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RESEARCH ARTICLE

FACTORS BEHIND THE GENESIS AND "RELEASE" OF THE INDIVIDUAL'S EXISTENTIAL TENSION

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ABSTRACT

The increasing complexity and intensification of human life in the epoch of digitalization and escalation of social and political conflicts on both the international and national levels is constantly enhancing the existence of the individual. This situation results in an acute socio-psychological and pedagogical problem of providing effective and qualified aid to people by releasing their existential tension. Therefore, identification and analysis of the factors influencing the genesis and dynamics of the individual's existence from the viewpoint of the existential philosophy appear to be a significantly topical issue. The scope of the present study is to identify and examine the main factors determining the individual's existence, as well as to define and analyze the main social conditions contributing to release of the individual's existential tension, on the basis of analysis of philosophical and psychological publications on existentialism and existential fiction. The results of the study consist in revealing the social nature of the origins of the existence as a conscious psychological state of the human soul, which depresses the mind of the individual and negatively affects their behavior. The author argues that it would be feasible to use the results of the present study for developing a methodology of providing effective social, clinical-psychological, and pedagogical aid to people in an acute state of existence.

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INTRODUCTION

The 21st century began as the century of alarming changes in the relationship between humans and nature and the international political, economic, and social-humanitarian spheres, as well as the century of transition from globalization to neo-globalization [Makhamatov 2017] and crisis of democracy and liberalism [Plattner 2015; Rupnik 2018]. This turbulence of the world system is accompanied by penetration of the libertarian principles into the individual lifestyle not only in the West, but also in other areas of the present-day world. As a result of this conflicting dynamics of the social reality, people experience stronger feelings of loneliness, fear, and anxiety about the future, and human existential tension intensifies [Zalec 2022]. In the current situation, just like in the 1950's, the existential philosophy becomes topical once again [The Cambridge Companion to Existentialism 2012; Mariani 2016; Varava 2020; Bonetskaya 2021 et al.]. Existence is a phenomenon of the inner world of a person. Therefore, the existential philosophy is mainly based on the data of psychological research [Jung 2021a; DeRobertis 2012; Hanscomb 1997; Ratcliffe & Broome 2012; Borisi et al., 2017] and existential works of art reflecting the basic principles of formation and evolution of existentialism. The mastery of a sculptor or painter in portraying the existential state of a person in their work is one of the main parts of the value of artwork. For example, Madonna's face expression in the sculptural composition "Pieta" by Michelangelo, Van Gogh's self-portrait, the face of the Demon in the eponymous painting by Vrubel, the man in "The Scream" by Munch as a deep reflection of existence of the characters of these artworks arouse a keen interest of viewers and critics. Yet the most adequate and complete forms of revealing the dynamics of existence is fiction literature, as demonstrated in the studies by A. Camus [Camus 1989], J. Malpas [Malpas 2012], A. Mariani [Mariani 2016], N. Bonetskaya [Bonetskaya 2021], V. Varava and T. Makhamatov [Varava & Makhamatov 2021], P. Ziak [Ziak et al.: 2022] and others. Yet the forms of existentialism found in artworks lack conceptual elaboration and need to be analyzed from the philosophic viewpoint. Thus, philosophy, while studying existential visual and literary artworks with the use of hermeneutic, phenomenological, and psychologic methods [Joseph & Reynolds 2011; Reynolds & Stokes 2017; Roy 2010; Jung 2021a; Jung 2021b], provides clearer definitions of the objective universal essence of existence and its external manifestations in concepts. In the present-day philosophic and literary studies of existentialism, despite their depth and multiversity, mainly the established forms are dealt with. The scope of the present study is to overcome these faults of existentialism by identifying and analyzing the system of factors determining the genesis of the individual's existence, as well as the ways of overcoming it, which

have not hitherto been sufficiently studied and systematized in the present-day philosophy.

Dialectics of the existential nature of the human being: Human existence, as pointed out by the classics of existentialism, is a conscious world of negative experiences and trials, especially those of the sensitive and psychological part of the human mind in search of self-understanding on the borderline of the rational and the irrational. K. Jaspers was among the first to observe that existence "becomes accessible in understandability (Verstehbarkeit)... it is in itself a process of self-understanding (Sichverstehen), and it is only on the verge of understandable that it primordially meets itself again" [Jaspers 2021: 14, 28-30]. J.-P. Sartre also argues that self-awareness is the starting point of human existence. "There cannot be any other truth at the starting point but 'I think, therefore I am'. It is the absolute truth of the self-comprehending mind" [Sartre 1989: 335]. Thus, existence does not belong to the sphere of "dark matters of existence, such as anxiety», i.e. the irrational, the unconscious, as argued, for example, by M. Gordon [Gordon 2018: p.122]. Even though humans are social animals and their life is connected to their ability to think and communicate with others, the human mind inevitably stays in the power of the inner world of loneliness. The mind grows more self-aware through its constantly reproduced negative emotions, experiences, and trials, i.e. through existence. "Out of the possibility of existence do I live", Jaspers wrote, "only in its realization am I myself" [Jaspers 2021: 4]. Thus, it can be argued that there cannot be a human individual without existence.

According to K. G. Jung, loneliness "cannot be eliminated by any successful adaptation and any unhindered adjustment to one's current environment, nor can it be done by the family, the society, or one's position" [Jung 2021a:193]. It is at the time of failures and trials that human thoughts are directed inwards, and the mind more clearly discovers itself in itself, i.e. its own existence. Existence has variable, dynamically changing contents, structure, and orientation, determined by both internal and external moral-ethical and value-related factors perceived by the individual. The thoughts of the individual about the meaninglessness and futility of their actions, the perception of their relationship with the external environment as absurd intensify human existence. Its dynamics is determined by the unsolved problems between the individual and the social milieu, which constantly haunt the human being. Therefore, according to Jung, "the human spirit is hopelessly stuck in the weirdest controversies" [Jung 2021a: 192]. In such situations, the pressure of the dark matters of the unconscious is intensified in the individual's soul, manifesting itself in irrational worries, depressions, despair, and fear. These phenomena of the human psychology are butthe background of nascency of human existence, which originates in the individual's awareness of their own negative psychological states, in their attempts to find a link between the irrational and consciousness. Sartre says: "it is in my subject that I worry, and yet this worry 'for myself' reveals to me the being, which is my being without being 'for me'" [Sartre 2004: 246]. According to Hanscomb, "existential concerns have always been around, and thus there are few limits on where and when they can show themselves" [Hanscomb 2006: 171].

It is true that existence consists in the individual's thoughts about the absurdity of their life, in the nihilistic approach to oneself and the external oppressing world [Dura et al: 2022]. It is a result of deep controversies in the human mind, causing mental and psychological depression, suffering, and discomfort. Existence, as a human psychological state, is by no means a mental illness, yet its intensification may lead to disturbance of the psyche of an existential human being [Jung 2021a; Ratcliffe & Broome 2012]. Existence of the individual whose behavior and thinking lack the will to search for a way out of the existential tension, and which may lead the individual to a mental illness or push them towards searching for their own death, can be defined as *pessimistic*, *negative existence*. The human soul, according to the classical works in psychoanalysis and existentialism, comprises the kind of existential contents, which can be defined as *positive*. For example, even before existentialism was

clearly formed as an independent branch of philosophy, Jung in his description of human psychological experiences observed that the psychological process of searching for ways to overcome mental and psychological controversies in oneself-for-oneself may contribute to evolution of the individual's thinking and their social development [Jung 2021b: 193-194]. Positive existence is specifically described from the philosophic viewpoint in Camus' work "The Myth of Sisyphus. An Essay on the Absurd". In this work, Camus identifies and analyzes the optimistic nuances of the individual's existence as a passionate wish and practical attempts to overcome the absurdity of life. "Thus I draw from the absurd three consequences, which are my revolt, my freedom, and my passion. By the mere activity of consciousness I transform into a rule of life what was an invitation to death - and I refuse suicide", writes Camus [Camus 1989: 267]. He likens people who are able to struggle against the absurdity of life to Oedipus and Sisyphus. Describing Sisyphus as "proletarian of the gods", Camus says: "The lucidity that was to constitute his torture at the same time crowns his victory. There is no fate that cannot be surmounted by scorn" [Camus 1989: 306]. It follows from his discussion that positive existence is the ability to endure mental and physical pain in order to survive and achieve one's goal, which may be very difficult and distant, like that of Jesus, or unattainable, like that of the Little Mermaid in Anderson's tale. Sartre in his work "Existentialism Is a Humanism", published in 1946, without defining existence as positive, demonstrates the positive tendencies in both existence and existentialism. According to this philosopher, the existential humanism reminds the individual "that there is no legislator but himself; that he himself, thus abandoned, must decide for himself; also because we show that it is not by turning back upon himself, but always by seeking, beyond himself, an aim which is one of liberation or of some particular realization, that man can realize himself as truly human" [Sartre 1989: 343].

The basics of the genesis and dynamics of existence: Both negative and positive existence of the individual as one's self-appraisal through others' attitude towards one's person has its own generating grounds, own stages of formation and evolution. In the available publications on existentialism, these aspects of existence appear to have not been sufficiently studies, and therefore the ideas on this issue need to be systematized. The genesis of existence is determined by the combination of the individual's relations and interactions with one's close and distant people, i.e. by communication. According to Jaspers, "Communication is the source of existence... I cannot become myself without entering into communication, and I cannot enter into communication without being alone" [Jaspers 2021: 64, 65]. Yet communication has its own gradual formation stages and comprises various contents and tendencies determined by the moral, aesthetic, religious, and other worldview values and material interests of the agents of communication. The positive or negative nature, the level of the individual's communication and orientation of one's activity from oneself or into oneself determine the features of one's existence, its contents and structure. Having examined and analyzed the classical works in the existential philosophy and child psychological development studies by Jung, Piaget, and other prominent psychologists, one can draw the conclusion that the genesis and essence of human existence have socio-psychological nature.

The starting point of the genesis of existence is the forming and intensively broadening relations and connections of a growing child who becomes aware of their self. The psychological aspects of child communication features influencing the initial formation of their existence are analyzed in depth in Jung's work "On Conflicts in the Child's Soul" published in 1910 (Jung 2021a: 11-40), even before the emergence of the existential philosophy of Heidegger, Jaspers, Sartre, Camus, and others. A person at the initial stage of communication formation, still being a child, begins to enter the "adult" world and faces the fear of being abandoned by one's parents, the frightening unknown, lack of knowledge, and questions that adults for some reason cannot adequately answer. The child develops the existence of egoism, jealousy of one's parents towards the newly born brother or sister, uncertainty. The existence of loneliness, distrust towards

adults, inner protest, and resistance to changes in the family is formed. The existential in the child grows more acute in the opposition of oneself to others and deepens in collision with the ambiguity of the surrounding world [Jung 2021a; DeRobertis 2012; Arp 2012].

The second stage of existential evolution starts when the child steps beyond the boundaries of the usual framework of the parental environment, when, independent of the child's will and wishes and for a reason they cannot understand, their communication space widens. The specific feature of the dynamics of this existential stage are revealed in a literary form in the short story "Another mom" by the Russian existential author A. Platonov [Platonov 1985]. In this story, Platonov demonstrates how the child widens and deepens the initial stage of his existence by stepping beyond the boundaries of his family. For the child who gets out of his parents' sight, the ambiguity of the coming future as an "alien" world causes inner fear, forces him to make independent decisions and choices, generates inner insecurity. These fear and insecurity are accompanied by the thought of abandonment. It seems to the child that no one needs him, that he is deprived of any help and support.

The third source of evolution and increasing complexity of the individual's existence is controversies, mutual unacceptance between oneself and others, mutual lack of understanding, which constantly emerge throughout the process of widening and increasing complexity of one's relationship with the changing outside world. One starts to realize that the other individual, however close they may be, can never be fully understood. According to Camus, "It is probably true that a man remains forever unknown to us and that there is in him something irreducible that escapes us" [Camus 1990: 228]. Specific features of the factors and dynamics of this existence stage are deeply reflected in the psyche of the main character of J. D. Salinger's "The Catcher in the Rye", Holden Caulfield.

The fourth determinant of the existence dynamics is the freedom of choice, free will, which requires bravery, independence, and readiness to bear responsibility for one's decisions. The individual faces this in the process of further widening and complexifying of one's communication. Its dynamics leads the growing individual to facing more and more alien people, which generates in him endless problems and unexpected controversies. The necessity to act independently in such cases gives rise to fear and insecurity and induces "escape from freedom" (E. Fromm). This is why Sartre argued, and rightly so, that facing the necessity of choice is one of the grounds of generating the individual's existence [Sartre 1989: 334-335].

The fifth factor of the genesis of existence consists in the pressure of the social time on the individual's psyche. A person changes in time, one's life pointlessly and meaninglessly leaks like water between one's fingers. In this sweeping torrent of time, the mind accumulates more negative memories of the past than positive ones. According to Sartre, "the mind is opposed to its past and future as being before itself, existing in the way of non-being; this refers us to the nihilating structure of temporariness" [Sartre 2004: 71]. The individual's feelings and thought of the impossibility to get rid of one's uncomfortable memories, to stop or slow down the time, which swiftly leads to inevitable death, also contributes to constant regeneration of existence. The psychological pressure of the social time on the individual's mind, its transience in contrast to the mechanistic inalterability of the surrounding world of things as a factor of existence are clearly reflected in the existential novel by J. D. Salinger, "The Catcher in the Rye". According to the main character, Holden Caulfield, the museum and the things in it never change, but a person becomes different every time. "It didn't exactly depress me to think about it, but it didn't make me feel gay as hell, either. Certain things they should stay the way they are", he concludes [Salinger 1983: 123]. Holden's mind cannot get rid of the uncomfortable and depressing episodes from his past. Things happening in the current present are not what he expected and hoped

The sixth determinant of existence formation is the discrepancy between the external communicational reality and the individual's expectations and spiritual values. In this case, existence regenerates as a nihilistic approach to one's environment, as an inner protest, the individual's hate towards one's abominable reality. This manifests itself in withdrawal, in falling into the abyss while lacking any will and wish to change this reality, which is demonstrated in the existential individual's behavior and actions. Salinger very subtly reveals such existence in Holden's soul through the words of another character, Mr. Antolini: "This fall I think you're riding for-it's a special kind of fall, a horrible kind. The man falling isn't permitted to feel or hear himself hit bottom. He just keeps falling and falling. The whole arrangement's designed for men who, at some time or other in their lives, were looking for something their own environment couldn't supply them with. Or they thought their own environment couldn't supply them with. So they gave up looking" [Salinger: 176].

The dialectics of overcoming existence: Due to the constant reproduction of different forms and intensity of the controversies between the individual and the external social environment, the individual's existence is sinuously reproduced and reinforced, demanding to be overcome and dialectically negated. It is only natural that every person tries to overcome, overpower, or mitigate one's existential tension.

As is generally known, there are two alternative ways of overcoming one's existential, as studied by Camus – either death or Sisyphus' labour.

The first way is searching for one's death as an escape from existence, the objective absurdity of life, which, according to Camus, results from the indifference of the people around towards the individual's fate, as demonstrated in his novel "The Stranger". This way can be defined as negative-pessimistic.

The second way is actively searching for a meaning in one's meaningless situation, which is comparable to Sisyphus' labour – a combination of hard labour with a hope for victory over hopelessness. "The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy" [Camus 1989: 308]. According to Camus, the images of Sisyphus and Oedipus prove that the individual can only overcome one's existence when struggling against the meaninglessness of life, transforming one's fate into one's handiwork. Yet this kind of overcoming is individualistic, giving no role to society and not everyone has such a strong character and inner will as the above-mentioned images.

Another way of overcoming the existential tension is religious faith. In a religion, the believer connects one's existential pain and sufferings to one's sinfulness before God. In prayers and confession before the priest, this individual confesses one's sins, accepts sufferings as God's trial, and sincerely believes that the Almighty will forgive these sins and not leave the individual alone before the trials of fate, whereby the individual's life will acquire a sense in God. According to Bojan Zalec, «Where there is intelligence, there is also a sense and possibility of accepting suffering. Every opportunity that allows one to understand, reflect, and accept suffering is extremely valuable, since we have no other reasonable options: to live with something that cannot be eliminated and not be accepted at the same time is clearly unreasonable and self-destructive, and life without suffering is just an empty illusion. So it remains the path of selftransformation that allows one to accept suffering» [Zalec 2020: 4; Westphal 2012]. Thus, according to Zalec, a religious person consciously accepts the way of suffering as the method of overcoming their existential tension. The existential believer, unlike Sisyphus and Oedipus, when accepting sufferings, does not trust in their patience and strong will only, but, first and foremost, they trust in the Lord.

Since the individual's existence generates in the human soul as a result of the society being dominated by indifference and latent

hostility of its members towards each other, it can be considered as a socio-psychological phenomenon. Communications of openly or latently negative nature, by regenerating and intensifying existence in the mind of the group members, creates a tense psychological atmosphere in the group. In this case, dialectical "release" of existence becomes a problem not only for the individual but also for one's group, where the existential individual constitutes the centre of tension and conflict. In such cases, humanization of the sociopsychological relations in the society constitutes the most effective method of overcoming the existential tension. Showing love, care, and respect in different levels of society restores the spiritual bonds between the individuals, generating in each of them the sense of relevance for their close people and group. As an example, one can again refer to Holden, the main character of the above-mentioned novel by J. D. Salinger. A genuine display of Phoebe's sincere attachment and sisterly love towards Holden has a very strong psychological effect on him. "I felt so damn happy all of sudden, the way old Phoebe kept going around and around. I was damn near bawling, I felt so damn happy, if you want to know the truth" (Salinger: 196). Due to the psychological effect of his sister's behavior, Holden is freed of all his nihilism, feeling useless, and hate towards others. His existential tension is "released". This and other examples demonstrate that humanity in relations in any society and providing psychoanalytical aid to the individual [Borisi et al. 2017; Pulatova 2017] help them mitigate their existential tension, overcome loneliness, and find a way out of their existence.

RESULTS

Despite a considerable number of deep and many-sided current philosophical studies in existentialism on almost every continent, there are still many unsolved problems concerning the nature and gradual dynamics of existence. The issues of identifying the negative and positive essence of existence and revealing its sociopsychological nature in more detail have not yet been sufficiently addressed in the philosophy of existentialism. In the present study, having considered the biosocial nature of the human individual, Jung's psychoanalytical studies, Jaspers' concept of the determining role of communication in forming the individual's existential world, and other present-day studies, the author comes to the conclusion on socio-psychological nature of the individual's existence and objectivity of its emergence. Another successful result of the present study, in the author's opinion, consists in identifying the main determinants of the existential world of a person. Yet the author would like to point out that the total volume of existence-forming factors is not limited to those discussed herein. This study should be considered as the beginning of philosophical research in this area. Yet another important and relevant result of this study consists in formulating the question about possible ways and dialectics of overcoming the individual's existential tension.

CONCLUSION

Under the influence of digitalization of human life, socio-political, military, technogenic, and other cataclysms, such as COVID-19, both the positive and the negative types of human existence are intensified. In the current existential philosophy, sufficient research on identification and analysis of the forms and ways of "dialectic relief" of one's existence has not yet been done, even though this research could be highly relevant to science, philosophy, psychotherapy, and pedagogics. It is widely known that, as revealed by the classic authors of existentialism, existence is an inseparable part of the human being, a way of discovering one's individuality through psychic pain and trials, through struggle with one's own inner controversies and problems with the external environment. In the present-day civilized and democratic society, every individual has his or her own unique value based on the principle "Every person is indispensable". For this reason, research on identification and analysis of factors and ways of "releasing" one's existential tension has a great humanistic and

civilizational significance. In this context, the results of the present study are undoubtedly important for understanding the significance of concrete, down-to-earth humanity as the basis for developing psychological and pedagogical methods of overcoming the existential tensions of individuals.

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