

## On the parallelism of the humanistic psychology of Abay Qunanbayuli and American psychologists

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**Abstract:** The objective of this paper is to reconstruct the thoughts, established in the works of Abay Qunanbayuli, based on the methods of scientific psychology and the works of American and Russian psychologists. "The Book of Words" was chosen as the research material. The book is easy and fascinating; it encourages the reader to improve himself, become a better person. The man himself is the maker of his existence; he forms himself as a personality. This is the main concept of Abay Qunanbayuli's humanistic psychology. The humanistic psychology of American psychologist A. Maslow is similar to that of Abay Qunanbayuli. They were not acquainted and did not reach each other's works, but they shared a common truth – the humanistic personality psychology.

**Key words:** Humanistic psychology; Kazakh ethnopsychology; Folklore; Kazakh nomads; Hermeneutics; Kazakh language

### 1. Introduction

The history of Kazakh psychology in general and ethnopsychology in particular had no classic works. However, this does not mean that psychology was non-existent altogether. The life and creative work of the people predetermines the existence of this people's psychology, but it was scattered among folklore, legends, fables, poems and prose. One of the prominent philosophers and enlighteners of the Kazakh people was Abay (Ibrahim) Qunanbayuli. Shakarim Kudaiberdiev wrote the following description of the times of Abay Qunanbayuli: "He was born in a pitiful environment and lived a humiliating life". However, a global celebration of Abay Qunanbayuli's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary was held in 1995 under the UNESCO ruling. Abay is one of those people who are born once in many centuries. Addressing us from ancient days, he wrote:

*Look deep into thy soul,*

*Realize that I was an enigma*

*Spent a lifetime in uncharted lands,*

*Fought a thousand men alone. – Do not blame!*

(Qunanbayuli, 1992)

This quatrain mentions the word "soul", which means that Abay attached great importance to the psychology of the soul. The first works of Abay – his

poems – were published in 1909 in Saint Petersburg. This research is interested in the psychological legacy of Abay, which is scattered among all his works. Of particular interest in "The Book of Words", which represents the psychology of an entire nation, written in poetic form. It also shows the specificity of Abay Qunanbayuli's psychology. The comparison of the texts of "The Book of Words" with the classic psychology and the works of remarkable psychologists (Vygotsky, Rubinstein, Leontyev, Galperina, Maslow, Thorndike, Robbins, Freud, Jung, Lewin, Allport, Fromm, Festinger, Douglas) allows concluding that Abay Qunanbayuli was a psychologist with a distinct type of mind, but his psychology was written in poetic form. He gathered the material for his psychological poetry from the life of Kazakh nomads of different social classes.

### 2. Discussion and results

Why is it expedient to refer to the psychological heritage of Abay? His work "The Book of Words" that was written for his fellow Kazakh nomads is a documentary evidence of the psychology of steppe peoples. Abay Qunanbayuli was interested in problems that are still relevant nowadays, but his research method differed radically from the ones

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used by modern psychologists. Based on practice, personal experience, intuition and generalization, Abay studied such phenomena as memory, perception, memorization, character, will, mind, consciousness, human soul and needs. The time of Abay's active work coincided with the time of origin and establishment of scientific psychology in the USA – the end of the XIX and the beginning of the XX centuries. Psychology as a science appeared from new ideas and new thoughts in 1879 in the USA.

The objective of this paper is to reconstruct the thoughts, established in the work of Abay, based on the methods of scientific psychology and the works of American and Russian psychologists. The psychology of Kazakh nomads is part of the culture of the nomad civilization and differs from scientific psychology in research methods, but it developed from a historical context and included not only the intellectual zeitgeist, but also the social, political and economic factors of nomads' life. These factors, which influence the formation of human psychology, do not depend on race and invoke similar reflections. The task of this paper is to show the parallels between Abay's psychological ideas and the theories of American psychologists A. Maslow, F. Herzberg, D. McClelland, D. McGregor and others. For example, it is possible to compare Abay Qunanbayuli's thoughts on human needs with A. Maslow's hierarchy of needs. It should be noted that Abay wrote his poems in 1875, while A. Maslow published his work in the 40s-50s of the XX century. In his "Motivation and Personality" book, he creates a hierarchal pyramid of human needs.



Fig. 1: A. Maslow's hierarchy of needs



Fig. 2: Abay Qunanbayuli's hierarchy of needs

The fundamental level of Maslow's hierarchy includes physiological needs and, first of all, the need for food. Maslow writes: "Undoubtedly, physiological needs that are necessary for human survival come first. They include the need for food, water, rest and sexual needs." (Ananiev, 1977) For comparison, the base of Abay's hierarchy is the needs of the body and flesh: "When a child is born, it inherits two beginnings. The first one demands food, drink and sleep. This is the need of the flesh. Without it, the body will not be able to shelter the soul, will not grow and will not become stronger" (Qunanbayuli, 1992).

In order to further elaborate his thought, Abay writes in "word" 25: "Will a hungry man maintain a clear mind, care for honor and remain diligent in studying?" (Qunanbayuli, 1992)

Two things are common in Maslow's and Abay's hierarchies – the top and the base of the pyramid. According to Abay, the supreme value is the need of the soul. In Maslow's work, the need of the soul is expressed in the need to realize the potential and abilities, granted by nature to the human soul. This is a higher level of development in scientific psychology. Abay Qunanbayuli also considers the development of a personality. He writes: "We should tirelessly broaden our range of interests, multiply the knowledge that feeds our souls. We should understand that spiritual welfare is incomparably greater than bodily welfare. We should subject our bodily needs to the will of the soul" (Qunanbayuli, 1992).

These lines are relevant to modern youth, who prioritize material values, do not read classic literature, forget how to write compositions and impoverish their souls. It would be fair to call this theory the "Abay-Maslow theory".

The middle levels of the pyramid differ, but this is natural, considering the economic development level and the social aspect in each separate country.

A. Maslow considers the problem of needs in the context of the motivation theory. A similar logic can be found in the works of Abay Qunanbayuli. The motivation theory is present in the works of Abay Qunanbayuli, but appears contextually and is not expressed in psychological terms; therefore, this article draws parallels between the works of Abay and Maslow. Abay Qunanbayuli comes from a nomadic civilization; his psychology is written in poems, which shows the peculiarity of nomadic psychology. Numerous sketches of Abay can be psychologically interpreted by comparing them with the works of modern psychologists.

Abay Qunanbayuli strived for self-realization through his people; he cared for his people and wanted them to be intelligent and well educated, but in real life, everything is different, therefore, a conflict was brewing in his soul. He expressed his attitude to the problem of the nomads' self-realization as follows: "I am a Kazakh myself. Do I love Kazakhs? If I did, I would approve of their character. I would have found in their conduct some tiny thing that would bring me joy and consolation

and would allow being content with some of their merits and my hope would not fade away" (Qunanbayuli, 1992).

His discomfort and mental conflict that resulted from the unachieved dream of his people Abay expressed as follows: "I live, but I do not consider myself alive. I do not know why – because of frustration with the people, discontent with myself or for some other reason. I am alive on the outside, but I am dead inside. I am cross, but I am not angry. I laugh, but I do not rejoice. The words that I utter and my laughter feel alien. Everything is alien". (Qunanbayuli, 1992)

Alongside self-realization, Abay considers the problem of personal self-actualization. According to him, self-actualization is a prerequisite for Kazakhs' life at the level of the more enlightened peoples, for example, Russians. He writes: "We need to study the Russian language. It holds spiritual wealth, knowledge, art and other untold wealth. To avoid Russian vice, but embrace their achievements, we need to study their language and understand their science. Since the Russians, having come to know other languages, became familiar with the world culture and have become what they are" (Qunanbayuli, 1992). These thoughts of Abay have acquired new meaning in modern Kazakhstan, as trilingualism (Kazakh, English and Russian languages) became obligatory in the country.

Abay arrived at the idea of transition from ordinary motivation, dictated by physiological needs, to supreme spiritual values. Maslow introduced the terms "metamotivation" and "metaneed" to describe these phenomena. Abay does not use such special terms, but he intuitively describes the phenomena in other words.

Abay considers Allah to be the supreme level of human existence. He imbues him with eight "images": "Here are Allah's divine images: Life, Science, Power, Vigilance, Tenderness, Will, Word and Creation" (Qunanbayuli, 1992). According to Abay, a man must strive to master all these eight "images". These are the highest needs of the human soul, according to Abay, which is similar to Maslow's metaneed theory.

A similar opinion and approach can be found in the works of Maslow, who emphasizes 14 human values that have to be developed as abilities. These are Truth, Goodness, Beauty, Wholeness, Aliveness, Uniqueness, Perfection, Completion, Justice, Richness, Simplicity, Playfulness, Effortlessness and Self-sufficiency (Ananiev, 1977). Maslow considers these the supreme values of human existence and the spiritual substance of the human being. Maslow's statements, from psychology's perspective, are indisputable, although the top levels of Maslow's and Abay's need hierarchies agree in terms of the general idea, but differ in its certain aspects. It is important that Abay – a nomad, who wrote his poems 70 years before Maslow – anticipated Maslow's humanistic theory.

According to Maslow, needs form five levels with each level being able to motivate only after the needs

of the lower level are satisfied. According to both Abay and Maslow, a man first strives to satisfy the most important need, which both psychologists consider the bodily or physiological needs.

In "word" 43, Abay elaborates the voluntary and involuntary human needs. He writes: "The need to eat, drink and sleep is involuntary" (Qunanbayuli, 1992). Contemplating the lower, but at the same time necessary needs, Abay elaborates the idea of motivation. Lower needs generate spiritual motivation: "Human potential is very weak at first. A man develops and strengthens his abilities. Without due attention and development, they deteriorate, disappear or remain at the rudimentary stage and become useless" (Qunanbayuli, 1992). Maslow's hierarchy allocates these values to the top level of the need pyramid and calls them "self-actualization needs", which implies the "realization of inherent potential", i.e. the natural potential. In this regard, Abay's and Maslow's opinions fully agree. Nomad Abay and American psychologist A. Maslow arrived at this conclusion independently and in doing so contributed to the development of the motivation theory. Due to the underdevelopment of the social and economic conditions of nomads, the psychological teachings of Abay Qunanbayuli's motivation theory are unknown to the world. This afforded ground for the writing of this paper with a view to familiarizing the civilized world with Abay Qunanbayuli's psychological works. Hence, the authors of this paper built Abay's need hierarchy pyramid similar to that of A. Maslow.

The problems of needs and motivation were not purposely studied in Kazakhstan. Interpreting the content of Abay Qunanbayuli's "The Book of Words" from the scientific psychology's perspective became possible only after analyzing the American and Russian psychological theory. Even Russian psychologists, particularly, professor of the Lomonosov Moscow State University D.A. Leontyev (2003), recognizes the fact that the motivation theory is little studied in Russia and mostly refers to the works of American psychologists. He refers to the Russian translations of classic works by Z. Freud, C. Jung, K. Lewin, G. Allport, E. Fromm, L. Festinger and A. Maslow, despite the fact that they were written 25 years ago, and states that a sound theory is always relevant. Although certain scientists believe that the Kazakh state and culture was nonexistent, the "golden man" from the Issyk kurgan (near Almaty) that was exhibited at the UN headquarters in New York proves that a state existed a thousand years ago. By analogy, nomadic psychological attitudes were preserved in the national cultural heritage and "The Book of Words" is a monument to nomadic psychology.

H. Heckhausen's book "Motivation and Action" is a fundamental work on the motivation and need theory. Famous Soviet psychologist S.L. Rubinstein included motivation psychology in the general psychological issues. They claimed that motivation psychology studied the reasons and regulators of behavior, but not the behavior itself.

Historically, the motive of behavior was deduced from internal reasons. This issue is covered by the works of K. Lewin, H. Heckhausen, W. McDougall, Z. Freud, K. Horney, C. Rogers and A. Maslow. Abay Qunanbayuli's psychological ideas were similar to A. Maslow's theory of motivation and need. Maslow's humanistic theories and Abay Qunanbayuli's humanistic ideas are also similar.

It is possible to trace the Aristotle element in Maslow's and Abay's views on the nature of needs – the nature and the substance of man as an individual are pivotal, while motivational phenomena are viewed as the manifestation of this nature.

Abay Qunanbayuli's psychological ideas and sketches are diverse and complex. In his work, he provides a psychological characteristic of the human being from a child as an individual to the higher forms of human spiritual perfection and a human who pursues the perfection of the Maker. His psychology contains elements of Maslow's "metamotivation" theory, V. Frankl's theory of the search for meaning, R. D'Andrade's cultural schemes and German psychologists' ideas of control over motivation.

For example, V. Frankl's theory of the search for meaning is expressed in Abay Qunanbayuli's works as a pursuance of Allah's perfection by mastering all eight "images" of the Maker. The elements of the control over motivation theory can be found in Abay's "word" 31 that lists the four motives of perception and memorization of what was heard and seen.

### 3. Conclusions

The objective of this paper is to familiarize the psychologists of the world with the psychological ideas of Kazakh poet and psychologist Abay Qunanbayuli, whose 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary was celebrated by the ruling of UNESCO in 1995.

Without the psychological theories of American psychologists, A. Maslow in particular, it is impossible to analyze the hermeneutic meaning of Abay Qunanbayuli's "The Book of Words".

While scientific psychology is descriptive in its nature, Abay's psychological sketches are targeted at the human soul; the poet speaks to the soul of each reader; his verses are perceived intimately and herein lies the true power of Abay's poetry. It is a prayer rather than a science.

There is a need for an adequate translation of Abay Qunanbayuli's poetry into the English language, since a Russian translation is already available. According to philologists, Abay Qunanbayuli performed excellent translations of poems by A.S. Pushkin and M.Yu. Lermontov, fables by I.A. Krylov and works by J. Goethe into the Kazakh language

Scientists of the world should know that there exists poetic psychology. Poetry is more intelligible than prose.

Abay is the founder of the Kazakh deficiency psychology. The life of Kazakhs directly depended on

livestock, i.e. the life and existence of Kazakhs mostly depended on the satisfaction of physiological needs. The main source of wealth for Kazakhs was livestock. "These vices come from people only caring for getting more livestock and thereby winning the respect of people around them," – Abay writes about Kazakh psychology. To elaborate the subject of Kazakh psychology, he writes in "word" 3: "By multiplying their herds, the parents try to make their children's herds even greater, to pass on the care for herds to shepherds and lead a life of leisure – to fully eat meat, drink kumis, enjoy the company of beautiful women and admire horses". Abay was the only Kazakh to study their psychology that fully depended on the environment. The environment and way of life that was closely related to livestock breeding formed the psychology of his compatriots. Thus, Abay obtained new information on Kazakh psychology. He did not care for livestock; he cared for the position and spiritual world of Kazakhs, who were forced only to multiply their herds. He calls this position of Kazakhs a "vice", i.e. he condemns the fact that Kazakhs were not pursuing other endeavors. The vice of Kazakhs originates from their way of life and thinking. A parallel can be drawn here between Maslow's motivation theory, deficiency motivation, in particular, that is aimed at filling the deficit of food or sleep, and Kazakh motivation that was aimed at satisfying a physiological (bodily) need for food by multiplying livestock. Abay considers such existence a moral and spiritual flaw, obnoxious to the truth and goodness and believes it to be a common national vice of Kazakhs. Abay was one of the first to study the negative aspects of Kazakh psychology. His researches were based on the vices of Kazakhs and allowed formulating a positive humanistic viewpoint of Kazakh human nature. In terms of the motivation theory, Abay mentions three types of motivation for a Kazakh. The first type is the deficiency motivation, aimed at filling a deficit, e.g. to have more livestock in order to satisfy the need for food. The second type is existential, i.e. the need to live a life of leisure, for which Abay harshly criticizes his compatriots. Abay describes the third motivation by the example of the fact that other nations were better developed than Kazakhs were. When writing about spirituality, Abay encourages Kazakhs to teach their children the Russian language and science. He not only encourages Kazakhs to study, but also scientifically unveils the psychology of the human soul, which corresponds with the modern psychological theories regarding the soul: "When a child is born, it inherits two beginnings. The first one demands food, drink and sleep. This is the need of the flesh. Without it, the body will not be able to shelter the soul, will not grow and will not become stronger. The second one is the pursuance of knowledge. The baby reaches out for shiny things, puts them in its mouth, tastes them and presses them against its cheek. It will shudder when it hears the sound the flute or pipe. Having grown up, it runs towards a barking dog, the sounds of animals, the laughter and crying of people. It becomes restless and asks about everything it sees

and hears: What is this? What is this for? Why does it do that? – now this is the need of the soul, the desire to see everything, to hear everything and to learn everything”. Abay does an excellent job of unveiling the substantial needs of a child and scientifically describing its sensuous learning and the fact that the need for learning is naturally imbued in the child and this need has to be satisfied by teaching it language and science. To elaborate the idea of the spiritual need, Abay develops the external motivation theory and writes: “It would be good to educate Kazakh children ... We need to study the Russian language. It holds spiritual wealth, knowledge, art and other untold wealth. To avoid Russian vice, but embrace their achievements, we need to study their language and understand their science. The Russian language will open our eyes of the world. By studying the language and culture of other nations, a man becomes equal to them and does not humiliate himself with pathetic requests. Enlightenment benefits religion, too”. Abay talks about mastering the psyche of Russian enlightenment, without explicitly mentioning it. The entire psychological science is presented implicitly in “The Book of Words”, since the human psyche depends on the level of social, educational, cultural and scientific development, rather than nationality. Abay does not use special psychological terms, but his work presents psychology, written in poetic form. Therein lies its advantage – the ability to convey the human state of mind in poetic form. Its disadvantage is the lack of scientific psychological categories. However, these categories are present implicitly in every verse of Abay Qunanbayuli’s poetry. The task is to reveal Abay’s psychology, based on modern psychological theories.

Therefore, the authors of this paper believe that there is a connection between Maslow’s humanistic theory and Abay Qunanbayuli’s psychology. The authors call this connection a parallelism, which is reflected in the title of this paper.

For example, in order to obtain new information on the human nature, A. Maslow used healthy and successful people as examples. Abay used scholars (hakims) as examples. In “word” 38 he wrote: “The power of man is in his mind and knowledge”, which shows that he considers them the highest human needs.

Maslow, too, believes that the highest need is the one that encourages a human to realize his abilities and talents, i.e. self-actualization. Abay addressed the issue of the self-actualization and emphasized that “a man develops and strengthens his abilities”, which is the self-actualization of a personality. According to Abay, it has to become constant need for human self-actualization. In every line of his work, Abay writes about the growth of a Kazakh as a personality, who has to aspire to god by learning the truth, which is one of the names for science. From this perspective, Abay associates the self-actualization of a personality with the familiarization with knowledge, science, god, truth, craft and labor.

Maslow’s theory includes the terms “metamotivation” and “metaneeds” that are associated with the existential human values, such as truth, goodness, beauty, etc.

Abay’s works also feature metamotivation and metaneeds, but they are presented as the faith in Allah. Abay explains that if the world was created by Allah, the task of man is to come to know god through science. Abay does not make Allah absolute, but rather imbues him with such “traits” as Life, Truth (science), Power, Mercy and Justice. Such existential values are proclaimed by the author as important for the formation of “metamotivation” and the self-perfection of man. To further elaborate this idea, Abay writes: “Human knowledge is obtained by the love of Truth, the desire to discover the nature and essence of things. A soul that holds no love for Truth shall not know Truth”. Thus, in his work “The Book of Words”, Abay equates the concepts of Allah, Truth and Science. Through faith in Allah, Abay formed the metamotivation for enlightenment, knowledge and science in his ignorant compatriots. However, in terms of modern psychology, the psychological context of Abay’s words is still relevant for forming motivational action of students. It bears didactic meaning and aims at forming a “thirst for knowledge” as a special psychological state. In other words, through compulsion and involvement, to form a constant need for understanding God, oneself and the world, to constantly do good, without sacrificing honor, and to avoid evil. “Justice is in you. This means that you pursue knowledge and possess true humanity. Truthfulness personifies Justice, good intentions personify Mercy and the Mind, as we know, is one of the names for Science”. Thus, metaneeds and metamotivations of Abay and Maslow match completely. According to Abay, all these needs come with knowledge. “One can achieve this by having a sincere desire and learning diligently,” – emphasizes Abay in “word” 38. Herein, “sincere desires” are motivations, while “diligent learning” is needs. Furthermore, the needs have to become an integral part of the way of life – this is the only way to obtain a result. “The Book of Words” holds numerous examples similar to this one.

A special feature of Abay’s humanistic psychology that differentiates it from that of Maslow is the reference to God and his imbuing with such existential values as Life, Truth, Power, Justice and Mercy. It teaches to pursue these values through knowledge, transforming it into a constant need. In Abay’s works, “metamotivations” seamlessly transform into “metaneeds”. Furthermore, he gives didactic recommendations regarding motivational action, which makes his teachings attractive and worth learning, especially in the native language, although the Russian translation by S. Sanbaev is well written, too.

Abay’s psychology is impossible without a philosophical interpretation of human nature and actions, based on intuition. Abay Qunanbayuli’s “teachings” have their advantage, despite being

written in an unprofessional language – they are closer to understanding the true essence of human psychology, since they are written in poetic form. This book helps understand one and is useful to the youth for the same purposes; it is useful for self-education; it helps solve psychological problems. The book attracts the reader; it is an interlocutor and allows opening new prospects for the psychological understanding of humans. It addresses the relevant topics of creative work, motivation and development and helps understand the human potential at the level of higher values.

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