

## ФИЛОЗОФИЈА У ХАМЛЕТУ PHILOSOPHY IN HAMLET



Јасминка Д. Марић, магистар

jasmin@eunet.rs

Jasminka D. Marić, Master of Arts

jasmin@eunet.rs

The book “Philosophy in *Hamlet*” is a comprehensive analysis of the ontological aspects of Shakespeare’s masterpiece *The Tragedy of Hamlet – Prince of Denmark*, as one of the most enigmatic philosophical plays in the history of literature, which contains the key to understanding the nature of psychological factors and processes, the nature of consciousness, the nature of reality, subjective time, and art. The primacy in the interpretation of the tragedy of *Hamlet* belongs to philosophy, due to indicated, immanent, fundamental philosophical problems in it.

The study has been undertaken with the aim to analyze and explain the problems set in the tragedy of *Hamlet*, in the light of new interpretations, to set guidelines for further philosophical and ontological research, and also to discover which philosophy is expressed in that literary masterpiece, since it is the most common question that has been asked by many hermeneutists.

The most significant previous literary-theoretical, philosophical and psychological interpretations of *Hamlet* have served as a starting point for the analysis of ontological aspects, and also the theories of tragedy and aesthetic

theories of numerous philosophers (Friedrich Nietzsche, Arthur Schopenhauer, Martin Heidegger, Peter Ouspensky, Pavel Florensky, Immanuel Kant, Karl Jaspers, Plato), which form the conceptual–hypothetical framework. Since the ontological and psychological analysis are not mutually exclusive, the achievements of Jung’s analytical psychology, with the concepts of the collective unconscious and archetypes, have been used an accompanying analysis of the tragedy.

Based on the study of *Hamlet* written by Lev S. Vygotsky, the book “Philosophy in *Hamlet*” points out the philosophical problems that are set in enigmatic Shakespeare’s tragedy: the problems of being, the nature of reality, or another reality and another world, the problem of transcendent, and the problem of time associated with the four-dimensional perception of reality, feelings of absurdity and meaning, then the problem of supernatural, *idem est.* – metaphysical, and philosophy that is expressed in *Hamlet*. Vygotsky’s study of *Hamlet* is not only a psychological analysis of the tragedy but also a philosophical analysis in which many philosophical–ontological aspects are highlighted. These fundamental philosophical problems

appear to be a mysterious background of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

The book is divided into two parts. In the first part are given the forward and introductory note, with reference to the genesis of the author's interest in Shakespeare's tragedy, then introduction, the review of Vygotsky's book *The Psychology of Art*, the author's personal experience of the tragedy of *Hamlet*, and analysis of that experience.

The introduction provides an overview of criticism that emphasizes the mystery of tragedy, which contains the cognitive value for philosophers, indicating the relationship between literature and philosophy. Since the tragedy is analyzed, attention is drawn to the etymological origin of the word *tragedy*, as well as to the place of Shakespeare's tragedy in the world theater heritage. The nature of artistic creativity and knowledge is also discussed, which is of a different nature from scientific knowledge, and also the need for their synthesis is emphasized that will lead to a change in world view, by unifying the paradigms of scientists and artists.

In the second chapter of the first part of the book, a special attention is paid to the analysis of Vygotsky's study of *Hamlet* and its reception, published in his book *The Psychology of Art*, because it is so far perhaps the most extensive and most important study ever written about *Hamlet*. Vygotsky's study about *Hamlet* is the first attempt to interpret the tragedy as a myth, i.e. a mystical reality and a religious truth that is manifested in the work of art, in which Vygotsky presented idealistic aesthetics.

A personal account of the tragedy of *Hamlet* is also presented in the third chapter.

In the fourth chapter the ideas conveyed from that experience have been analyzed (of strange occurrences and feelings, four-dimensional perception of reality, two realities and two worlds, transcendent, etc.), in the light of the ideas already expressed in the study of Vygotsky and other critics cited by Vygotsky. The mutual ideas have also been analyzed in the light of philosophical theory, the theory of tragedy, analytical psychology, in order to point out to independent arrival at identical

insights and conclusions, which demonstrate that the study of Vygotsky is not an arbitrary, subjectivist interpretation of the tragedy, but that those are impartial interpretations of two independent readers of Shakespeare's tragedy, which later form the basis and framework for the analysis of ontological aspects of the tragedy of *Hamlet* in the second part of the book.

The second part of the book contains 11 chapters. At the beginning, the need for ontological analysis is emphasized, as the deepest analysis that can help to reflect on various ontological and metaphysical aspects of the tragedy, i.e. the question of being, the nature of reality, time, four-dimensional, as well as two worlds, transcendent, and supernatural that are positioned in the tragedy.

Chapter one (1) is dedicated to the problem of being in *Hamlet*. Therefore, it refers to Heidegger's understanding of the origin of art and the function of artwork. The reason why Heidegger insists on discovering the essence of art lies in the fact that art expresses and bestows another kind of knowledge that science can never reach with its way of exploring the world of objects. The truth and the secret are contained in the tragedy of *Hamlet*, which are not artificial and fictional, but stem from the very nature of things, and which therefore invoke its disclosure and interpretation. Artistic and philosophical knowledge are different from scientific knowledge and as such contribute to our overall knowledge, and show that purely scientific and rationalist knowledge cannot be our comprehensive knowledge.

Chapter two (2) of the second part of the book, titled "The Nature of Reality in *Hamlet*", discusses in detail the metaphysical nature of reality in the tragedy. The hypothesis of two realities is substantiated referring to the previous authors who have noticed an identical metaphysical problem in *Hamlet*, such as Vygotsky, Nietzsche, Ouspensky, Brandes, James Kirsch, Clive S. Lewis, and others.

The subchapter (2a) of the second chapter is dedicated to the mystical experience, in order to help us understand why Vygotsky interpreted *Hamlet* as a mystical tragedy and a

religious truth manifested in it. Mystical and spiritual experiences are the basis and source of religious experience. Mystical knowledge is a unique kind of knowledge that takes place by means of expanded consciousness, and that knowledge is difficult to communicate to another who has not had a similar authentic mystical experience. The subchapter (2a) refers to numerous authors who wrote about a mystical experience like William James, Anica Savić–Rebac, etc.

Chapter three (3) of the second part of the book is dedicated to the problem of time in *Hamlet*. Hamlet's statement "time is out of the joint" indicates altered psychological experience of time in Hamlet's consciousness and the metaphysical nature of time. That verse also asserts the problem of time as the fourth dimension or coordinate and indicates the problem of time a psychological and ontological category. The hypothesis of a metaphysical nature of time in Hamlet's utterance is corroborated by the interpretations of Goethe, Vygotsky, Deleuze, and attention is drawn to Plato's definition of time in the *Timaeus*, as well as to the so-called Kant's Copernican turn.

In the subchapter (3a) of the third chapter, the parallels between Jung's phenomenon of synchronicity and the tragedy of *Hamlet* have been made, which can be seen in the emergence of two problems – the category of time and the category of meaning. It has been suggested that a "self-creating transcendental meaning" is felt in the tragedy of *Hamlet*.

Chapter four (4) of the second part of the book deals with the problem of the transcendent in *Hamlet* and it is suggested, citing Nietzsche, Kuno Fischer, Vygotsky, Aikhenvald, Florensky, that religious cause of the tragedy is transcendent, which corresponds with the opinion of the theorists of tragedy – that tragedy signifies the presence of a transcendence, and that Hamlet struggles with an unidentified, transcendent force.

In the subchapter (4a) of the fourth chapter, Jaspers' understanding of the tragic knowledge and conception of the transcendent have been given, which with its language of codes

indicates a function of metaphysical expression of the hidden source from which arises all that exists. *Hamlet* is a work of art in which the content of transcendent is encoded.

Chapter five (5) of the second part of the book is devoted to the four-dimensional perception of reality in *Hamlet*, which is connected with the problem of time. It has been suggested that four-dimensional perception of reality prevails in the tragedy and that hypothesis is supported by the opinion of Vygotsky, and the ideas of Florensky, Hinton, Ouspensky, and Plato.

Chapter Six (6) of the second part of the book is devoted to the problem of co-existence of two worlds in the tragedy of *Hamlet*. The hypothesis is that Hamlet got in touch with an unknown world that remained unknowable. The idea of the existence of two worlds in the tragedy is supported by the interpretations of Vygotsky, Dostoevsky, Kuno Fischer, Govoruhha-Otrok, Clive S. Lewis, and Roy Walker.

The explanation for the nature of the other, unknown and unknowable world is found in the ideas of Plato, Florensky, and Ouspensky. The other, noumenal world is for us the world of "metaphysical facts". Pathways to that other, noumenal, intelligible world lead only through art, poetry, mysticism, and idealistic philosophy.

Chapter seven (7) of the second part of the book, is devoted to the feeling of absurdity in the tragedy, and it points to the fact that Hamlet is the tragic hero of the absurd, and that the feeling of absurdity is one of the causes of Hamlet's apathy. The tragic feeling of the absurd is the state of extraordinary lucidity, characteristic of philosophers. That assertion is supported by the psychological insights of Vygotsky, Nietzsche, Jan Kott, and J. Striković. Hamlet moves from the position of the hero of absurd to the philosopher who intuitively metaphysical root in the arrangement of the world.

Therefore, chapter eight (8) of the second part of the book is dedicated to a feeling of meaning in *Hamlet*. It is suggested that the tragedy has a hidden meaning thereby referring to the assertion of Vygotsky on the existence of two meanings. The intention is to

point out that it is a feeling of “self-creating transcendental meaning” as a relationship between us and an unknown agency, that springs from affection, and in that sense a parallel with Jung’s synchronistic meaning has been made.

Chapter nine (9) is devoted to the problem of the supernatural in the tragedy of *Hamlet*. Starting from Hamlet’s statement and Vygotsky’s assertion that the entire play is supernatural, the possibility of supernatural phenomena has been attempted to be explained seeking a foothold in philosophy, i.e. relying on philosophical theories of Plato, Soloviev, Florensky, Ouspensky, where the ideas about multidimensionality have been suggested.

In the concluding chapter ten (10) the achieved results have been summarized by recapitulating philosophemes used in *Hamlet*. The book *The Meaning of Idealism* by Pavel Florensky has helped in gaining insight that Plato’s idealistic philosophy is expressed in *Hamlet*, which is a novelty and discovery for “Hamletology”

and “Shakespeareology”, but not for philosophy, because even Schopenhauer pointed out that Plato’s ideas are the subject of art.

The ontological aspects that are expressed in the tragedy, such as the question of being, the problem of the nature of reality, or another reality and another world, then the problem of supernatural, idem est. – metaphysical, transcendental, and the problem of time which is associated with the four-dimensional perception of reality, connect the tragedy of *Hamlet* and Platonism.

Based on the conducted research and analysis of the ontological aspects of the tragedy, it has been concluded that Plato’s idealistic philosophy is reflected in the tragedy of *Hamlet* and that it is, therefore, a metaphysical tragedy, thereby confirming the initial hypotheses. Argumentation and stronghold for this conclusion have been found in the works of James Joyce, Ouspensky, Florensky, and finally, in excerpts from the original Platonic philosophy.

Монографија „Филозофија у Хамлету“ је свеобухватна анализа онтолошких аспеката у Шекспировој назагонетнијој филозофској трагедији, у којој је садржан кључ за разумевање природе свести, психолошких процеса, природе реалности, субјективног времена и уметности. Као полазна основа за анализу онтолошких аспеката послужила је студија Лава Виготског о *Хамлету*. Примат у тумачењу трагедије *Хамлет* припада филозофији због иманентно назначених темељних филозофских проблема у овом литерарном делу и зато што је ова трагедија пре свега метафизичка трагедија, у којој је изражена идеалистичка филозофија. Књига *Смисао идеализма*

Павла Флоренског помогла је да се дође до увида у то да је у трагедији *Хамлет* исказана Платонова идеалистичка филозофија, што представља новост и откриће за „хамлетологију“ и шекспирологију, али не и за филозофију, јер је још Шопенхауер указао на то да су Платонове идеје предмет уметности. Оно што повезује трагедију *Хамлет* и платонизам јесу онтолошки аспекти који су исказани у трагедији: питање бића, проблем природе реалности, односно друге стварности и другог света, затим проблем натприродног, тј. метафизичког, трансцендентног, као и проблем времена који је повезан са четвородимензионалним сагледавањем реалности.