central ideologies, and distinctive modes of presentation.

Abai’s fundamental contribution formed the basis for the modern perception of national identity, demonstrating significance in the formation of cultural policy, literary language standards and the education system. He created an excellent ethical and religious philosophy that encouraged his contemporaries to unite into a single nation. More specifically, a nation that has survived numerous historical trials to achieve independence and create its unique national state, thus realizing its potential. The Kazakh people’s apparent reluctance to

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accept change and embrace the quest for knowledge and faith ultimately shaped the socio-existential tone of his later work. He consciously assimilated and disseminated the most important literary works of the Middle East and the West, which allowed him to form a unique national character in his poetic works, thereby expanding the Kazakhs' worldview. Thus, after his death, his creative legacy and the echo of his historical memory contributed to the Kazakh people's projection on the world stage.

Blaise Pascal made a significant contribution to mathematics and science, in particular in the areas of probability theory and geometry, noting his direct presence in the scientific world. His seminal work *Pensées (Thoughts)* (1978) provides insight into his philosophical and religious views, intensively exploring the concepts of faith, rationality and the human condition. His hypothesis introduces a rational discourse of belief in God. Mainly his influence came from classical Eastern literature, an isolated branch of ancient philosophy, perpetuated by Arab scholars. Abay himself, actualizing his philosophy through personal example, consistently sought new and unexplored territories in order to increase his knowledge base and spiritual depth. Thus, in order to build an intercultural dialogue and foster self-awareness, the authors managed to go beyond the usual interpretations of Abai's works. This necessitates a more thorough examination of the ideas and philosophically oriented representatives of Western philosophical thought, in particular B. Pascal. In doing so, scholars have gained a more complete understanding of the complex interplay of influences that shaped Abai's intellectual development and creative pursuits.

The scholarly study of spirituality, conceptualized as a cohesive combination of knowledge, wisdom and virtue in Abai's and Pascal's own works, was deliberately chosen as the focus of this study, in light of their recognized status as deeply religious and spiritually luxuriant thinkers. Their work strikes a delicate balance between human intellectual capacity and the necessary morally sound compass that guides our existence. The different sociocultural conditions, in which each thinker developed his ideas, do not detract from the parallels that can be found upon careful examination. They include the congruence of key concepts and their interaction in each work, the justification of relevant considerations, and the stylistic and genre methodologies used. However, the key aspect of this study is the analysis of the transformations of religious, existential and ethical aspects in their works after contextualization within a more general symbolic framework. Despite the apparent lack of a comprehensive comparative eclectic analysis of Abai's *Words of Edification* (2022) and Pascal's *Thoughts* (1978), the notion of the heart as a major component of their philosophical foundation remains underemphasized.

The term "cordocentrism", despite its heuristic potential, did not gain popularity in either the Kazakh or Western traditions, being limited to its use in the of Russian and Ukrainian mystic philosophers' lesser-known works of the XVIII-XIX centuries.

Cordocentrism represents a fundamental theological premise that originates in biblical narratives, believing that the heart is the seat of a person’s true essence. In this framework, the heart functions as a focal point, bringing together personal self-awareness and the multifaceted dimensions of human existence, including emotion, rationality, intuitive cognition, willpower, contemplation and memory. Thus, this multidimensional understanding of the heart inadvertently creates a convergence that limits the clear delineation and hierarchical arrangement of these possibilities. The heart is conceptualized as a subjective conductor of value-sensory interactions.

It is worth emphasizing that the authors chose the right methodology for their research. The conducted research was based on the use of a complex theoretical methodology, which included the analysis of Abai’s and Pascal’s main textual documents, the synthesis of the main categories arising from both philosophical systems, the definition of the subject of research and the explanation of philosophical principles in the context of the obtained data. This process also involved generalization, the identification of analogies between individual textual elements and their general content, as well as a stylistic comparison of the methodological and categorical tools used by these thinkers. The research also used less traditional methodological approaches. The historical-philosophical approach, with a special emphasis on comparative and retrospective analytical methods related to socio-cultural contexts, was chosen due to the requirement of the breadth of historical analysis and focus on the philosophical orientation of the texts that were the object of the study. This combination creates the basis for a unique treatment of primary sources while preserving the ontological integrity of the original text. The analytical process also involved the use of hermeneutic strategies for the interpretation of the text, aimed at revealing the main provisions and content of theological postulates, as well as at the reconstruction of the semantic canvas of literary elements within the texts. An eclectic approach was used as a mixture of classical eclecticism and generalized theoretical methods, facilitating flexible manipulation of the resulting categories, thus allowing for more precise comparisons and analogies.

Yeszhanova and Esim (2024) concluded that the concept of “heartiness” is a fundamental principle for philosophical systems Abai’s and B. Pascal’s philosophical systems. They also introduced the term “cordocentrism” as a typological generalization for philosophical systems in which sensuality and morality, through the metaphor of the heart, are located at the highest level of existence, thinking and making morally evaluative judgments. According to both Abai’s and Pascal’s philosophies, the heart is a reservoir of virtue that directs the mind to knowledge and the will to action. This unity in personality, which is guided by humility or faith, reflecting not only faith but also religiosity, provides the possibility of highly moral actions about others at any level of social ontology. Such a person is also capable of a deep understanding of his nature, the material world, the soul of his neighbor and foreign culture. Both philosophers, within the framework of their worldview, emphasize the importance of

the divine element for achieving complete “heartiness”. The category of “submissiveness” in Pascal correlates with “iman” in Abai. Both philosophers see the ideal form of faith in worship and each within the limits of their respective religion.

Even though related philosophical and literary genres, such as preaching and meditation, are not unique in the context of Western philosophy, cordocentrism, as the embodiment of the unity of moral and religious philosophy at the intersection of rational and sensual cognitive strategies, reflects an aspect of the Kazakh mentality that is open to cultural dialogue, which follows Abai’s principles. Variations in historical, cultural and socio-political contexts do not exclude the fact of conceptual and theoretical compatibility of Abai’s and Pascal’s philosophical views. Due to the lack of accurate biographical data, it is difficult to determine the reason for this similarity. However, taking into account the presence of other “philosophies of the heart” in the Russian Empire at that time, it is considered acceptable to assume Abai’s possible direct or indirect contact with cordocentrism or related ideas in the context of the influence of classical and modern Russian literature on its development (which is embodied in the religious-existential philosophical tradition).

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