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ЕКЗИСТЕНЦІЙНІ МОТИВИ У ТРАГЕДІЇ «ГАМЛЕТ»
В. ШЕКСПІРА

EXISTENTIAL MOTIVES IN THE TRAGEDY «HAMLET»
BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Статтю присвячено екзистенційним мотивам у трагедії «Гамлет» В. Шекспіра. Поява нової світоглядної та мистецької парадигми екзистенціалізму актуалізувала складну суперечність між сутністю та існуванням людини, реалізовану в усі кризові періоди культури. Зокрема, протиріччя між сутністю та існуванням
особистості представлено в кризі елітарної гуманістичної культури Ренесансу, що знайшло відображення в трагедіях В. Шекспіра. Філософська насиченість творів митя змушує замислитися над питаннями сенсу буття, ролі мистецтва, місця особистості у Всесвіті.

Екзистенціялізм або філософія існування позиціонує і досліджує людину як унікальну духовну істоту, що здатна до вибору власної долі. Філософи-екзистенціалісти, які творили в складний історичний період світових вояг і післявоєнного часу, визначали сутність людини її духовним начацлам, що виражається в самосвідомості, емоційних переживаннях добра, любові, пошуку тощо буття свого, іного та об’єктивного світу.


Духовні віяння реформаційної епохи, що проголосила «порятунок особистою вірою» (Лютер), гранично повно відобразилася у творчості В. Шекспіра. Якщо Ренесанс приніс із собою відродження античної (давньоримської) комедії, то заслуга В. Шекспіра перш за все в тому, що він започаткував велике мистецтво трагедії Нового часу.

Ключові слова: В. Шекспір, філософія екзистенціалізму, трагедія, Ренесанс, п’єса.

The article devoted to existential motives in the tragedy «Hamlet» by W. Shakespeare. The emergence of a new worldview and artistic paradigm of existentialism actualized the complex contradiction between the essence and existence of a person, realized in all crisis periods of culture. In particular, the contradiction between the essence and existence of the individual is presented in the crisis of the elite humanist culture of the Renaissance, which was reflected in the tragedies of W. Shakespeare. The philosophical richness of the artist’s works makes one think about the meaning of existence, the role of art, and the place of the individual in the universe.
Existentialism or the philosophy of existence positions examines man as a unique spiritual being capable of choosing his own destiny. Existentialist philosophers, who worked during the difficult historical period of the world wars and the post-war period, determined the essence of a person by his spiritual principle, which is expressed in self-awareness, emotional experiences of goodness, love, and the search for a topos of being in one’s own, another’s, and the objective world.

The characters of W. Shakespeare’s works experience a painful existential conflict. The tragedies of the turn of the 16th–17th centuries: Hamlet (1601), Macbeth (1606), King Lear (1606) reveal the philosophical and anthropological meanings of the character’s self-reflection process from its inner motivational origins, which determine the essence of a person, up to a tragic outcome due to her external actions. W. Shakespeare, like existentialist writers, puts the categories of the absurdity of existence, despair, suffering, loneliness, and death first. This is most vividly outlined in Hamlet’s monologue, where the world is absurd, nothing, and human existence is «existence for death» as the only goal and conclusion of existence.

The spiritual trends of the Reformation era, which proclaimed «salvation by personal faith» (Luther), were most fully reflected in the work of W. Shakespeare. If the Renaissance brought with it the revival of ancient (ancient Roman) comedy, the merit of W. Shakespeare is first of all that he initiated the great art of modern tragedy.

Key words: W. Shakespeare, philosophy of existentialism, tragedy, Renaissance, play.

Formulation of the problem. Many brilliant works belong to W. Shakespeare. The images created by the famous playwright are unlike others, unique. This, in particular, is the image of Hamlet, which still attracts artists and researchers of different eras and countries. For the first time in world literature, W. Shakespeare depicted his hero as internally divided, his character as contradictory, and his actions as ambiguous.

The tale of Hamlet, which became the basis of the plot of one of the most famous tragedies of W. Shakespeare, has been known since ancient times. Prince Amlet of Jutland lived in pagan times, that is, until 827, when Christianity was introduced in Denmark. His story was told by the Saxon Grammar in his History of the Danes. Subsequently, the French author Francois Belfort retold it in his «Tragic Stories» (1576). An unknown English dramatist (perhaps Thomas Kyd) wrote a tragedy based on this plot, which was staged in London in 1589.
W. Shakespeare raised the indicated story to a height of such an understanding of life, which was not present in art before him. The heroes of the play are characterized by ardent passions, a powerful will, and immeasurable desires. All of them are outstanding characters. The character of each is revealed with unusual clarity and completeness. Everyone determines his own destiny, choosing one or another path in life. At the same time, W. Shakespeare does not have ideal heroes. He understood and reflected the complexity of human nature in the images he created. His heroes are characterized by weaknesses, mistakes and even crimes. W. Shakespeare possessed the gift of seeing the contradictions characteristic of people. At the same time, he was far from evaluating the behavior of his heroes from the point of view of some strict morality. The playwright depicted evil and good, without falling into didacticism. And one of such bright, unforgettable and at the same time controversial images created by the playwright is the image of the main character of the tragedy «Hamlet». W. Shakespeare created the immortal image of Hamlet, in which humanity finds its vivid reflection for four centuries: «…What a charm of a great work of the human spirit! Well, what is there – in the yard is a beautiful time, our life time. We live now in the eternal that captivated everyone three hundred years ago, fascinates now and will fascinate and amaze humanity for centuries to come...» [28, p. 3].

Thus, the image of Hamlet is a traditional image of European literature. Traditional plots and images are the property of the general cultural memory. They are relevant throughout the centuries and help to understand both the general and the specific, national-historical. Entering into a dialogue with a certain national culture, they undergo adaptation and transformation, reflecting certain ideological and aesthetic demands of this culture, acquire a number of unique meanings. The emergence of a new worldview and artistic paradigm of existentialism actualized the complex contradiction between the essence and existence of a person, realized in all crisis periods of culture. In particular, the contradiction between the essence and existence of the individual is presented in the crisis of the elite humanist culture of the Renaissance, which was reflected in the tragedies of W. Shakespeare. The philosophical richness of the artist’s works makes one think about the meaning of existence, the role of art, and the place of the individual in the universe. Therefore, we consider our attempt to explore the image of Hamlet through the prism of the philosophy of existentialism to be relevant and new.

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** The tragedy and its hero became the object of research by many domestic and foreign scientists, including O. Anikst, F. Bowers, E. Burges, M. Blumenkranz, I. Bohdanova,
G. Brandes, E. Bradley, L. Vyhotsky, A. Hulyga, S. Krymskyi, A. Niamtsu, A. Mahalif, S. Marshak, H. Pomerants, V. Prysiazhnyi, S. Savitskyi, V. Tabachkovskyi, M. Urmov, I. Franko and many others. However, modern literature still lacks scientific works that reveal in detail the existential motives in the tragedy «Hamlet».

**The purpose of the article:** to distinguish and analyze existential motives in the tragedy «Hamlet» by W. Shakespeare.

**Presentation of the main material.** Existentialism in literature means the movement that has developed most in France, as well as to some extent in other countries of Western Europe and the USA. It is based on the philosophy of existentialism represented by the names of K. Jaspers, M. Heidegger and other thinkers. It was formed after the First World War during the global crisis of liberalism and rationalism. F. Dostoevsky, S. Kierkegaard, B. Pascal, M. de Unamuno, and F. Nietzsche are among the predecessors of existentialism, or, in other words, the «philosophy of existence». The influence of E. Husserl’s philosophy of life and phenomenology on existentialism is also noticeable. The researchers emphasize that neither as a philosophy nor as a literary current existentialism does not constitute a single system.

There is a distinction between religious existentialism (M. Berdiaev, M. Buber, G. Marcel, D. Shestov, K. Jaspers) and atheistic existentialism (Heidegger, A. Camus, M. Merleau-Ponty, J. P. Sartre). A common feature of most existentialists is an attempt to discover and explain existence through the prism of personal existence (existence), which S. Kierkegaard strove for, who considered himself more of a poet than a philosopher, and contrasted the intimate experience of an individual with intellectual «Hegelian» knowledge. Existence, that is, human existence, given directly, according to existentialists, cannot be known by scientific, rational means. Hence the special role of art, which A. Bergson, M. Heidegger, F. Nietzsche, and K. Jaspers considered to be the most important form of learning the secrets of the existence of the world. In addition, K. Jaspers affirmed the importance of negative emotions for the artistic cognition of existence, considering fear, despair, loneliness, guilt as the engines of spiritual life and artistic creativity.

Existentialism characterizes the general state of the individual as alienation from society and history. The individual is yoked by collective forms of life, deprived of freedom by coercive standards regardless of the social system. In this way, the absurdity of human existence is determined, which, according to Zh.-P. Sartre, first of all, is «the discord between the human desire to connect with the world and the insurmountable dualism of
reason and nature, between man’s yearning for the eternal and the finitude of his existence» (Explanation to «Stranger», 1943) [14, c. 170].

On the basis of this disharmony, the idea of transcendence, of going beyond one’s limits, arises. True, different representatives of existentialism interpret the concept of the transcendent in different ways: for religious existentialists, the transcendent is God, for Sartre – Nothing. Depending on the interpretation of transcendence, the main problem of existentialism – the problem of human freedom – was also solved. Marcel and Jaspers saw freedom in the breakthrough to God; for Sartre, freedom is a denial of existence: since there is neither God nor so-called «human nature», each person must «project» himself, choose himself, guided by nothing but his own subjectivity. But all existentialists rejected not only the Enlightenment rationalist tradition, which reduced freedom to the knowledge of necessity, but also the naturalistic one, where freedom was understood as the disclosure of a person’s natural endowments. According to the philosophy of existentialism, freedom should be understood exclusively based on existence.

Literary theorists note that the creation of a literary current based on the philosophy of existentialism is primarily connected with the work of Zh.-P. Sartre and A. Camus. Artists who, in addition to philosophical works («Being and Nothingness», «Existentialism is Humanism», «Critique of Dialectical Reason» by J. P. Sartre; «The Myth of Sisyphus», «Rebellious Man» by A. Camus) embodied the main ideas of existentialism in works of art. Literary manifestos of existentialism can be called the novel by Zh.-P. Sartre’s «Nausea» (1938) and A. Camus’ novel «The Outsider» (1942). Subsequently, the socio-political views of Zh.-P. Sartre and A. Camus will be fundamentally different. A. Camus would later deny his involvement in existentialism, replacing the «philosophy of the absurd» with the «philosophy of rebellion». A notable role in the formation of French existentialism was also played by S. de Beauvoir, known for such works as: «The Guest», «Alien’s Blood», «Tangerines» and others.

Among the distinctive features of existentialism literature, the following should be noted: direct expression of the author’s worldview concept, use of the first-person narrative type. At the same time, as a rule, an atmosphere of strict restraint is maintained, which, in particular, is explained by the existentialists’ awareness of the enormous responsibility for every word spoken. Quite often, the author, whose consciousness is considered the «forge of myths», creates a stylized model of reality, a parable. The tendency towards parables is connected primarily with the extremely negative attitude of existentialists towards world history itself, which is perceived by them as the embodiment of absurdity on Earth.
M. Heidegger «saw the artist himself as the only source of an artistic work. In his opinion, the writer expresses only himself in his work, and not objective reality. The reality created by him stands above time and society, because it reveals the secret of being in general. Art cannot be analyzed or interpreted, it must only be experienced, because it is a symbol» [17, p. 219]. In the work «Wandering. The source of art» (1950), the philosopher notes that «the truth carried by the work is always subjective and individual, because reality is subject to «denial» in the work of art, it is «overcome», confirming the activity of the artist’s conscious and subconscious» [17, p. 219]. In the literature of different countries and eras, there is a steady tendency to reproduce and analyze the alienation of the individual and to pose and attempt to solve existential problems. We are talking, in particular, about the main question of philosophy, according to A. Camus: «Is life worth living?». In the broadest sense, the book of Job, Ecclesiastes, the Socratic principle of self-knowledge, Gnosticism, Stoicism etc. can be considered the foundation of the philosophy and literature of existentialism.

Existentialism or the philosophy of existence positions and examines man as a unique spiritual being capable of choosing his own destiny. According to L. Korol, modern literary studies «tries to understand the human figure from all aspects of the reproduction of his inner and outer worlds» [13, p. 156]. According to the scientist, the study of personality in its perception by other heroes of the work, the recipient and the writer himself is of great importance. L. Korol emphasizes that literary science seeks to reveal the secrets of human thinking [13, p. 156]. The problem of the generalized aesthetic concept of a person in a work of art becomes the subject of study for a number of domestic researchers: L. Basiuk, L. Korol, H. Kudry, V. Marka, T. Muzyka, O. Romanenko, O. Semeniuk, O. Shek and others. Literary experts are primarily interested in «the spirituality, morality, psychology of a person, his aspirations, urges, actions...» [3]. In the modern theory of literature, the «concept of man» is «a comprehensive literary concept that allows, on the basis of the study of the internal structure of the text, to highlight the richness and ambiguity of the ethical attitudes of the individual depicted in the work, to analyze the regularities of the author’s artistic thinking, linguistic and communicative forms of expression of the cultural and artistic type of character of the hero in literature» [21, p. 3–4]. Thus, according to O. Romanenko, this concept unites different levels of the artistic text and involves the analysis of the smallest detail of the poetics of the work, the regularities of the artistic writing and thinking of the author, the type of culture etc.

The problem of human essence belongs to a number of eternal philosophical problems. Each artistic direction gives its own answers to a
question traditional for philosophy. This is due to the fact that at all times one or another understanding of the essence of man affects the development of all constituent parts of humanitarian knowledge. Psychological, literary, sociological, economic, linguistic and other theories are always based on a certain philosophical approach to the interpretation of the essence of a person, and at the same time, the development of specific scientific fields of knowledge contributes to the further development and multiplication of modifications, ideas about what the essence of an individual is.

Thus, starting with Socrates, philosophers believed that the task of man is to know himself. Protagoras declared man to be the measure of all things. Plato built his theory of the ideal state based on the idea of insurmountable inequality between the free and the slave, and Aristotle called man a political animal, noting that this being is social, gifted with language, capable of perceiving such concepts as good and evil, justice and injustice.

Starting with Augustine, the problem of the relationship between the essence of man and his existence is actualized. In particular, Augustine asserted the highest degree of indisputability that «I exist», and if they tell me, he said, and what if you are wrong, then I will answer: if I am wrong, then I already exist.

In the 17th century, this thesis was fundamentally developed by Rene Descartes: «I think, therefore I exist». And three centuries later, Albert Camus interpreted Descartes’ thesis regarding the realities of the 20th century: «I rebel, therefore we exist».

Back in the Middle Ages, Mykola Kuzanskyi in his work «Dialogue about the ball game» presented man in the general order of things as the unity of light and the otherness of bodily darkness. Man is God, he claimed, but not absolute. Man is also the world, but not all things. The essence of man encompasses both God and the whole world, therefore he can be a human God, an angel, an animal or anything else, inside the human essence there is everything in its own way.

In a person, as in the universe, everything is connected in a universal way. She is endowed with the power to create everything from the creative possibilities of her own essence. At the same time, M. Kuzansky emphasized that the creative activity of a person has no other final goal, except for a person, because a whole world exists within him.

Erasmus of Rotterdam associated the essence of man with the interaction of soul and body: the body enjoys visible things, while the soul is directed upward, overcoming the earthly burden. According to Erasmus of Rotterdam, the order of things requires that the body willingly and joyfully submit to the soul, because the passions of the flesh seek to rule the mind,
and if the mind submits to the decision of the body, then the order of things is distorted.

Thomas Hobbes raised the issue of the need to study human nature as a synthesis of natural abilities and forces, such as the ability to eat and move. He called these abilities natural and argued that they are contained in the definition of a person as an animal endowed with reason.

Over time, the approaches to defining the essence of a person become more and more diverse in the presence of a transitional tendency, which is characterized by relentless attempts to find something meaningful in a person, unique only to him. So, Descartes calls a person a machine, Pascal a thinking cane. Franklin and Marx associated the essence of man with the ability to produce tools and change the surrounding world in their activities, creating a «second nature» and thus changing oneself. According to V. Soloviov, a person is distinguished by shame, pity and reverence.

In general, we can say that: first, the problem of the genesis of ideas about a person is always relevant within the limits of dynamically developing philosophical knowledge; secondly, until the middle of the 19th century, philosophers explained the essence of a person based on the fact that a person is a part of society and the world in general.

It was believed that knowledge of the world in general, an increasingly deeper understanding of the laws and regularities of its development contributes to the understanding of the human essence, since a person is subject to general laws that are fully accessible to rational cognition. Perhaps this was expressed most vividly by Helvetius, who argued that a person always acts out of self-interest and cannot act otherwise, as well as Hegel, who considered a person as an average specimen of the genus, which completely dissolves in the general.

Thirdly, starting from the middle of the 19th century, the topic of the human personality and its destiny came to the fore, to the forefront of philosophical thought for the first time in the entire history of development in order to become the leitmotif of the philosophical reflection of representatives of almost all philosophical schools and directions already in the next century.

Indeed, the ancient Greeks were obsessed with the relentless search for something eternal, imperishable, be it Plato’s eidos, Thales’ water or Heraclitus’ fire. Philosophical thought of the Middle Ages was concerned with the problem of the relationship between knowledge and faith, the philosophical justification of the existence of God. The new era gave birth to an unrestrained belief in the unlimited possibilities of the human mind, and, accordingly, the problem of the relationship between philosophy and natural science became significantly more relevant. Especially until the beginning
of the 19th century, when each of the specific sciences began to claim to create its own picture of the world, and this in turn actualized the problem of the status of philosophical knowledge itself. Therefore, starting from the middle of the 19th century, the possibilities of rational cognition are subjected to increasingly persistent criticism from the philosophy of life presented by A. Schopenhauer, S. Kierkegaard, F. Nietzsche, V. Dilthey, and at the turn of the 19th-20th centuries by the neo-Kantians V. Windelband and G. Rickert and further A. Bergson and others.

Later, representatives of the philosophy of life unconditionally joined the critique of rational cognition by existentialism. The philosophy of existentialism arises as anthropological in its essential orientation. Its central problem and main issue is the problem of man, his existence in the world. The birth of existentialism was connected with a radical condemnation of the classical (rationalist) tradition in the understanding of man. This criticism began in the middle of the 19th century and reached its peak in the works of philosophical innovators – S. Kierkegaard, F. Dostoevsky and F. Nietzsche.

Criticism was directed primarily against the neglect of the individual and his fate in the world. Man in the classical systems of new European rationalism is understood as something essentially defined only in its generality, not individuality. To understand and explain a person, from the point of view of classical philosophy, means to describe his general nature, to characterize the main components of his essence. According to the postulates of this philosophy, a person is a «cognitive ability», «will», «mind» etc. But a specific individual is much less concerned with the problems of the general «will» and «mind» than the problems of his own individual existence. That is why the new era begins with the «rebellion» of the common man against such a philosophy.

The ideological sources of existentialism and existential philosophy are traditionally seen primarily in the religious and mystical teachings of the original Danish Christian thinker S. Kierkegaard (1813–1855). He was the first to formulate the concept of «existence» – the «internal» being of a person, which gradually turns into his external being [10, p. 192; 18, p. 25–159; 19, p. 554–555]. The philosopher believed that true philosophy can only be «existential», that is, have a deeply personal character. S. Kierkegaard analyzed man as «existence», studied his «essential, ontological structure». The researcher used concepts such as «despair», «fear», «determination» etc. Later, the outlined concepts were developed in their writings by existentialists.

In connection with the stated opinion, S. Kierkegaard constantly returns to his favorite character – the biblical Job. Contrary to common sense and
the rational beliefs of society, Job refused to recognize his suffering and losses as inevitable and necessary within the laws of the universe.

The same «rebellion» against circumstances, «common sense» and philosophy, which justifies rationalism and forces a person to live according to established norms, is observed in F. Nietzsche. The theme is especially clearly defined in the early works of the philosopher. He claims that each person is a completely unique being. Therefore, the main task of the individual is to devote his whole life to the disclosure of his own inner unique content. The philosopher notes that the main problem of our existence is that we obey the generally accepted, live in accordance with the general norms and requirements of the environment and thereby lose our uniqueness, that is, we lose ourselves. According to F. Nietzsche, «no one dares to show his personality, but everyone wears the mask of an educated person, or a scientist, or a poet, or a politician» [19, p. 187].

So, the existentialist philosophers who worked during the difficult historical period of the world wars and the post-war period defined the essence of a person by his spiritual principle, which is expressed in self-awareness, emotional experiences of goodness, love, and the search for a topos of being in one’s own, the other’s, and the objective world. Images of a person were associated with the spirit, ideation, freedom, responsibility, communication.

Analyzing the internal conflict of Hamlet in the tragedy of the same name by W. Shakespeare, it is worth defining the concept of «conflict» in literary studies. In the Encyclopedia of Literary Studies, edited by Yu. Kovaliv, the defined term is defined as «a clash of opposing views and interests, a tense struggle, an aggravation of contradictions that form the basis of the plot of an artistic work and are correlated with its composition» [16, p. 520-521]. The study of the problem of personality conflict through the prism of the philosophy of existentialism in literature is called existential conflict. Like any other, existential conflict is a clash of opposing views, interests, aspirations, life positions of the hero of a literary work.

Existentialism, fully formed as a philosophical direction in the 20th century, becoming the most popular discourse in Western Europe for several decades, is understood in the history of philosophy as a reaction of man and society to the crisis of culture. However, there is no doubt that the philosophy of existentialism is deeper and more complex than the specific historical situation of re-evaluation of the values and meanings of human existence, which developed in Europe after the First World War and, as is commonly believed, marked the beginning of the understanding of individual living by a person of his existence. Building a historical-philosophical tradition through calling on the philosophy of the predecessors
of the given direction: S. Kierkegaard, F. Nietzsche, E. Husserl, is insufficient.

Being a relevant type of cultural consciousness in our time, existentialism was shaped by the joint efforts of philosophy and literature much earlier than it is generally considered in the history of philosophy.

Researchers (I. Bychko, S. Vilchynska, L. Nefiodova, V. Stetsenko) believe that existentialism as a type of cultural consciousness, actualizing the contradiction between the essence and existence of a person, is possible in all crisis periods of culture. In particular, the contradiction between essence and existence is presented in the crisis of the elite humanist culture of the Renaissance, which was reflected in the tragedies of W. Shakespeare, whose characters experience a painful existential conflict. The tragedies of the turn of the 16th–17th centuries: Hamlet (1601), Macbeth (1606), King Lear (1606) reveal the philosophical and anthropological meanings of the character’s self-reflection process from its inner motivational origins, which determine the essence of a person, up to a tragic outcome due to her external actions. W. Shakespeare, like existentialist writers, puts the categories of the absurdity of existence, despair, suffering, loneliness, and death first. This is most vividly outlined in Hamlet’s monologue, where «the tragic beginning is an irrational, all-encompassing attitude of a person to life, a universal way of being a person in society, because the world is absurd, nothing, and human existence is «being for death» as the only goal and summary of existence» [17, p. 220].

The spiritual trends of the Reformation era, which proclaimed «salvation by personal faith» (Luther), were most fully reflected in the work of W. Shakespeare. If the Renaissance brought with it the revival of ancient (ancient Roman) comedy, then the merit of W. Shakespeare, first of all, is that he initiated the great art of modern tragedy.

T. Akindinova, researching existentialism in relation to artistic creativity, analyzes the tragic collisions of famous Shakespearean dramas through the prism of the concept of K. Jaspers. According to the researcher, for traditional medieval consciousness, the finale of the play in «Romeo and Juliet» cannot look like a tragedy. The death of the lovers appears as a logical consequence of their «unreasonableness» – love for a representative of the enemy’s family. Such a pragmatic view immanently carries reconciliation with the event, spiritually distancing itself from it and referring to the general feeling of the tragedy of human existence. The tragedy of Romeo and Juliet arises as a result of the lovers’ free choice despite belonging to rival families, in the existential discovery of each other, the value of which for both is more important than life itself. The absolute
truth of the existential choice revealed in their love is perceived by the viewer as an act of awakening one’s own existence.

«Actually, – notes T. Akindinova, – all the plots of Shakespeare’s tragedies unfold around the event of transcendence – the existential exit of the heroes beyond the usual forms of existence to the reality of absolute trust and love. Those who have touched this higher reality are incomprehensible to those around them. And for the Shakespearean hero himself, the tragedy is caused by a mistake or a temptation to suppress, to replace the existential layer of being with traditional reality» [2, p. 46].

According to the researcher, for Othello, who learned with Desdemona the unique union of souls in love, under Iago’s insidious whisper about the hypocrisy of all women, at some point the absolute priority of existential life disappears, and he does not believe his beloved. The source of Hamlet’s tragedy is the existential betrayal of his mother in love with his father. The young man is so impressed by the ease with which his mother accepts another man that he questions the very possibility of love, and thus the meaning of life. King Lear, demanding a public declaration of love from his daughters, inflicted a fatal emotional wound on Cordelia, the only one who truly loved her father. Forgetting existence inevitably leads to the loss not only of freedom, but also of love.

T. Akindinova comes to the conclusion that the focus of V. Shakespeare’s stories is the cardinal problem of the Reformation era – the problem of freedom of will in the perspective of personal responsibility for the choice made by a person on the border with the transcendental world, and the criterion of the truth of the decision made here always remains the faithfulness of existence, revealed by an act of love. The work of W. Shakespeare was probably indicative for K. Jaspers and the fact that it revealed for the first time the importance of love in the emergence of the existential layer of the personality and the discovery of being.

Let’s consider Hamlet’s monologue in relation to the ideas of the predecessors of existentialism: S. Kierkegaard, F. Nietzsche, E. Husserl. First of all, it is the idea of discovering the meaning of existence in the critical situation of choice in S. Kierkegaard. Next – F. Nietzsche’s idea about knowing the world in the being of a person and E. Husserl’s idea of the obviousness of the experience of being and the discovery of obviousness by intuition. The presence of an immanent world of consciousness, an appeal to a thing purified from verbal constructions [7, p. 337]. These ideas are quite convincingly presented in the modeling of the image of a person in the works of W. Shakespeare and determine the essence of the existential conflict experienced by his characters, in particular Hamlet.
Let us turn to revealing the meaning of Hamlet’s internal conflict to reveal the hidden foundations of existentialism outlined in the philosophical works of S. Kierkegaard, F. Nietzsche and E. Husserl.

Using the example of the monologue «To be or not to be», where the hero’s own inner self acts as the communicator, we will consider S. Kierkegaard’s idea of the correlation between reality and individual existence. The understanding of reality not as an abstraction, but as a real individual existence manifested in connection with the inner unique experiences of an individual person, is not a definition of S. Kierkegaard himself, but follows from his works: «Either or» (1843), «The concept of fear» (1844) and others. At the center of the philosopher’s works is a person who seeks an explanation of his existence in the process of self-reflection, intense personal choice, preservation of human dignity and acceptance of responsibility for his own choice.

According to S. Kierkegaard, there are a number of postulates inherent in the philosophy of existentialism: «the insurmountable tragedy of human existence, the absolute uniqueness, the uniqueness of man, the correlation of existence with transcendence, society as a factor that levels the individual, the development of the categories of fear, despair, guilt, paradox, jump» [8, p. 25]. The outlined philosophical elements are revealed to some extent in Hamlet’s monologue.

Two and a half centuries earlier, in 1601, Hamlet also searches for an explanation of his existence in a situation of material choice. The reflective consciousness of W. Shakespeare’s character, on the one hand, extremely abstracts the world order defined for him. This is the world as it is for everyone and everything, which is emphasized by the absence of a grammatical «I» character: the inner monologue is built mainly on the pronouns who, we: «How did we get rid of mortal worries?» [28, p. 81], «Because of these thoughts / With life we continue to be poor» [28, p. 81], «For who would endure the scourge and scorn of time... If he himself could stop all this / With a small dagger? Who would pull the yoke / And the burden of life in groans and sweat, / If it were not for the fear of something else after death...» [28, p. 81], «So why, weak-willed, do we rather endure / A disaster that is close to us, than go to meet / The unknown? This is how consciousness makes / Out of all of us cowards» [28, p. 81]. Hamlet is not talking about himself, but about man in general. The idea of understanding, discovering the meaning of existence in a critical situation of choice is born, defined much later by S. Kierkegaard.

Before a person in general, and not only before Prince Hamlet, who lost both his father and the throne, the problem of ontological choice arises, which inevitably approaches at the critical point of individual existence: «To
be or not to be? – this is the question» [28, p. 81]. The verb «to be» used in this case instead of the verb «to live» means that this question is not a question of personal choice of the prince, but a general question of the meaning of existence for every person.

Not only Hamlet experiences the bitter loss of his father, but also Ophelia, Laertes, Fortinbras. These young people, who are just entering adulthood and are just getting to know their essence, are also in a state of existential conflict between their essence and «the scourge and mockery of time» [28, p. 81]. They also have to make their main life choices. Fortinbras chooses a war of conquest, Laertes chooses blind revenge, Ophelia chooses death.

Hamlet is in an internal mental action – he is delving into the reflection of the opposition «subject – the world», into the understanding and living of the existential conflict, clearly seeing not only himself, but also the world in all its material layers in general, with an invariable death in the finale. In Hamlet’s reflection, body and spirit, soul and body are intertwined. The terror of an unexplored world, from which no traveler has returned, oppresses the will and compels us to endure such misfortunes as we have, rather than to face the unknown.

As we can see, already in 1601, W. Shakespeare, portraying the hero in a state of reflection of himself and the world, took a new step in culture in understanding the correlation «man – world» after the «Book of Job» and Augustine’s «Confessions», showing the influence of thought on the event.

The flight of Hamlet’s thoughts is similar to the lunge of a swordsman during a deadly duel, to which the author leads his hero in the finale. However, critics for a long time did not want to see anything in the reflection of the character, except the delay of action due to Hamlet’s indecision. They reproached the character for inaction, and W. Shakespeare was accused of a weak dramatic intrigue.

Instead, W. Shakespeare showed another way out of the existential conflict, talking about philosophical reflection. He did not reduce the story of Hamlet to banal reckless revenge, suicide or military games, but showed a conscious existential choice.

F. Nietzsche’s idea that «the world, taken regardless of our condition, namely the possibility of living in it, which is not reduced by us to our being, our logic and our superstitions, is such a world as the world in itself becomes relevant here, does not exist» [19, p. 33]. The world, the understanding of which is gradually formed by Hamlet into a coherent picture, is a world that reflects his own existence, the existence of an orphaned son betrayed by his mother, lover and friends. A world in which a
carefree, comfortable existence ended for the young man and the «Shackles and arrows of a hinged fate...» [28, p. 81].

The reality in which Hamlet tries to build family ties, make friends, and love turns out to be fictional. Denmark becomes a prison. Ophelia, his beloved, «I loved Ophelia so much; love and forty thousand brothers / My inequality» [28, p. 151], preferred duty, uncle – «King of rags, rags» [28, p. 149], and her mother’s «name is treachery»! [28, p. 123] The cycle of life demonstrates the dark irony of the Creator: from the greatness of Alexander the Great to the cork of a beer barrel: «Alexander is dead; Alexander – buried; Oleksandr – turned to dust; dust is earth; we make clay from the earth. Why can’t the clay he turned into be used to make stoppers to plug a beer barrel with? Mighty Caesar is now a lump of clay, / That plugs up our gaping walls. That body, which was a place of refuge for the people, / Now it can only hide the blow» [28, p. 150]. All this is not an independent, separate world, this world is the life of Hamlet, who lives it together with others: «God, / How useless to me, boring / And stale all the needs of this world! This is a garden of unburned weeds, / Where only a wild potion grows and reigns» [28, p. 30]. Thus, the idea of understanding the world, as it is presented in F. Nietzsche, is included in the existential conflict of Shakespeare’s character.

Let us turn to E. Husserl’s idea of obviousness and detection of obviousness by intuition. According to the teachings of the philosopher, only the obvious, that which is perceived without any prerequisites, can be considered true. E. Husserl criticized psychologism, according to which the perception of something as truth is determined by the activity of the psyche. He believed that truth exists independently of a person, but a person always perceives the world subjectively.

In the tragedy, the existence of the immanent world of Hamlet’s consciousness is clearly expressed, his search for the essence of things, cleansed of verbal constructions. He is in search of an answer to the question: «What is man?» The answer for the young man is obvious: man is the quintessence of dust. Men and women are equally physically vulnerable by nature. Hamlet makes sense of a person not even in the context of being and non-being, as in the case of existentialists, but correlates his existence with the state of agony of the hangman, who crawls in the dark. The obviousness of total suffering is revealed, unbearable for man, which makes him not the crown of creation, but an unhappy creature confused under the burden of life.

The obvious end of the human life path to the unknown is revealed. No traveler returned from an unknown country. At the same time, the internal source of reflection is revealed – thought, mind, conscience, which are
elements of a certain mental spiritual force that changes the direction of human movement. Existentialism recognizes a person's awareness of his own mortality and imperfection as a deep knowledge of his nature.

Thus, the three ideas of the predecessors of European existentialism turned out to be implicitly presented two and a half centuries earlier and, moreover, in the artistic form of philosophizing in the Renaissance dramatic text of W. Shakespeare. The genius of the playwright lies in the fact that he was able to portray his characters as real and independent living people, without imposing any «ideology» on them and without turning them into mouthpieces of the author's worldview.

**Research conclusions and prospects for further exploration.** The main reason for the appearance of existentialism on the forefront of philosophical thought can be seen in the close relationship, first of all, with the dramatic and tragic events of the last century. Among them are the First and Second World Wars, revolutionary upheavals in many countries, the scientific and technological revolution, global problems of our time, covering the vital interests of all humanity in general and each individual in particular.

The Renaissance era, which replaced the Middle Ages in Central Europe already in the 14th century, brought the hitherto impossible coexistence of ancient and Christian values, ideas and concepts into cultural and social life. The collapse of the «universal» man of the Renaissance with his desire for godlikeness revealed an insurmountable barrier between a high ideal and its realization, between quixotic consciousness and life opportunities, allows to consider the literature of this period through the prism of the philosophy of existentialism.

In England, the Renaissance appeared only two and a half centuries later, however, having absorbed the Central European experience, it immediately became a fertile ground for cultural figures. W. Shakespeare brilliantly depicted the Renaissance in all its contradictions in his works. The focus of the dramatist's stories is the cardinal problem of the Reformation era – the problem of free will in the perspective of personal responsibility for the choice made by a person on the border with the transcendental world.

The ideas of S. Kierkegaard, F. Nietzsche, E. Husserl, which consist in understanding the meaning of existence in a critical situation of choice; knowledge of the world through intuition; the understanding of human existence as «being for death» is quite convincingly presented in the modeling of the image of a person in the work of V. Shakespeare and determines the essence of the existential conflict experienced by his characters, Hamlet in particular.
The conflict of the tragedy is formally based on the motive of revenge, but in its interpretation Shakespeare goes beyond the classical bloody tragedy. The main character recognizes all the imperfection of the world after the true reasons for his father’s death are revealed to him in a conversation with a ghost. Hamlet concludes that crimes, evil, treachery, hypocrisy are quite common in this world. «Denmark is a prison», the main character believes, and therefore he cannot count on fair and legal retribution. Prospects for further investigations consist in the analysis of other tragedies of W. Shakespeare through the prism of the philosophy of existentialism.

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