

ETHICAL AND AESTHETIC VIEWS IN THE WORKS OF ABAY

KUNANBAYEV

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Abstract. This article discusses the issues of ethical and aesthetic views in the works of Abay Kunanbayev. Many of Abay Kunanbayev's works are written in the form of moral teachings and moralistic conversations. In them, the Kazakh educator criticizes patriarchal-feudal customs, prejudices, and promotes a new morality that expresses the ideas of social progress. In solving ethical issues, as well as other problems, his cherished educational ideals come to the fore. Education, the development of mental abilities, culture in Abay — these are the criteria by which you can evaluate the actions and behavior of people. Everything that opposed the enlightenment of the people, their economic and spiritual development, and supported ignorant customs, was condemned and denounced by the poet-thinker. Hence the peculiarity of Abay's works devoted to the problems of morality. They usually begin with criticism of the prevailing norms: ignorance, dishonesty, hypocrisy, meanness, greed, the desire to live at the expense of others. Abay angrily condemns the modern society, in which even friendship between people is based on self-interest.

Keywords: ethics, aesthetics, morality, friendship, moralizing, enlightenment, custom, trust, enmity.

Abay was disgusted by such ugly phenomena, when “the son sells the father, the brother-the brother”. He was indignant that mutual trust between people was lost,

they were watching each other, enmity and hatred prevailed among them. In this world, says the enlightener, “a person is born crying, dies angry. Not seeing happiness, chasing each other, bragging to each other, we lose a poor life, we ruin it with obscene actions, we neglect it like sand, like a rotten rope, and when it comes to an end, we cry and cannot buy one day of life for all our fortune.” Abay claims that if people’s friendship is based on calculation, then enmity between them occurs only because of “envy and quarrel”. It is not the clever, honest, good people who are held in high esteem, but those who have wealth acquired in dishonest ways. In the poem “The Donkey”, the poet-thinker notes that while the donkey was loaded with gold, he was revered, stroked even when he kicked people, bit them. But as soon as the gold was removed from it, people stopped honoring it and began to carry manure on it. In this case, Abay satirically expressed the idea that in a society based on inequality, the only measure of determining the dignity of people is wealth. The outstanding educator contrasted the moral principles of the exploiters, the meaninglessness of their way of life, and their spiritual poverty with new criteria in assessing people, which expressed his progressive ideals. “Only reason, will, and conscience elevate a person. Only a fool can think that it is possible to rise otherwise,” wrote Abay [1, p 426].

“Gossip, deceit, laziness, waste” the poet calls these enemies of humanity and calls on contemporaries to avoid these vices in every possible way. He especially hates laziness and idleness, considering them a great evil that spoils the morals of people, and the source of all other negative actions. “Every lazy person is a coward and powerless,” Abay writes. “The powerless are cowards and boastful. The boastful and the cowardly can be stupid and ignorant. Lazy people make shameless beggars. They can be gluttons, indomitable, stupid, inept, misanthropic.” Abay’s criticism of parasitism and laziness is of fundamental importance. It was the parasitic way of life

of the exploiters, in particular the Kazakh feudal lords, that contained contempt and aversion to work. Even today, Abay's criticism of laziness provides us with useful material in the fight against the manifestations of this vice. After all, nowhere is laziness and parasitism more severely condemned, nowhere is industriousness more highly esteemed, than in a socialist society. Abay opposes and elevates the five high moral qualities listed above – “perseverance, work, deep reflection, moderation, kindness”, which he insistently suggests to support and develop [1, p 427].

In their social sense, these moral qualities express the aspirations of the progressive part of society, in which hard work and perseverance are combined with kindness and reasonableness. Abay did everything to raise young people strong-willed, hardworking, ready to overcome any obstacles to the study of science. Reason and work - these are the basic moral qualities that an ideal person should master, according to Abay. They are not an end in themselves for the educator, but the basis for fruitful work in the interests of the people. Abay taught young people to find their place in society and direct their knowledge to help the people free themselves from ignorance and disenfranchisement. According to Abay, smart people do not waste their energy on anything, but persistently and purposefully work in the name of a bright future. And in this work they get real satisfaction. “A smart person is a genuine person”, Abay wrote.- Of course, he gets carried away, but when he gets carried away, he spends everything on achieving the goal and the search time itself will remain in his memory the best time of his life.

Such a person, having found a worthy object of passion, goes with greed, and when, remembering, he tells, he understands that he received a high pleasure, and does not regret that his life has passed. Such a person was Abay himself, who devoted his life to the noble cause of educating his native people. This edification of his has not lost its relevance in our time, helping young men and women to understand their

lives, to get on the right path. Of course, this commandment of the outstanding educator was difficult for his contemporaries to fulfill. The oppressed and disenfranchised workers had no real opportunity to realize their cherished dreams. Abay Kunanbayev's moral precepts were exceptionally progressive under the conditions of patriarchal domination. However, even today, the thoughts of the educator are relevant to the fact that every person considers himself a part of society, a "brick of the universe" and takes a worthy place in public life [1, p 428].

His advice not to settle down on what has been achieved, not to be arrogant, not to get drunk on success, to be critical of the results of their activities is very modern. They still have a great educational value today, because Abay was far ahead of his time in a number of ethical issues. Abay's ethical views are an expression of his democratic beliefs. He condemned the selfishness and self-interest of the exploiters, which made them indifferent, indifferent to the fate of their neighbors. Abay urged his contemporaries not to be hostile, but to provide mutual assistance, to consider each other brothers. So be responsive, like a friend and brother, and share with everyone what you are rich in. Let friendship be sincere and honest— and all bad feelings will be silenced! Promoting the ideas of humanism among the masses, Abay stressed that everyone who loves and respects himself should love and respect another, see him as the same person. Otherwise, his selfishness turns into hatred for people, causing them to respond. Moreover, blind egoism, according to the educator, gives rise to the most negative phenomenon in the actions of people — meanness [2, 1978, p 532-533].

In the "Thirty-eighth word" Abay identified three negative moral categories- ignorance, laziness, meanness, which "humiliate humanity". Ignorance and laziness were discussed above. Abay considered them among the five enemies of humanity. Here he examines these phenomena, emphasizing their organic connection with the

meanness committed by the exploiters towards the oppressed masses. Meanness—“the enemy of the human race. And the enemy of the human race cannot be considered a man, belongs to the number of predatory animals”. Although Abay was not a revolutionary democrat, the moral he proclaimed, calling for humane treatment of working people, is democratic in nature [2, 1978, p 534].

Pain with your soul and pity for those who suffer, work to benefit people. However, the desire of Abay to show good feelings to the oppressed and destitute in the conditions of the domination of feudal relations was unrealistic, utopian. In an antagonistic society, the opposite of class interests does not imply mutual love, but enmity between the exploiters and the exploited. Moreover, Abay made the mistake of believing that laziness can serve as a source of poverty. Of course, in the conditions of a capitalist society, activity, efficiency, and enterprise can, to a certain extent, contribute to enrichment. But even under these circumstances, the accumulation of wealth occurs as a result of the appropriation of the fruits of other people’s labor, the robbery of people. Of course, such disruptions in Abay’s social views do not negate the general progressive-democratic orientation of his worldview, including ethical views [2, 1978, p 535].

Abay’s humanism and ideas of protecting the interests of the oppressed masses are not just good wishes. It requires people to take active actions, to be ready for self-sacrifice. He considers the real hero to be the one who does not submit obediently to the generally recognized prejudices, but bravely and resolutely goes against them and seeks to turn the people from the wrong to the right path. “A man who has a valiant heart quickly recovers from misfortune, he does not follow the caravan like a dog, he turns the lost people on the right path. He submits, but he submits to what is right for the mind, although this submission is sometimes difficult for him. He does not submit to what does not stand the test of reason. All this is what we call a lion’s heart.” In

moralistic conversations, Abay analyzes and interprets a number of categories of morality, in particular, the concepts of fun and sadness, joy and pride, honesty and truthfulness, shame and conscience. He considers these categories not in the abstract, but in close connection with his educational and socio-political views, with the specific tasks that he sets to promote the progressive development of the Kazakh people. Abay writes about the addiction of some people to fun and laughter. In his opinion, the constant manifestations of these emotions are generated by wealth, a rampant life, carelessness [3, 1983, p 131].

In this case, Abay suggested that people should not be frivolous, take care and grieve about the pressing issues of public life. But this did not mean that he advised his countrymen to remain constantly in sadness and abandon the high spirits. The Kazakh educator taught his contemporaries not to limit themselves to contemplation of vices and passive sadness about them, but to actively act to eliminate them. He sought to educate the younger generation in the spirit of cheerfulness, taught them to boldly overcome difficulties and misfortunes, urged young people not to give in to frivolity, to combine the quality of thoughtfulness with cheerfulness, optimism. In the “Twenty-first Word” Abay analyzes the category of “pride”. His opinions on this issue are imbued with the ideas of democracy and patriotism. He claims that pride is of a twofold nature. One follows from the intention of a person to behave with dignity, the other-from bragging. “To behave with dignity,” writes Abay, “means that a person values himself, he wants to be called ignorant, frivolous, boastful. The desire to behave with dignity follows from the desire of a person to emphasize that he is alien to such vicious qualities as bad manners, dishonor, swagger, mediocrity, begging, gossip, deception, lies.” Abay explains the first manifestation of pride by the awareness of a person’s own positive qualities, his dignity. “Such actions,” Abay points out, “are the actions of intelligent, honest, excellent people.” [3, 1983, p 132]

As for the other kind of pride that results from bragging, from the desire for self-aggrandizement, Abay considers it as a manifestation of ignorance generated by the conditions of the social environment. Directing in this case the sharp edge of criticism against the Kazakh rich people, feudal lords, their bragging and pride in wealth, Abay calls such people “ignoramuses of the ignoramuses” and despises them for their insignificance. A more lenient educator treats a person who praises his family and people. He calls such a Kazakh an ignoramus, because he does not understand the backwardness of his country. The educator requires people to be critical not only of themselves, but also of their own people. He considers it inappropriate, morally unjustified to be proud of the Kazakhs, when their native country is dominated by lack of culture and ignorance. In the “Twenty-sixth word”, Abay considers the category of “joy”, specifically speaking about what Kazakhs often enjoy. “If a Kazakh’s horse comes first in the race,” Abay writes— “or the wrestler on whom he placed a bet wins, or his golden eagle grabs the prey, or the dog is ahead of the others, the Kazakh will be happy to the point of losing consciousness. I don’t know if he has any greater joy than that. Oh, probably not.” Abay considers such joy as absurdity and stupidity. According to the educator, people should rejoice when they stand out from others not by the qualities of animals, because this is a natural phenomenon that does not depend on human activity, but by their skills, knowledge acquired as a result of work and effort. “The racehorse, and the golden eagle, and the greyhound,” Abay notes— “are all animals. They sometimes happen to one, the other. And a strong horseman is born in one, then in another kind. All this will not be created by your art.” [3, 1983, p 133]

In the coverage of this issue, as well as many others, Abay’s tendency to consider the phenomena of life through the prism of his educational views is clearly manifested. The customs that exist in Kazakh auls, which he considers ridiculous, he

explains, as a rule, ignorance, backwardness. The idealistic approach to social phenomena prevents Abay from realizing that these customs are generated by the material conditions of existence of the Kazakhs, due to their way of life. Under the rule of the pastoral nomadic economy, horse riding, protection of herds from predators with the help of dogs, hunting with golden eagles and greyhounds were natural phenomena. Hence, it is no accident that the Kazakhs, having no theaters, circuses and other entertainment institutions, enjoyed horse racing, hunting, etc. In moralistic conversations, Abay constantly calls on his compatriots to be honest and truthful, considering these concepts as manifestations of the inherent, positive moral qualities of a person. Not to value honor and conscience means, according to Abay, to cease to be a person. At the same time, he considered the categories of “conscience” and “honor” in organic connection with the concept of “shame”. According to him, “shame is humanity in a person, his inner awareness of the inhumanity of his act and his condemnation of his behavior.” According to Abay, such an experience in a conscientious person appears when one or another of his actions contradicts the rules of faith and human reason. “Let such an act go unnoticed by other people,” Abay writes— “but it disturbs your conscience, and your conscience tortures you with its self-condemnation. A person does not find peace, does not dare to look directly. A person stops eating, sleeping, and sometimes even takes his own life. It is difficult for a person who has suffered torments of conscience.” [4, 1989, p 66-67]

From this provision, it is not difficult to understand that Abay, speaking for the education of such positive moral qualities as modesty and conscientiousness, proceeded from his ethical principle, which requires the moral improvement of members of society through education. Although the explanation of the concept of shame is given by Abay in an abstract form, the very fact that he considers this issue, along with such categories of ethics as pride, joy, laughter, sadness, and others, is

important. After all, Abay is the first Kazakh thinker who in his works gave an interpretation to certain ethical categories from the standpoint of his educational ideas. Thus, the educator rose to the philosophical generalization of the mores of his contemporaries and sought to promote their change in a progressive direction. An important place in the works of Abay is occupied by the problem of love and marriage. He also approached its solution from the standpoint of democracy and humanism. As already noted, the position of women in society worried many akyns before Abay, as well as his predecessors. Valikhanov and I. Altynsarin. But during the life of A. Kunanbayev, in connection with the aggravation of social contradictions and the impending revolutionary storm, the question of the emancipation of women became extremely relevant and particularly acute. The progressive significance of Abay's poetry is that he stands up for disenfranchised Kazakh women, criticizes the feudal lords who buy the daughters of the poor as wives. In the poem "The beauty-the girl at the khan lived" Abay exposes the moral depravity of the feudal lords in family life and condemns the purchase of girls for kalym: Old rich man has all the power in money, but you can't become young again for money. Despicable, having bought someone's daughter for a kalym, You, old, have become a fool, asking for happiness. Abay emphasized that love cannot be bought, that here the decisive role is played by mutual attraction, the feelings of a young man and a girl. Believing that nothing can replace the desire and need of the heart, the Kazakh educator spoke about the impossibility of real marital love between an old man and a young girl. Ch. Valikhanov even proposed to the state authorities to issue a special law prohibiting premature marriage. Although Abay did not put the question in this plane, he considered it morally unacceptable for a girl to be the wife of a man who is many years older than her [5, 2002, p 368].

In a patriarchal-feudal society, in which reactionary customs and prejudices humiliated women and ignored their dignity, the poet-thinker proclaimed that a full-fledged family can only be where there is mutual love of the spouses and their mutual respect. If you are loved by your wife and love yourself, then it is not known to some fools. Where a smart husband and a well-behaved wife, we see a happy family there. These lines once again emphasize the democracy of Abay's views on the issues of love and marriage. At the same time, his individual statements in this area have not lost their significance in the fight against the remnants of the past and in modern conditions. Paying attention to the fact that a person is valued for high moral qualities and skills, Abay advised young people that they, arranging family life, were not interested only in the appearance of girls, but were interested in their inner content [5, 2002, p 369].

Do not be carried away by external beauty, do not give in to the passion of the blind. Do not be deceived by a beautiful woman, find out what kind of character she has. The enlightener condemned impermanence, transience, and transience in love. You love a girl — love only your own, one, well, and you are a sucker for many—you are a pathetic madcap [6, 1988, p 9].

In pre-revolutionary times, the rich tried to marry their sons to their equal daughters, counting on the support of famous relatives in the inter-tribal struggle. It was financially advantageous to marry such girls, since with a rich bride came a rich dowry. At the same time, some wealthy people tried to marry the daughters of the poor, as they, unlike the rich people, did not require a large kalym. In his works, Abay strongly opposed marriage of convenience. He urged young people to give up self-serving motives when starting a family. Don't marry a rich man's daughter for the sake of jewelry and wealth, and don't get carried away with a poor man's daughter for the sake of cheapness. But even here, due to the historical limitations of

his worldview, Abay was unable to reveal the root causes of women's disenfranchisement, to indicate the real ways of their liberation. One of the most important points in Abay's ethical views is that he constantly emphasized the need for moderation in all matters: in love, food, fun, accumulation of wealth, etc. Excessive desire for wealth, a tendency to greed, debauchery, waste are considered by the poet-educator as a moral ugliness. Promoting the idea of moderation, the Kazakh educator emphasized the need for reasonable satisfaction of needs. Crossing a reasonable border is not only harmful to society, but also disastrous for the bearer of this vice [7, 1997, p 289].

Thus, in the conditions of a patriarchal-feudal society, A. Kunanbayev promoted new moral norms that exalt reason and condemn ignorance. They are organically connected with his educational ideas, imbued with the spirit of democracy and humanism, reflect the progressive aspirations of new social forces that advocated the spread of Russian education in Kazakhstan, for its economic and cultural progress. In the highly artistic works of the outstanding educator, deep thoughts are expressed on aesthetic issues, in particular, on the role and purpose of poetry in public life. Here it is necessary to emphasize that it is in these issues that the materialistic trend in Abay's worldview most clearly appears. In understanding the essence of art and its social vocation, the educator stands on quite realistic positions. According to him, life, a person with his feelings and thoughts are the source of poetic creativity. Although in the works of Abay we do not find a scientific definition of the concept of art as a reflection of life, but the meaning of his judgments is reduced to this. In his opinion, the song is born of life, expresses the emotional experiences of people, their sorrows or joys. V.G. Belinsky argued that life itself is poetry. And, according to Abay, life in all its manifestations generates songs. The Kazakh educator considered poetry a special form of expression of thought that

requires skill, ability and creative daring. Many people have a taste for song-making, Abay noted, but only a select few are worthy of the title of a true poet. Poetry is the ruler of language, and genius carves miracles out of stone. The heart warms if the speech is light, and the ear is caressed by the beauty of the speeches [7, 1997, p 290].

Attaching serious importance to the form of poems, the poet-educator emphasized the importance of their ideological content with special force. Many people compose poetry, but some are only able to create works in which the external beauty is in harmony with the internal content. Speaking for the high artistic quality of poetry and the depth of its content, Abay gave the main role to the ideological design of works of art. “There are few Kazakhs who compose poems with a golden gut and a silver opera,” Abay said, meaning “correct content” by the golden gut. It was not by chance that the poet attached the utmost importance to it. Being an opponent of aesthetic idealists, he strongly rejected the Akyns, who lavished their poetic gift for the comfort of the rich. It is not for fun that I compose a poem, nor do I fill it with fictions. For sensitive ears, heart and soul, for the young, I give birth to my own verse. Those who are clear-sighted and sensitive in their hearts will understand that in every verse I write. These lines involuntarily remind us of the words of N.G. Chernyshevsky regarding the purpose of art: “Content worthy of the attention of a thinking person alone can save art from the reproach that it is an empty amusement, which it really is extremely often: an artistic form will not save a work of art from contempt or a compassionate smile, if it is not able to answer the question by the importance of its idea: “Was it worth working on such trifles? The useless has no right to respect.” [8, 2001, p 218]

Here, to a certain extent, there is a consonance between the aesthetic views of Abay and the Russian revolutionary democrats, who consider art as an effective means of promoting progressive and democratic ideas, fighting against the prevailing

social order. Abay saw that there are still few people who are able and willing to understand the meaning of poetry. The listeners are mostly ignorant, do not understand the benefits of science and education, do not realize the need for education to eliminate the backwardness of their native country. But Abay also recognizes that the interest of even uneducated people in poetry, their desire to delve into the content of songs and poems depends on how much the songs express the depth of feelings and experiences of the people. As we can see, Abay understood the social purpose of poetry, saw it as a means of awakening civil consciousness in the masses, an effective, mobilizing value in public life. In this respect, his poetic works served as a model for others, calling the Kazakh people to progress. The name of the outstanding poet-thinker Abay Kunanbayev is associated with a whole period in the development of the Kazakh national culture, an extremely fruitful period of pre-revolutionary social thought in Kazakhstan. The purpose of Abay's life was to serve the working people, to help them learn the truth by spreading science and education, to convince the masses of the need to fight against social vices, to promote the economic and cultural development of Kazakhstan [9, 2007, p 8-116].

Speaking for the education of the Kazakh people on the basis of introducing them to Russian culture, promoting progressive ideas, Abay joined the democratic camp of Russia led by the Revolutionary Democrats. With his educational activities, the struggle against conservatism, backwardness, stagnation of patriarchal-feudal society, bold criticism of the vices of social and political life in Kazakhstan, Abay complemented the activities of progressive circles of Russia, who fought against autocratic despotism, police arbitrariness and violence. Poems and moralistic conversations of the educator, reflecting the gloomy picture of pre-revolutionary reality, increased the discontent of the masses with the existing social orders, contributed to the growth of class consciousness of the Kazakh poor, created

ideological and political prerequisites for future revolutionary actions. Abay's work as a whole, containing deep philosophical thoughts and progressive ideas, had a huge impact on the further development of democratic thought and the liberation movement in Kazakhstan at the beginning of the XX century [12, 1971, p 230-231].

Kazakh educators Chokan Valikhanov, Ibray Altynsarin and Abay Kunanbayev played an outstanding role in the life of Kazakhstan with their creativity and socio-political activities. Because of the backwardness and disunity of the various districts of the vast region, the enlighteners did not know each other, although they lived almost at the same time. However, the content of their educational ideas is strikingly similar. Russians fervently defended the enlightenment, recognized the progressive role of Russia in relation to Kazakhstan, and called on their people to study Russian science and to assimilate the achievements of Russian culture. But each of the Kazakh educators has its own characteristics, and the activities of each of them left a unique mark in the history of social and philosophical thought of Kazakhstan. After the Akyns of the first half of the XIX century, who spontaneously expressed the discontent of the masses, against the background of the backward environment in the person of Ch. Valikhanov was born in the Russian-educated Kazakh, who theoretically comprehended the phenomena of public life and put forward bold plans for progressive transformations of his native land, following the example of Russia. But his cultural and educational and socio-political ideas, which emerged under the influence of the Russian liberation movement, did not yet have a real basis in the Kazakh reality. They remained in Russian scientific publications, not spreading in the Kazakh environment [10, 1982, p 334].

However, the needs of the developing social life were such that another Kazakh educator I. Altynsarin, regardless of Ch. Valikhanov tried to practically solve the problems of educating the people. On his initiative, a whole system of schools

and educational institutions is being created, which contributes to “intellectual and further industrial development” of the people. But the activity of I. Altynsarin was limited to the limits of one region [11, 1993, p 8-11].

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