

**Grek A. G.**

## **ON GIFTEDNESS AND ITS FRUITS<sup>1</sup>**

The study of gifted children is important not only for modern school education in general, but also for the methods of teaching philological disciplines at all levels and in various types of schools. Families, clans, nations, and cultures have always paid attention to those people whose natural endowments, their richness or intensity of manifestation, are unique. There are, at least, two factors indicative of the significance of giftedness studies in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: rapidly widening standardization of education and a wealth of talent found in the Slavic world, which unites many nations, nationalities, and ethnic groups.

It is well known that giftedness of a child, as well as a human being in general, is not a matter in itself, but is given to him/her. Giftedness manifests itself and is recognized by others as a generic property: from parents, ancestors, for generations. The spiritual aspect of giftedness is, quite on the contrary, difficult to understand, although even a child knows the New Testament parable about talents in its symbolic or more worldly and secular perception. This parable is about the talents, which were multiplied by those people to whom they were given, and the bitter truth about one talent, hidden under a bushel. The general symbolic value of this parable is that the gift (Russian: *о-дар-ённ-ость* ← *да-р* ← *да-ть*; English: *gift-ed-ness* ← *gift* ← *to give*) can have various degrees, and its fruits, which are the privilege of every child, of every person, born and living in the world, are also different.

The stories featured in this article are about three philologists, whose giftedness is related to the Russian<sup>2</sup> land, the possibilities and potential of the Russian culture in

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<sup>1</sup> The first variant of this article was published in “Преподавание литературы учащимся с филологической одарённостью” (Moscow, 2012). P. 5-22.

<sup>2</sup> In this context, the term “Russian” does not actualize, like in other contexts, national and ethnic component of its meaning. This comment is important also because one of the characters of this article, I. I. Kovtunova, was born on

the field of education and determined by the historical destiny of the people in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century<sup>3</sup>. The giftedness of each of these philologists, famous not only in their motherland, but all around the world, manifested already in their childhood and adolescence; however, unfortunately, there is little information about this. Their heritage or, in other words, fruits of their giftedness and work, are the pride of the Russian culture and are an important part of the world culture. They are what the Russian education and the cultural type of person, nurtured by it, honored for.

Giftedness that has natural endowments at its base can reveal itself even under worse conditions. However, the starting point for the manifestation and development of giftedness is favorable conditions. Originally, the environment, life style, the atmosphere of the inner and outer circles of communication and perception should be conducive to creativity, which is impossible without a talent, giftedness. Scientists, who will be discussed below, represent different generations of philologists, enjoyed different repute, made different contributions to the world science, and had different types of giftedness, as well as quite unique prerequisites and conditions of its development. With the help of articles, letters, collections released during the last decade, as well as archival materials remaining unpublished, some features of the development of their talents, starting from their infancy, adolescence, can be observed; the development that contributed to philology in general or to its particular branches.

**Nikolay Sergeyeovich Trubetskoy** (Moscow, April 16, 1890 – Vienna, June 25, 1938). According to the academician V. N. Toporov, N. S. Trubetskoy was “a great scholar and a profound, original thinker”, but, at the same time, “he embodies a great and rare type of a person influenced by the Russian history and spiritual culture” [21, lxxii]. His soul embraces extremes, “breadth, flight, range, outward movement and subtlety, centrality, concentration, inward movement, intuition and logic, boldness of thought, its sobriety, ‘theoretical’ and ‘practical’ aspects, self-reliance and openness, composure, seriousness, self-control, self-possession and

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Kharkiv and her papers described her, as well as her parents, as Ukrainian. But before the revolution both her parents and her paternal grandparents were Ukrainians: in Russia, Rus' Minor.

<sup>3</sup> Though some of them were born in the 19th Century, some died at the beginning of the 21st Century.

temperament, impulse, enthusiasm, etc.” The amazing genius of his mind and soul, many-sided talents and interests, extraordinary diligence, and holistic approach as the only acceptable way to discern the truth, the author continues, defined Trubetskoy as a human being and were easily recognizable in Trubetskoy as a scholar and a thinker [19, lxxiii].

The book *Grundzüge der Phonologie*, which was being written by Trubetskoy for the last 12 years of his life until his premature death, is known to any linguist who has received a university education or has taken appropriate courses in teacher-training schools. This masterwork contains descriptions of the phonological systems of more than 100 languages. The book was written in German; in 1949, it was released in French; and, only 20 years after its first publication, it was translated into Russian (*Основы фонологии*, 1960 [22]). Other works of Trubetskoy are less well-known to Russian philologists, including the Old Church Slavonic and Turanian element in the Russian culture, language teleology, and the multitude of world languages (*Вавилонская башня и смешение языков (The Tower of Babel and the Confusion of Tongues*, 1923), the Old Russian language, as well as articles on the characteristics of the Finno-Ugric, Caucasian, and other languages, the Russian self-knowledge, eurasianism, etc. [23], [24]. According to S. A. Starostin, the largest specialist in the Caucasian languages, N. S. Trubetskoy “can be fairly called the founder of the comparative study of the North Caucasian (and especially the East Caucasian) languages”. Yet, little known are his works on the Russian literature (*Достоевский-художник (Dostoyevsky – the artist)*), *Литературное развитие Льва Толстого (Leo Tolstoy’s Literary Education)*, etc.), on the ethnography and folklore of various peoples [24].

N. S. Trubetskoy was born into one of the noblest and the most educated families in Russia. His father, Prince Sergey, was a famous religious philosopher, interested in a wide range of issues, professor, who, in the autumn of 1905, became the Rector of the Moscow University. The atmosphere in the family was extremely favorable for comprehensive and accelerated early development. Sixty years later, Boris Pasternak, a classmate of N. S. Trubetskoy, described the manor of the

Trubetskoys in Uzkoe, an estate in the southwestern part of Moscow, in a remarkable verse:

Ворота с полукруглой аркой,	Full-centered arch's before my eyes
Холмы, луга, леса, овсы,	Green hills and fields, fresh grove and
В ограде мрак и холод парка.	gentian,
И дом невиданной красы	In gloomy park the shadow lies.
	Unthinkably majestic mansion.

That was the environment where Trubetskoy spent his childhood.

It is known that, when N. S. Trubetskoy was 13, he displayed particular interest in ethnography, ethnology, and folklore. His research on the Finno-Ugric languages started at that time. Since 1904, he established connection with the scientific world in Moscow: he attended meetings of the Moscow Ethnographic Association, made acquaintances with famous scientists, V. Ph. Miller, a prominent expert in Russian folklore and the one of the best Iranists of his time, W. G. Bogoraz and L. Ya. Sternberg, experts in the Paleosiberian languages, among others. When Bogoraz visited his correspondent, he was impressed by “einen Schulknaben”, i.e. a schoolboy<sup>4</sup>. In 1905–1906, two scientific articles were published by the 15-year-old author. One of them was dedicated to the funeral ceremony reflected in Finnish folksongs. By that time, Trubetskoy learnt the Mordvinic language. A fifth-grader in the grammar school, he was interested in Kalevala and Finno-Ugric ethnography. Since 1907, he studied the Paleosiberian languages of Eastern Siberia and the languages of the Caucasus. According to S. K. Kuznetsov's advice, he gathered information about the Kamchadal (Itelmen) language in the reports about early journeys to Kamchatka; these materials laid the foundation for a dictionary and a comparative and grammatical language essay.

N. S. Trubetskoy was home-schooled; he took exams without attending classes in Moscow Men's High School, situated at the corner of the Povarskaya and Molchanovka streets in the house of Prince Gallitzin. B. Pasternak, his coeval, also

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<sup>4</sup> See the second edition of Trubetskoy's letter to V. G. Bogoraz [19, 443-444].

studied there. In his autobiographical prose *Люди и положения* (*People and Situations*), the poet gratefully mentioned Mansurov, a young historian, who was “a relative and a loyal friend of the young Trubetskoj and Dmitry Samarin”<sup>5</sup>. According to Pasternak, these three young men “took exams without attending classes year by year. Samarin, who had philosophy, dialectics, knowledge coursing through his veins, moved to Moscow from Siberia at the beginning of the New Economic Policy (NEP), swelled from hunger, and soon fell ill with typhus and died. Pasternak did not know about Mansurov’s fate. As for the “prominent philologist Nikolai Trubetskoj”, the poet wrote that he “became famous all over the world and recently died in Vienna” [18, 252-256].

Having left Russia, Trubetskoj saved his life and became a great scholar. At the first International Congress of Linguists, Meillet, a French linguist, said, pointing at Trubetskoj, “He is the clearest intellect of modern linguistics.” “Clear intellect”, someone confirmed. “The clearest one”, Meillet insisted.

The letters of N. S. Trubetskoj to friends and colleagues, especially his correspondence with Roman Jakobson, a prominent linguist (*Письма и заметки Н. С. Трубецкого* (*Trubetskoj's Letters and Notes*), 2004), give a fuller picture of Trubetskoj’s interests in exile, immerse us in the atmosphere of intellectual search and intensive work. A fragment of one of the letters from Trubetskoj to Jakobson (July 18, 1923), which was sent from Vienna<sup>6</sup>, is a vivid evidence:

*“Dear Roman Osipovich!*

*I am grateful for Your detailed letter and for information about Vasiliev’s<sup>7</sup> works.*

*In the history of the Russian language, as in Slavic studies in general, I do nothing but try to see the forest instead of trees, because now, in my opinion, it is possible; however, very few people do it. Looking at the history of the development*

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<sup>5</sup> D. Samarin was born into a famous Slavophile family.

<sup>6</sup> In 1922-1938, N. S. Trubetskoj was a member of the Slavistics Department of Vienna University.

<sup>7</sup> L. L. Vasiliev was a Russian linguist. His work *О значении каморы в некоторых древнерусских памятниках XVI-XVIII вв.* (*On Importance of Kamora in Some Old Russian Written Records of the 16<sup>th</sup> - 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries*), published in the *Русский филологический вестник* (*Russian Philological Vestnik*), 1917, №3-4 (Kazan, 1918), was mentioned by Trubetskoj in his letter to Jakobson in June 21, 1923 [19, 50].

*and disintegration of the all-Russian language, as the phrase goes, from d'oiseau eye view<sup>8</sup>, I was amazed by the logical harmony of the picture. Actually everything comes down to a very simple fact: only the western and southwestern parts of Russia contact with other Slavic languages. Hence, there is the following consequence: all phenomena common to all or several Slavic languages come first in the Western and Southwestern dialects and, then, spread further to Northeastern Russia <...>” [19, 51-52]<sup>9</sup>.*

N. S. Trubetskoy was one of those few who defined the main directions of the development of historical and philological, as well as linguistic studies of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. He was also a thinker, a generous spirit and a kind soul, who concealed the pain of his homeland<sup>10</sup>. Trubetskoy foresaw the tragic events in Europe. His latest work *Упадок творчества (The Decline of the Art)* was published in 1937 in the 12<sup>th</sup> edition of the Eurasian Chronicle, which was forbidden by the Nazis. At the very beginning, the author wrote, “In the life of every individual, be it an individual or a collective personality, i.e. a people or an entity comprised of many peoples, creativity goes through uplifting and disheartening periods” [24, 444]. The scholar and thinker saw the cause of depression, of the decline of creativity in Russia and in Europe in the intervention of ideological, authoritarian, and economic forces into life and work. According to Jakobson, the life and work of Trubetskoy were and remain inseparable in combating these hostile to creativity forces [25, xv].

**Irina Ilyinichna Kovtunova** (Kharkiv, March 4, 1926 – Moscow, January 6, 2007) is a famous specialist in the Russian language studies. Works of Kovtunova on the free indirect speech in the Russian literature of the 18<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries, word order standards, relation between the word order and the thematic-rhematic

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<sup>8</sup> A comic blending of the synonymous phrases in the Russian (с высоты птичьего полёта) and in the French (à vol d’oiseau) languages that was used by Moscow linguists. Publisher’s Note. Translation into Russian by V. Plungyan.

<sup>9</sup> The author of the article kept the original spelling and punctuation of the letter in Russian.

<sup>10</sup> See two extracts of the letters of Trubetskoy in different periods of time, which reveal his attitude to some events in Russia: (1) “It is hard and frightening to think about Russia, especially for those people who hide themselves from reality and are misled by false hopes. Those rulers remind a rider, who sits on the wild horse perfectly, however, he cannot control it at all and has a little idea where to ride (the horse chooses the direction itself)...” (07. 28.1921); (2) “Yagodich returned from Moscow and was rather scrunched. His stories were terrifying and hopeless. The most horrible thing was that the liquidation of the intellectuals was supported enthusiastically by the masses, and it was considered to be ‘the common case’”(04.03.1930): [19, 24-25, 174-175].

articulation in the Russian literary language, poetic grammar and the syntax of the poetic text, and the style of some authors are recognized both in our country and abroad [8]. In the jubilee volume on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Kovtunova's academic career, the colleagues at the V. V. Vinogradov Russian Language Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences and her students wrote, "Irina Ilyinichna Kovtunova has always been interested in the most difficult problems and the phenomena that do not lie on the surface, have a complex internal structure, and require serious theoretical reflection" [20, 11]. Kovtunova's book "Поэтический синтаксис" (Poetic Syntax), published in 1986, opened the way of learning the syntax of the Russian poetic language [Ibid, 14].

I. I. Kovtunova's first article *Несобственно прямая речь в современном русском литературном языке* (*Free Indirect Speech in the Modern Russian Literary Language*) was based on her graduation paper<sup>11</sup>. The article was put into print in the journal *Русский язык в школе* (*The Russian Language in School*)<sup>12</sup> [10]. Its author, having passed the entrance exams, became a post-graduate student in the Institute of Linguistics of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR and continued to work on this topic<sup>13</sup>. Study of French, German<sup>14</sup>, and Russian linguistics requires maturity of mind, the ability to see common and distinct in different approaches and points of view, separate significant and valuable matters from particulars. Free indirect speech, which is characterized by the interaction of the author's speech and character's speech, is stylistically foregrounded, but it is difficult to see the forms and methods of its linguistic expression. In this case, the ability of the researcher to see the particulars, as opposed to the general picture, its attention to diverse and elusive meanings and nuances are very valuable. Abilities and qualities that Kovtunova

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<sup>11</sup> N. M. Bazhenov, a Professor of Kharkiv University and the research advisor of I. Kovtunova, was one of the authors of the Modern Russian Language Textbook, which was well-known in Ukraine. I. Kovtunova was indebted to the patronage of N. M. Bazhenov for employing in the Russian Language Department of Starobel'sk Teachers' Institute, where she worked as a teacher (1951-1952) before joining Ph.D. program in V. V. Vinogradov Institute.

<sup>12</sup> Even today O. P. Yermakova, professor from Kaluga and a famous linguist, recommends this article to students as one of the best works on this issue.

<sup>13</sup> V. V. Vinogradov, the academician, whose studies on language and style of Russian writers (I. A. Krylov, L. N. Tolstoy) contained research on free indirect speech, was the research supervisor of I. Kovtunova. The book of I. I. Kovtunova, dedicated to free indirect speech, was published half a century later, after the author's death [15].

<sup>14</sup> At the beginning of the 1950s, the works of French German scholars, representatives of Karl Vossler's school, were not yet translated into Russian.

showed in this study determined her professionalism<sup>15</sup>. N. S. Pospelov, a famous expert in syntax, called the work of the 29-year-old scholar “a major contribution to the resolution of the problem of the free indirect speech”, and V. D. Levin, a brilliant stylist, culminated his review with the words, “The whole work bears the seal of inquiring mind and talent” [14].

Teachers of the Russian language of different generations know and appreciate the textbook of A. M. Zemsky, S. E. Kryuchkov, and M. V. Svetlaev *Русский язык (The Russian Language)*<sup>16</sup>. In its 9<sup>th</sup> edition (1980), sections devoted to the word order in sentences and phrases appeared. Kovtunova was the author of these sections. Students of the Russian Philology Departments who mastered the curriculum in the Russian language quite successfully are familiar with a textbook by I. I. Kovtunova *Порядок слов и актуальное членение предложения (Word Order and Actual Division of the Sentence)*<sup>17</sup> [11]. It was not an ordinary textbook, however. It afforded the reader the atmosphere of intellectual search, linguistic experiment, and the situation when the reader had to make the choice as to the approach that would be the most adequate to the studied phenomenon. Well-known is her *Энциклопедический словарь юного филолога (языкознание) (Encyclopedia of a Young Philologist (Linguistics))* (1984). It contains written by Kovtunova articles on the word order and the actual division of the sentence, complex syntactic entities. While preparing the second edition of this dictionary, M. V. Panov, an editor and a talented linguist, wrote to Kovtunova:

*“The meeting and communication with You are the happiest moments of my life. As well as Your charm, charisma, inner harmony that are an inherent part of all Your life style, thought, and creativity. And everything, where the musical spirit of life prevails, is connected with You.*

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<sup>15</sup> The study of the syntactic and lexical units that, in free indirect speech, changed their semantics and functions as compared to those in simple narrative sentences, i.e. purely author’s speech, allowed I. I. Kovtunova to substantiate stylistic functions of the free indirect speech in different contexts from linguistic point of view and study its evolution in the Russian literature of 18<sup>th</sup> – earlier part of 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries.

<sup>16</sup> This textbook was developed for teacher-training colleges; it, however, turned out to be universal. The 13<sup>th</sup> revised edition (“Drofa”, 2003) was published as a classic textbook.

<sup>17</sup> The first edition was published in 1976 (publishing house Prosveshchenie) in *Современный русский язык* series (*The Modern Russian Language*).



*Your essays about Akhmatova, Annensky, Tsvetaeva are new capstones of your creativity. Very seldom while reading research papers on such prominent talents like these three poets, do we have a feeling that the character (the poet) and the researcher are a match in creativity; this feeling of parity, however, is clear in Your essays.*

*And I have a dream: you will write ten (or even more) insightful stories about poets... and the book, which will be a special milestone in the poetry interpretation, will be released. It will become a star among the best words about poets. This is my most cherished dream!*

*M. P” [17]<sup>18</sup>.*

There are no notes or memories about the childhood and adolescence of Irina Ilyinichna. However, there is a diary of her mother, Yelizaveta Semyonovna Kovtunova, fine philologist, specialist in the Russian language, prominent educator, and a talented person<sup>19</sup>.

The first entry in the “Diary” of Yelizaveta Semyonovna was made on July 4, 1929, when her daughter was 3 years old, and the last one – on December 2, 1934, when Irina started school. The atmosphere of love and creativity reigned in the young Kovtunov family. Just like all children, little Irina created many new words. She was distinguished by high sensitivity to the word and its relation to the communicative situation, in which this newly created word was used. The author of the diary highlights the child’s gift of versification, her sense of rhythm, fertile imagination.

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<sup>18</sup> Panov’s dream came true. In 2004, *Очерки по языку поэтов* (Azbukovnik Publishing House) was released. The book includes two big articles about the language of A. Blok and B. Pasternak and six “language portrait” devoted to F. Tyutchev, A. Fet, I. Annensky, A. Akhmatova, and M. Tsvetaeva. During preparation of this edition (after Panov’s death, at the end of 2003) the memorial phrase was added “In cherished memory of Mikhail Viktorovich Panov, a scientist, an educator, and a poet” [11]. The letters of M. V. Panov to I. I. Kovtunova were handed over to the archive of the library of Luhansk Taras Shevchenko National University during the readings in memory of Kovtunova, organized with the help of Starobel’sk Department of Luhansk National University (summer 2009).

<sup>19</sup> Letters to her daughter, a notebook with poems, water-colors, collections of gramophone records, memoirs of relatives, friends, and students are indicative of this statement. Some letters from I. I. Kovtunova’s archive are kept in Luhansk Taras Shevchenko National University.

“<...> She (Irina<sup>20</sup> – A.H.) calls me ‘родная’. She says, ‘ты моя родная роднашка’. Today: ‘Кто это там стоит? Это мой большой голубчик?’<sup>21</sup> I am very unfair to her. I get nervous when I do not have to; it happens too often. I am always in a hurry, and if she makes mischief and keeps me back, I get worried, and then my conscience smites me.

*A charming child with her inner world, full of animals, various adventures of little boys and girls; very lively, with wonderful, slightly pensive eyes, sometimes having mischievous twinkle, with tiny mouth, delicate figure and long legs... my little, sunny girl...*

*What a marvel are her existence, her being my daughter, her rules and noise, which fills the house! A wave of uncontrollable and immense happiness swells in me when I see her, and my loved one, looking at me with their eyes, so much resembling each other, so big and a little pensive.*

*The destiny, which gave them to me, was kind to me” [8].*

Some parts of the “Diary” feature early poetic experiments of Irina, for example:

“Буду спать,

В парке играть!”

“I will sleep today,

In the garden play!”

“Смешной тип!

У Киски грипп!”

“That is true!

Kitty has the flu!”

“Козлик, Саша, мамаша!

Раз, два, три.

Тётя Тася, посмотри!”

“Little goat, Sasha, mum!

One, two, three.

Auntie Tasia, you must see!”

“Нас живёт три,

“We are here and we are three,

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<sup>20</sup> In “Diary” such variants of name as *Irina – Irisik (Ирина – Ирисик)* were used. More often the author used *Ir. (Ир.)*.

<sup>21</sup> “Голубчик” referred to Irina’s father, who, unlike little Irina, was tall and “big”.

Мы едим мандари!”

We are eating mandarie!”<sup>22</sup>

Trips to the Crimea contributed a lot to the girl’s development. After several days of the first journey, Irina’s mother made the following note:

*“All her life, all her games consist of impressions from travelling”.*

*Trains, cars, boats, steamships, mountains, sea, Alushta, the Crimea”.*

After writing down a conversation with her daughter, Yelizaveta Semyonovna stresses an amazing for Irina’s age (3 years and 8 months) understanding of space. The complex composition of Irina’s early drawings, which combined a number of very detailed parts with panoramic images and the scale, also proved it.

At the age of five, Irina was sent to the kindergarten, where she studied German. At the age of eight, she joined the second grade of an ordinary school. Mother said that her daughter, “read the very same books I read at her age, she is extremely enthusiastic about the school (she spent only 3 months there) and the new world around her” (recorded on December 2, 1934) [9].

It is easy to see that the talents the girl had were, to a degree, a development of the gifts of Yelizaveta Semyonovna herself, the daughter of S. Tschopp, a famous Odessa artist. She liked literature, especially the Russian poetry. The influence of the father on the girl was no less significant; it appears to shape her mental abilities towards more abstract forms, towards different languages and ways of expressing in them of the same content, and towards the sensitivity to the artistic word and its sound. Her father influenced her career choice. According to the “Diary”, the common trait of both the father and the daughter was determination (*Russian: у-прям-ство: прямота в сочетании с твёрдостью? волей?...*).

Irina’s father, Ilya Mikhaylovich Kovtunov, was the only child in a landlord family. By the time the revolution began, he was able to graduate from one of the best grammar schools in Kharkiv, which gave him knowledge of Greek and Latin<sup>23</sup>. Ilya Mikhaylovich also knew French and Italian, translated from these languages into

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<sup>22</sup> This last example was given after the following situation, “Leonid, Irina and I are sitting together and eating mandarins. Suddenly, ‘Ir.’ goes into raptures over it and starts jumping and singing: *Нас живёт три, Мы едим мандари!*”

<sup>23</sup> M. L. Gasparov once said about the Department of Philology of the Moscow State University in the 1950s, “...we were graduating from the university with the same amount of knowledge that a pre-revolutionary grammar school graduate” [5, 311].

Russian and Ukrainian. His gentlemanhood and participation in the Volunteer Army prevented him from continuing his foreign language studies in Kharkiv University. However, his talents of a reciter, actor, writer, his wittiness, books, friendship with the talented writers, artists, and scientists in Kharkiv made him one of the most educated people of his time<sup>24</sup>.

Natalia S. Fertik<sup>25</sup> from Kharkiv wrote to the author of this article about the school years of Irina Kovtunova: “We met each other in September of 1944, when we both transferred to the 10<sup>th</sup> graduation class of the 17<sup>th</sup> Women's High School. Despite differing vectors of our interests: Irina was interested in the liberal arts, liked literature and history, and I was not interested in either literature, or history, but loved mathematics, for some reason we became friends. Together, we visited museums, drew, discussed various, important to us, problems.

Irina wrote the best Russian literature essays in the group. Everything that Irina wrote was not “taken” from books, but always created independently and deeply thought through by her; it was always really meaningful and interesting. Irina also had a gift for mathematics. There was no mathematical problem that she could not solve, and the solution was always original, not like other students had” [14].

After graduation from the grammar school, Irina chose philology and, then, linguistics. For all her life, she remained loyal to this choice. The latter fact does not imply that she was narrow-minded or fanatic in her service to philology or, more precisely, linguistics, which she considered to be an excellent tool for understanding the world and the human being, as reflected in the language and artistic expression. According to the friends and students, Irina Ilyinichna liked classical music, dramatic reading, and painting. Moreover, she wrote fine verses, was interested in philosophy, history of religion. She always read a lot. Modern discoveries in mathematics and physics attracted her in terms of their methodological value for the liberal arts. In her last works, devoted to the poetry of A. Blok and M. Voloshin, she was able not only

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<sup>24</sup> I. M. Kovtunov taught Latin in one of Kharkiv medical institutes, for several years worked as an actor in Kharkiv Drama Theater, organized several clubs of dramatic reading for students, and translated librettos from Italian for Ukrainian theaters, fiction from French. He was a friend of M. Voloshin, who visited Kharkiv regularly, was a group-mate of D. Zhuravlyov, a famous elocutionist, etc.

<sup>25</sup> N. S. Fertik, a mathematician, worked in one of Kharkiv research institutes.

to describe the style of these authors, but also to define the high mission of poets in the world associated with their creative work, which is like a “ticket to eternity” [12, 56], [13, 33-35]

Irina Ilyinichna was herself an example of an artist despite the authoritarian Soviet society and the social chaos in the 1990s. In the face of a long-term exhausting disease, she did a lot for the science. Her heritage is measured not by the amount of the works written, but by the novelty and the value of the work done. She was able to help those involved in education by “translating” scientific knowledge into clear logos structures. According to S. Kodzasov<sup>26</sup>, a Moscow linguist, all her books and articles were written in the language of the classical Russian literature, i.e. were written in a wonderful Russian language. As the descendant of the best traditions of the pre-revolutionary Russian culture, she managed to preserve and enhance them at the time of destruction, at the time of persecution and rejection, she was able to save it for the Future.

**Mikhail Leonovich Gasparov** (Moscow, July 13, 1935 – Moscow, November 7, 2005), a leading specialist in Ancient literature [1, I], literature, and prosody [3], [4], a gifted translator and an outstanding rhetor. His book *Занимательная Греция*<sup>27</sup> (*Interesting Greece*) [2], in which Greek mythology is presented in the genre of anecdotes, with appropriate to young people simplicity and sense of humor, is interesting not only to children and adolescents, to whom it is dedicated, but also to their parents and adults.

In a recent conversation, which took place in the Institute of Linguistics of the Academy of Sciences, a graduate student N. N. said that she became a philologist thanks to Mikhail Leonovich Gasparov. “How is that possible?” I asked, knowing her youth and the circumstances of the last years of Gasparov’s life, including his serious illness. “The meeting with Mikhail Leonovich was arranged by our literature teacher

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<sup>26</sup> A famous phonetician, Professor of Moscow State University.

<sup>27</sup> The book had been shelved in the publishing house for 14 years before it was published and re-published triumphantly.

Nadezhda Aronovna Shapiro. He spoke about philology in such a wonderful way that it influenced my choice”, she replied<sup>28</sup>.

Among colleagues of M. L. Gasparov’s in the V. V. Vinogradov Russian Language Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences and in the Stylistics Department was I. Kovtunova. She once said about him with admiration, “Fame follows Gasparov; he, however, does not notice it!”

Talking about academician Gasparov, whose fame and popularity in philological, prosodic, literary, humanitarian (and many others!) circles even in the early 1990s were significant, is like knocking at an open door. Today, all his works are available on the Internet, including *Современный русский стих. Метрика и ритмика (Modern Russian Verse. The Metrics and Rhythm System)*, *Очерк истории русского стиха (Essay on the History of Russian Verse)*, *Очерк истории европейского стиха (Essay on the History of European Poetry)*, *Занимательная Греция (An Interesting Greece)*, translations of ancient Greek and Latin authors, articles on rhetoric, poetics, prosody [7]. Here, one can read Gasparov’s letters written at different times, from different places, and to different recipients [6]. *Записки и выписки (Notes and Extracts)* (2000/2001), Gasparov’s experimental poems-pasticcios, which caused a stir among scientific intelligencia, was also uploaded. The Internet also makes available additional information about Gasparov as a scientist, a writer, and a person – in the articles written by different authors, who knew him in person. Entering the name of the scientist in the search system will immediately bring about hundreds and thousands of pages [26], [27].

Reading M. L. Gasparov again and again, one marvels at his “philo-”, i.e. love, of the Word-Logos. Clarity and intelligibility of everything he created and delivered, both orally and in a written form, finds adequate expression in a small amount of text, its brevity being similar to that of the epigraphy that requires reflective reading, long meditation, and immersing into its meaning. Gasparov’s “Word” has embraced all historical meanings, which, at first sight, may seem lost, but then, all of a sudden, appear to be sought-after and relevant today. Being framed by the strict semantic

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<sup>28</sup> Svetlana Bochaver is now a Candidate of Philological Sciences. She graduated from school № 57 (Moscow).

structure of the immediate and the larger context, Gasparov's "Word" requires the reader to be humble and diligent, cures him/her from willfulness (Russian: *своеволие*). Light and clear, it cures carelessness (Russian: *легко-мыслие*), takes the reader away from the chaos and routine of everyday life.

Once, after Gasparov delivered a speech on verse linguistics at readings in memory of an outstanding phonetician<sup>29</sup>, my colleague<sup>30</sup> and I thanked Mikhail Leonovich for the excellent speech and its content. "I shall make no secret of the fact", I said laughing (but being absolutely serious!), "that we have been unable to perceive the depth and immensity of Your words. To say nothing about others! However, everyone is extremely satisfied with Your paper. What is Your secret?" – "I was trying to do my best", Gasparov was smiling and a little embarrassed.

M L. Gasparov's stories, his memories published in his lifetime, notes and conversations give us an opportunity to judge about his childhood and adolescence, the nature of his creative talent, the direction of his interests, conditions and factors that paradoxically influenced the development of his gifts.

Gasparov<sup>31</sup> said that he was a second generation intellectual and called his mother Elena Alexandrovna Nurenberg "a self-made man<sup>32</sup>". Gasparov's mother was the descendant of the "well-off commoners of Shuya, trans-Volga region", and her father was, according to Gasparov, "a good-for-nothing shalom-aleichem type of merchant"<sup>33</sup>, who roamed the world and had tried different jobs. His mother, already in high school, was making money as a proofreader; she then joined a "Social Sciences Department", where she studied everything, worked in the newspaper, on the radio, and as an editor at the Lenin Library. When she was 37, she became a doctoral student and studied psychology, defended her thesis and wrote several books on the history of psychology. Trying to make some additional money, she would re-type books or manuscripts in the evening. "I had only seen her working" were the

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<sup>29</sup> From the beginning of 2000 to November of 2005, M. L. Gasparov was the chair of the Linguistic Poetics and Literary Language Department of the Russian Language Institute, where he worked (after A. M. Gorky Institute of World Literature) from the 1990s.

<sup>30</sup> L. L. Shestakova, an expert in author's lexicography.

<sup>31</sup> Gasparov's mother divorced Leo Gasparov, an engineer from Nagorno-Karabakh, when her son was a little child.

<sup>32</sup> "A self-made man". However, Gasparov, as a philologist, translated this phrase in accordance with Bazarov, the main character of *Fathers and Sons* by Ivan Turgenev: "самоломный человек".

<sup>33</sup> Undoubtedly, this phrase reflects Gasparov's grandmother's attitude to her husband.

recollections of the son about his mother [5, 71-73], and he was truly his mother's match: everywhere, in the library, at various meetings and conferences, in the Moscow subway, he was writing something in his notebook, translating or making prosody calculations and notes.

Mikhail Leonovich's father had another family and until his death was considered by his son to be "just mother's friend". He worked as an editor at the publishing house of the Academy of Sciences. "I've seen, says Gasparov, the manuscript of my mother edited by him. It was an excellent work" [5, 73]. The son<sup>34</sup> inherited the talent for editing from his father. According to M. L. Gasparov, the appetite for the stylization and "respect for the insignificant and the forgotten, owing to whom the famous are standing out" could also be inherited from father. The father had no higher education, and "everything he knew, he had learned by himself." Later, recalling his student years, M. L. Gasparov said, "My education is based on reading."

M. L. Gasparov's childhood impressions of words, books, and authors, as described by Gasparov himself, suggest that he was extremely sensitive to the word, and the reaction to it was even more intense than that to reality. When he was a child, he liked unusual words<sup>35</sup>, especially names, which, according to Gasparov's own confession, opened to him the enigmatic world of adults<sup>36</sup>. At the same time, the boy was not forced to read any books or poems and learn them by heart. Here is one of the examples, mentioned by Gasparov in his memoirs, "I am playing with bricks in the corner, a dusty oblique ray of light falls reaches me through the window, my grandmother is standing near the table and is saying something, I ask her, "Who is Pushkin?" "Is it possible that you do not know who Pushkin is!" A month later, I spouted Pushkin's poetry by heart for hours, "Breezes o'er the ocean play/Speed a barque upon its way..."<sup>37</sup> [5, 75]. Gasparov recalls that once, playing with other

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<sup>34</sup> Many Russian editions of classical works were edited by M. L. Gasparov.

<sup>35</sup> This interest led Gasparov as a scientist to the works of A. Bely, V. Khlebnikov, V. Mayakovsky and other authors, who used a lot of odd words.

<sup>36</sup> Among names that Gasparov heard from adults there were: *Eugene Onegin*, *The Queen of Spades*, *Anna Karenina*, *Charlie Chaplin*.

<sup>37</sup> See in another place, "When I was 5, I asked my grandmother, "Who is Pushkin?" "Is it possible that you do not know who Pushkin is!" she astonished. A month later, I spouted Pushkin by heart for hours".



children, “I suddenly realized that everything we do can be fitted into words and phrases, simple, as in the book” [5, 76].

When he was 5 (!), he read poems by Marina Tsvetaeva and Osip Mandelstam. Moreover, these were not poets’ verses for children, but the entire collections of their poetry! It was his mother who, quite unwittingly, introduced little Mikhail to them: when she was typing lists and collections of poetry for someone, her five-year child was reading and re-reading them. At first he hardly understood these poems; however, further reading brought about better understanding. According to Gasparov, he was “lucky” to read poems of Tsvetaeva and Mandelstam, knowing nothing about these authors [5, 306]. There were no books by Blok, Fet, Tyutchev in the house where he grew up; these and many others were lent to him by his friends. Just like a miracle to Mikhail Leonovich was an old, worn one-volume edition of Pushkin, found in the evacuation station – and once again: spouting poetry, reading on the road, chanting these odd, but fascinating lines, including “Скажите, кто меж вами купит ценою жизни ночь мою?” “And what did it mean,” Gasparov added, “hardly could I understand”<sup>38</sup>.

And there were many miracles, blessings, and non-random coincidences in his life. Thus, in the preschool years, he gets another volume of a complete set of Pushkin’s works, and he was amazed again, “the poetry does not come into this world perfect <...> verses are composed slowly and with difficulty” [5, 305]. During evacuation, an issue of the *Kostior* magazine falls into his hands; it contains two pages of advice for authors who write prose and poetry, where it is explained that the same four lines can be written as iambus, trochee, dactyl, anapest, amphibrach, etc.<sup>39</sup>

After the family returned from the evacuation, the boy started school as a second-grader. The strongest impression was the changes: crowd, beatings if the answer is not to the point, and faces who “disintegrated into the roles: a gloomy hardass, a restless screamer, a scrapper, a tough guy, a laggard, and a clown”. Lessons were nothing but a break between scuffles, and illness was a break between

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<sup>38</sup> Other two volumes (II and III) of Gasparov’s selected works were devoted to the analysis of poets, including those ones whose names were mentioned above [1].

<sup>39</sup> M. L. Gasparov won Pushkin award for his three-volume edition, one of the parts contained several articles about the works of Pushkin [1, II].

the periods of imminent school. When in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade scuffles intensified, the boy fell ill and, as Gasparov-adult said, “I escaped to the disease”. In the 7<sup>th</sup> grade, when the developmental crisis was overcome, he returned to school.

Among school subjects, M. L. Gasparov highlighted history and geography. He liked these subjects because of “great amount of interesting names and titles”. He also said that he had read both school and university textbooks before he needed them for study. In the house of his friend there were many books of ancient authors in Russian translation and by the time he graduated from school, “I have read and liked all of them” [5, 309]. When Gasparov finished school, he “knew for sure” that he wanted to study antiquity, because “it allows me to escape from modernity”. In 1952, he became a student of the school of classical languages, which was not prestigious in those days. He later recalled that “students were forced to choose this major”, but there were “very good professors: they taught in such a manner that people began to love the hateful Antiquity” [5, 310].

A visit to the Tretyakov Gallery (it was a quarter of an hour away from Zamoskvorechye District, where the family lived), the first musical experience, including a yearly pass to concerts, as well as playing with peers, theater, cinema, all these were important but not formative for Gasparov’s interests and his activity. It was the word, the bookish word that was in the center of these interests and activities; Mikhail Leonovich, however, could always see the person behind it, people and their relationships, historical periods, and time. Not coincidentally, the scientist defined philology as a science of comprehension and lauded it for “curing human spiritual self-centeredness” [5, 100].

Yu. Orbitskiy, who often met Gasparov both at prosody forums and working in the Russian State University for the Humanities (RSUH), wrote about letters of Mikhail Leonovich to different recipients, collected in the book *Bau M.F. (Sincerely, M. G.)*, “Reading the book, one can almost hear Mikhail Leonovich’s deliberate speech, which is carefully constructed in accordance with all the laws of classical rhetoric, with his slight stammer and an indispensable benevolence to companion. *Bau M.F.* is a great chance to hear the speech of the great man and scholar, even

many years after his death” [14] / [26]. N. V. Braginskaya<sup>40</sup>, a well-known translator of ancient works and a philologist, was one of the receivers of the letters published in this book. In her foreword to the publication she said something very important about Gasparov as a personality, “M. L. did not teach me classical philology, but he did not let me lose knowledge that I had got, and he showed me achievements that I could reach if I wanted” [6] / [25].

Today it has become fashionable to create “databanks”, “national corpuses” of languages, etc. There is every reason to believe that collecting materials about prominent philologists of our time “at the beginning of their life” would be of great importance. This article is to attest to the value of this undertaking.

All of us, adults towards children and adolescents, teachers towards learners, and the society towards gifted children, talented and creative people should be more empathetic, caring, and wise. Being fascinated with modernity and its novelty, which is often deceptive, we must remember about the rich heritage that can be preserved by us in the Russian culture if we want that. While easily accepting “foreign” heritage, we must be aware of “our” past and present contribution to the world culture.

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<sup>40</sup> N. V. Braginskaya saved 120 letters and postcards from Gasparov; however, only a small part of them, 37 letters, was published in this edition.

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### **Грек А. Г. Про обдарованість та її плоди**

Статтю присвячено трьом видатним філологам ХХ ст., якими вони були в дитинстві та юнацтві, у зрілі роки, а також тому, що визначило їхню вченість і її плоди. Тип обдарованості, умови й обставини розвитку таланту, як показано автором, можуть бути різними. Однак у всіх випадках важливим виявляється якась «погодженість» хисту й контексту – починаючи з родини, найближчого оточення, культурного середовища й закінчуючи соціально-історичними чинниками й передумовами. Плоди обдарованості, якими б вони різними не були за масштабом і характером вияву, вирізняє істотність, доброякісність, актуальність для найближчого й віддаленого майбутнього.

*Ключові слова:* талант, учені-філологи, мова, слово, дитинство, науковий світ, культура.

## **Грек А. Г. Об одарённости и её плодах**

Статья посвящена трём выдающимся филологам XX в., какими они были в детстве и юности, в зрелые годы, а также тому, что предопределило их учёность и её плоды. Тип одарённости, условия и обстоятельства развития таланта, как показано автором, могут быть различными. Однако во всех случаях важным оказывается некая «согласованность» дара и контекста – начиная с семьи, ближайшего окружения, культурной среды и кончая социально-историческими факторами и предпосылками. Плоды одарённости, какими бы они различными не были по масштабу и характеру проявления, отличаются существенностью, доброкачественностью, актуальностью для ближайшего и отдалённого будущего.

*Ключевые слова:* талант, учёные-филологи, язык, слово, детство, научный мир, культура.

## **A. G. Grek. On Giftedness and its Fruits**

The article focuses on the childhood, adolescence, and adulthood of the three prominent linguists of the 20th Century and factors that influenced their scholarship and its fruits. Types of giftedness, conditions and circumstances of its development, as is shown by the author, may be different. However, in all cases the “coherence” of the gift and the context played the leading role: beginning with family, immediate environment, cultural environment and ending with the socio-historical factors and prerequisites. Despite the fact that the fruits of giftedness can significantly differ in scope and nature, they are always significant, of high quality, and relevant for the near and distant future.

*Key words:* talent, philologists, language, word, childhood, scientific community, culture.

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