

Existential philosophy: Ontological and Religious aspects

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Abstract. The article seeks to present an analysis of existential philosophy as a broad ontology, aim of which is contained in interpreting the present inconsistencies in scientific thought, namely, assigning the existential philosophy to irrational movements of the 20th century and distinguishing its religious and atheistic fractions.

Keywords: existentialism, metaphysics, consciousness, nothing (*not-being*), metaphysical revolt.

Introduction

In our days there are a number of inconsistencies in the popular notion of existential philosophy. These inconsistencies assign the existential philosophy to “the irrational movements of 20th century” and distinguishes in it atheistic and religious fractions. Existentialist philosophers already resolved a number of doubts, which stem from the logic of existential thought, namely that:

- The philosophy of existentialism, as “a philosophy of nothingness (absurd)”, is not complete and finished nihilism;
- The philosophy of existentialism, as “a philosophy of terror”, does not undermine the will to action [18];
- The philosophy of existentialism does not conclude the permissibility of murder and suicide [7].

However, above mentioned contradictions are continuing to exist: some assign the philosophy of existentialism to irrational trends, and distinguish in the philosophy of existentialism itself religious and atheistic aspects. The aim of present article is to prove the impossibility of such classification.

The analysis of the literature on the research

Firstly, we used the works of the 20th century existentialists (Albert Camus, Jean Paul Sartre, Martin Heidegger, Gabriel Marcel, Karl Jaspers, Lev Shestov), and their predecessors (Miguel de Unamuno, Blaise Pascal, Søren Kierkegaard) as primary sources of literature, secondly, the works of contemporary researchers (O. F. Bolnov, S. Bulgakov, N. V. Motroshilova), and thirdly, the contemporary textbooks, supplementary materials, and vocabularies.

Our first argument is directed at both false, in our assumption, classifications and associated with understanding the philosophy of existentialism as a broad ontology. Although the existential philosophy was called existentialism in 20th century, its representatives, principally, did not create completely new philosophy, and did not decline the old philosophy.

The methods and methodology of the research

The character of the present problem requires the implementation of systematic, historical and comparative approaches. Additionally, the article uses a wide spectrum of scientific and logical methods (analysis, synthesis, formalization, conceptualization, classification, abstraction, generalization, induction, deduction, analogy). Methodological principles are based on the formal logic, which offers opportunity of proof through understanding, argumentation, conclusion, and on the laws of identity, non-contradiction, excluded middle and good cause.

Analysis and results

Existentialists of the 20th century focused on the problems of ontology, individual aspects of which have earlier been actualized only as parts of some other separate philosophical systems. So called existentialism can altogether be viewed as a unity of the parts of different philosophies, and at the same time that, which directly stems from the philosophy itself, from metaphysics, and something broader – something which extends beyond the borders of metaphysics. N. V. Motroshilova writes about the same thing, and she approaches to existentialism in a broad sense: “The existential philosophy, in the broadest sense of the word, can be attributed to the philosophical doctrines and movements, in which the main emphasis is put on the problem of man, his existence, development of his personality, and relationship of the individual with the nature, society and other individuals, on the culture, God and religion” [6, 3]. Perhaps, this is the reason that we can name so many predecessors for this philosophy, and this is the reason for the belief that Aristotelian definition of the “beginning” of philosophy (philosophy begins with curiosity) is the definition of the “beginning” of existential experience, and the heart and causes of existential philosophy.

O. F. Bolnov draws a parallel between existentialism and Christianity, Islam and Buddhism [1]. We can continue this chain with different doctrines, as well as names, and the roots of these innumerable parallels will be the confluence of the nature metaphysics itself with the nature of existential philosophy. Metaphysics, we assume (as well as existential philosophy, accordingly) is only an ontology. Other divisions, which are supported by overwhelming number of thinkers in philosophy, are either particular cases, or the results of the ontology of metaphysics. Thus, for instance, the ethics of existentialism is borne exclusively out of ontological questions, and this is reflected in the answer to the question, put by Albert Camus in the following form: “Is life worth living or is it not, and if not, then do I need to finish it?”. As assumed by existentialists, absurd is occurred not only in life situations, which make man feel the antagonism with world and life, but also in futility of the efforts to know it. This might factored in the inclusion of existentialism into irrational movements by a number of scholars. In very rare situations this irrationality is put to questioning. For instance, S. Bulgakov describes the philosophy of absurd as thus: “The Philosophy of Absurd seeks ways to overcome “speculative” thought, to abolish reason, and by passing to its higher dimension, to reveal somewhat “abstruse”, “existential” philosophy. But in reality, this represents the purest rationalism, only with the minus coefficient” [2]. Overcoming the speculative reasoning is also the sincerity of the existential consciousness. But, no one attempted to abolish reasoning per se, and “abstruseness” may be attributed to, say, Heidegger, but not, for instance to Camus. “I am able to understand only in human terms <...> Intellect is also in its

own way telling me of the absurdity of the world. Its opponent, which is blind reason, can pretend to full clarity all the same – I am waiting for proofs and I would be glad to receive them. But, despite the everlasting pretensions, despite such incalculable number of eloquent men, who are willing to get me believe in anything, I know that all the proof are false. I will not admit that I am happy, if I do not know of happiness. This universal reason, practical or moral, this determinism, these all-encompassing and all-explaining categories –there is something to laugh about for an honest person. All of these do not have anything in common with the intelligence; they deny its deepest essence, which is contained in the fact that it was subjected to bondage by the world” [9, 34]. The idea that existential philosophy presents in itself the purest rationalism, only with minus coefficient – is the leitmotif of the works of Camus. *Ratio* – is an extreme sincerity, which lies beyond even the dichotomy of pessimism-optimism.

The Philosophy of Absurd acquired the description “irrational” because of its main method, called “phenomenological reduction”, imported from the Philosophy of Life, which denies the rationalism as an epistemological method. “Phenomenological reduction” – is the intentionality and “abstinence from any forms of reasoning, related to the objective reality and that go beyond the boundaries of “pure” practice” [17, 386]. Rationalism is rejected as a method of cognition, but not perception. The cause of this is the setting of principal independence of the everything. “The reason and the body, albeit degraded, are the only things of which I can be certain” [8, 31], writes Camus, and this is the second argument against the assignment of the existential philosophy to the irrational movements. Let us look further upon the relationship of the existential philosophy with the reason and cognition in general.

Sartre declares, that the human being and existence must first be described, with the consciousness in mind, for consciousness is the measure of human existence. Consciousness, according to Sartre, cannot be deduced from anything, but it is different from all other global phenomena and processes. It goes through the existence, and the individual experience of existence. Consciousness is “nothing (not-being)” in the sense, that we do not have anything, that we could point to and declare that it is the consciousness. Consciousness exists only as a consciousness of the thing; to which it is directed. These conclusions are the results of the development of the phenomenological notion “consciousness intentionality”. But, for the time being, occur the possible intentional duality: not only consciousness – “nothing” without orientation to something, but also the existence is numb and “nothing”, if consciousness exists, which points to it. However, the second existential thinker cannot fully accept it, because, it is hindered by the absurd reasoning itself and the method of phenomenological reduction, derived from the absurd and sounding as “an abstinence from any judgements, relating to objective reality, and which extend beyond the boundaries of “pure practice” [14, 386]. Without having the opportunity to maintain anything in the existence out of us, we can, - and this is the only thing that we can, - only talk about our Selfness, and about our consciousness as something belonging to the general existence, the parts of the substance of the existence. How to correlate the existence with “nothing” and how our consciousness and Self correlate with “nothing”? What is to be said of “nothing”? We can notice a paradox in the question. Heidegger ponders upon it in his work “What is metaphysics?” and answers the

paradoxical question. Actually, he asks in a such fashion that his answer, in essence, draws up its force from this persistence of questioning.

So, to the matter of “nothing”. It occurs in groundless terror and steps forth at the same level as the matter. The occurrence of the “nothing” is the condition of “becoming nothing”, from which starts the existential experience, which put us in the midst of the existential truth. “In terror occurs shaking off something, but this shaking off – is not escape, but something of a benumbed rest. The shaking off comes out of “nothing”. Nothing does not draw to itself, but, according to its nature, repulses off itself. Repulsing of itself as such, at the same time – because of the fact that, it makes the matter slip off – is the repulsion to the sinking matter in general. This repulsion to the slipping matter in general, which presses us in our terrors everywhere, is the matter of nothing: Nothingness. It is not the destruction of the matter, not the consequences of some negation. Nothingness cannot in any way allow itself to write itself off on account of destruction and negation. Nothing itself makes nothing <...> nothing steps forth “at the same time” the slipping of the matter in general” [18, 22].

Thus we cannot stipulate that “nothing” is more primary than the matter, but can suppose that the existence of the matter can be seen by us without “nothing”. We cannot say that “nothing” is the correlate of the existence by contrast, in that case we would have unwillingly given the characteristics of “nothing”, which is, in principle, impossible, but we can say, that “nothing” – is the correlate of the existence in the sense of the condition of the existence of the “nothing” itself – intentionality of existence, and “existence” – intentionality of “nothing”.

That new thing that existentialism puts into the old concept of “existence” is, among other things, the possibility of its applicability only to man, since only human consciousness sees, “called by the voice of being” [18, 38], the miracle of all miracles: that matter exists. According to E. Y. Solovyov, “an increased interest in man as an individual phenomenon is a characteristic feature of the socio-philosophical thought of the 20th century” [15] in general. In existential philosophy, consciousness as the starting point of what is called “consciousness” belongs essentially to “nothing” (according to Sartre). Consciousness, just like “nothing”, cannot be equated with empty non-existence. and in intention, in consciousness, and in “nothing” it is necessary to feel the waiting space, which gives the possibility of being. Such an initial connection between consciousness, nothingness and Being determines all further existential reasoning, and in general is the cause of nullification. and, finally, the human Self itself, the only thing that remains during existential experience, undetected in everyday life, obscured by the soul, also to some extent belongs to nature “nothing”, and its intentionality is a person with his place and time, with by his place and purpose, with soul and body, in other words, this is any person.

So, for a person of absurdity, “reason is sterile, and there is nothing higher than reason.” We will call the philosophy of absurdity anti-scientist, and we will not tell a lie, but we will not define it as “irrational”, because it is not so. In addition to classifying existentialism as an irrational movement, the atheistic and religious movement is often distinguished in existentialism itself. It is enough to open the “history of philosophy” (be it a university textbook, a textbook on philosophy [3, 534-535; 5, 642; 11, 201]), or an article in the dictionary [12, 1212; 17, 421], everywhere we meet approximately one and the same: “they

distinguish between religious existentialism (K. Jaspers, G. Marcel, M. Buber) and atheistic (M. Heidegger, J. P. Sartre, A. Camus, M. Merleau-Ponty, S. de Beauvoir)".

The reasons for the persistent separation of the atheistic and religious camps in existentialism are precisely in the connection between existential philosophy and metaphysics itself. Since metaphysics has theology in it, the existential vision of existence in its highest manifestation is a condition for religious existentialism.

The position of "atheistic" existentialism can be called consistently atheistic, moreover, it can be said that this existentialism is in opposition to inconsistent atheism, which depends on religion because of its belief in the rationality of being itself. the denial of one God turns into the affirmation of another. For example, the discretion of the structure and meaning of the world, harmony sometimes leads to pantheism. another example: the beginning of the philosophy of Buddhism goes in parallel with existential philosophy, but as soon as thoughts about the "death" in the first appear, their paths diverge. It is necessary to free ourselves, according to Sartre, from any ideas about the orderliness of the world (including the afterlife), about the presence of regularities in it [14]. This is the only way to "achieve the ungodliness of the world." To be real is to be "random." From God, Sartre is left with only "a look directed at me." It is important that Sartre saw and called this spirit of primordial power, strangeness and incomprehensibility intuition that accompanies a person of absurdity. Marcel, Unamuno, Jaspers, Pascal, Kierkegaard could not refuse to call this intuition the Christian God.

"Religious" existentialists talk about the feeling of God in us. This is a dubious, insoluble feeling, misleading and giving hope for something other than the conclusions of the absurd. but hope is not with a "+" coloring, but as incomprehensible, terrible and wonderful as the very state of existence. The first to grasp this feature was Kierkegaard. This is the image of God in his "Fear and Awe" [10] - menacing and crazy. After him there were thoughts that were less and less substantiated and more and more similar to subterfuges. Unamuno reached the apogee in this, quoting Kierkegaard as if in support of his innocence, but in fact giving only the measure of his delusions.

The terrible image of God among existentialists who recognize God can be fully deduced from the concept of "existence" common to existentialism. Although the concept itself is irrelevant to existentialism and is deeply rooted in the history of philosophical thought, it was taken and developed by existential philosophy in a slightly different, narrower, but at the same time deeper and more primordial sense. The concept of "existentia" goes back to the ancient difference between the concepts of "essentia" (essence) and actually "existentia" (existence) [1]. IbnSina, distinguishing essence and existence, divided forever on the basis of their relationship finite things from God. In finite things, essence does not coincide with existence, so it is impossible to deduce its existence from the concept of a finite thing. In God, as in an infinite being, essence and existence coincide, so that one can deduce his existence from the concept of God. This distinction, assimilated by the scholastics, was ultimately decisive in the philosophy of existentialism. That which, for example, Thomas Aquinas calmly stated, became an agony in the thought of the Rebel. God, thus being a pure form (according to Aquinas), self-causal (according to Spinoza), that is, the essence of which contains existence in itself, appears in a rather enviable position in comparison with man. The fact that existentialists, and in particular Kierkegaard as one of the founders of existentialism,

made a distinction between existence and essence, according to A. F. Zotov, is already a reorientation of philosophy: "this very distinction is understandable, not fixed by any natural scientific, and, in general, concrete scientific research - opens the way for the reorientation of philosophy" [4, 35]. The opposition of *essentia* and *existentia*, which do not coincide for man and coincide for God, used to prove God, in existential philosophy ultimately became the cause and attribute of existential abandonment, a fundamental fragment of absurdity. This is due to a change in the narrator: an absurd consciousness is an experience of the individual.

Thus, the terrifying hope of "religious" philosophers is more terrible than a logical conclusion. This hope is also present in *Pensées* of Pascal [13], an ardent apologist for God. It is remarkable that speeches like "believe in God" do not sound convincing at all, and he, in the end, refuses to prove the existence of God, instead of which he pragmatically makes a "bet" on his existence. but here is how it is said in *Thoughts about terrible hope and doubt*: "when I look at the dumb universe and at a man abandoned in the darkness at himself and as if lost in this corner of the universe, not knowing who put him here, why he I came here, what will become of him after death, and unable to find out all this - I am frightened, like the one who was brought to sleep on a desolate, terrible island and who wakes up there in confusion and without the means to get out of there. and therefore it amazes me how people do not fall into despair from such an unfortunate lot" [13, 113]. Pascal does not believe in what was the main reason for the emergence of various beliefs - in the afterlife. he stands for Christianity, but in his Christianity there is no belief in eternity. The Christian God Kierkegaard also has a gloomy face, and absurdity is the criterion of the religious.

Existentialism is more or less consistent in describing the state of *annihilation*, surprise and shock, but from the moment the question is posed: *what to do?* In the history of the path of this movement, divergences begin. As an example, here we can cite the philosophy of Shestov: after honest speeches about the absurd, he begins to give justifications of the biblical God, and writes that God returned Job to his children, the very ones who died [19]. Unamuno's nostalgic mind violently blocks the path of reason and tries to find some way to the truth. So he often leaves an absurd thought, and in his reasoning, either the metaphysical contribution to the casket of God's proofs continues, then the former social views appear like fat on the surface of the water, and yet with the last chords of any thought he throws doubts into his own former hopes and, by essentially contradicts itself. he suddenly explains the desire for companionship in illusion by the "weakness" of the "feeling" consciousness: "Due to the fact that we are endowed with consciousness, we feel our existence, - and this is something completely different from knowing about our existence, and we want to feel the existence of everything else, so that each of things would also be a kind of me <...> A person cannot reconcile himself either with being the only consciousness in the Universe, or with being an objective phenomenon among other objective phenomena. He wants to save his vital, or affective, subjectivity, making the whole Universe alive, personal, animate. Therefore, for this, God and substance were discovered, which always - in one way or another disguised - return to human reasoning" [16]. This is how we see how things are roughly with the evidence of the existence of God.

If we proceed from the essence of the problem "Da-sein" ("here is being", Heidegger's term), from its origins, from the cause and power of "surprise", then only a direct path of reasoning is possible, from some honest conclusions other honest ones should follow findings. So

Pascal questioned kindness, thus anticipating the multivolume funeral of God Nietzsche (by the way, in terms of the power of metaphorical comparisons, he is in no way inferior to the famous German). In the philosophy of life, the point was put by him (Nietzsche) in the conclusion: "nothing is true, everything is permissible." "Nothing is true" ... - this is where the absurd comes, but makes it the starting point for the further development of thought. "Everything is permitted" - the stage to which Pascal approached, abandoning ethics and morality for the Self, this stage was passed by Unamuno, which led him to certain confusion and doubts, Albert Camus devotes the "Rebellious Man" to the analysis of this issue [7]. We see no sense in considering the path of rebellious thought from the thesis "everything is allowed" and from the Marquis de Sade to the "silent philosopher" and "existential rebellion" of the Man of the Absurd, since this work has already been done by Camus. We will only outline the main milestones of his reasoning:

- the time when "yes" and "no" are balanced; - the time of freedom of morals;
- time of loneliness;
- the time of voluntary self-restraint, "strange asceticism of rebellion" [7, 125].

So from hedonism and skepticism as a model of communication with the world (not yet "genuine"), stoicism follows as a model of keeping oneself in the world. the other way, the way of protecting God, does not eliminate his deafness, God remains equal to the Absurd. And this is the second argument against the isolation of atheistic and religious trends in existential philosophy.

Conclusions and recommendations

Thus we formulate our conclusions, which we come to have:

1. The existential philosophy is a broad ontology, which stands above the metaphysics itself and puts questions about the existence, therefore it is incorrect to classify it in the framework of metaphysics according to narrower parameters, than that of the metaphysics.
2. The existential philosophy cannot be associated with the irrational philosophy; it is because of the belief of the existential thought in the reason alone.
3. Existential philosophy cannot take an atheistic or religious position because of this attitude towards cognition within the boundaries of pure experience, and it (experience) does not give any definite answer, although the mind asks for an answer.

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