

Topic No.12. Philosophy of Existentialism.

Philosophy of Existentialism (Lat. – existencia – existence) was the one of the most influential trend of the contemporary philosophy. Its main topic is the problem of a human being in the contemporary technologically dehumanized society. It came into being between the two world wars. It was the time when the dozens of states concentrated all the might for the destruction of cities and killing a huge number of people. The actual loss in man power is still approximate. This tragedy had a great negative effect. It concerned in a big way the intellectual part of the mankind. It turned the philosophic search in the direction of a human existence.

It caused the revival of the ideas of S.Kierkegaard, F.Nietzsche and F.Dostoevsky and some other thinkers of the XIX-th century. The heroes of this philosophic trend were K.Jaspers, G.Marcel, M.Heidegger, J-P.Sartre and A.Camus.


The crisis of the European civilization in the XX century undermined the belief in reason and the moral values. The key idea of the existentialists is that the technological and scientific progress brings in the loss of stability to a human being. The more the social life gets complicated the more is the alienation of a person from the actual life. It causes a careful insight into the inner world of a human life. The only possible way of the confrontation to the challenges caused by life is the spiritual resistance. If that is the reality then the vital issue for a human is the philosophy of the inner world or existence of an individual and not the philosophy of Nature. A human is not the vehicle and the means of generating capital or cognition. He is a sensible and reasonable subject of a free, self sufficient and responsible being.

To make it clear we should trace the basic notions of this philosophy which are **Existence** and **Essence**. Any animal comes into being with its essence while a human is helpless and gets to his essence in the course of development. Here we mean the process of upbringing and socialization. It takes a while until he gets the sense of life and can be self standing.

In the philosophy of existentialism much of attention is paid to the category of “**boundary situation**”. This state of his feelings comes to his mind when his life is at stake. The mind is stuffed with fear, horror, despair and loss. In the situation when one is close or on the verge of death there comes some considerable reconsideration and reshuffling of his entire life. Under such an incredible stress a person gains some exclusive vision of his being.


The notion of **freedom** is the central one in existentialism. Freedom is the natural and generic sense of one's being. It is not the realized necessity as it is treated in Marxism. A human is a self producing self (causa sui). There is nothing beyond a human that can dominate him. J-P.Sartre makes a point that freedom is a great moral burden in front of himself and other people. That is the reason why people try to stay away from freedom as something related to the responsibility.

The fundamental piece of the philosophy of existentialism is the **transcendence** as the penetration beyond its real boundaries to the extremes and infinity. What is idea of this strive? The religious section of existentialism (K.Jaspers, G.Marcel) identifies a human with the God. A human should be fused with the God in search of the actual freedom. The atheistic section of existentialism identifies it with **nothing** as the mystery of the human existence. So, **nothing** is the room of the human's existence with the limits and termination.



The other feature of existentialism is the confrontation of a human and the society with no way for its resolution. It is believed that the contradictions can never be resolved. A person is the real player that decides and takes the pick between the existence and sense, possession and being, cognition and understanding and etc. This choice does lead to the tragedy and destruction.

M.Heidegger in his work “Being and Time” describes the time-limit of a human being as “here and now”. A human is the only creature that realizes the termination and mortality of his being. It requires the analysis of his inner sufferings. In the modern society a human gets to the point of being “average” and easily replaceable. It creates the situation that any person is nobody being far from the capacity of being subjects of the reality.



A. Camus calls this state of things as the “world of absurd” with the inevitable death and lack of sense. He calls along for the struggle against this absurdity of being.


The great thinker of Existentialism was V. Frankl who saw the loss of the sense of life that caused the tragedies and created problems. He called it as the “**existential vacuum**”. Some people who face some great problems join the religious society, some other drink alcohol and use drugs, others turn out to be criminals or commit suicide. He suggests that people should stay as optimists and keep the sense of life. That is the only reasonable way to survive.

The reason of such a pessimistic philosophy is the rapid change of the terms and conditions of being when the new changes emerge with the package of some new values. The only possible way to survive is to adapt and tune up your skills and talents for the incoming modernizing facts of life.

Clerical (religious) Philosophy

In spite of some fundamental discoveries and inventions of the XX and XXI centuries the role of the religion is still great. Not a single religious factor has been evaporated from the life of a human. More than that the role is growing with the perspective of the self destruction of the whole mankind. If earlier the death was the matter of a single individual now it can happen to the whole world in one go.


- The current Christian religion talks of the three negative factors of the contemporary life:
- The contemplation reinforced in the modern science that the world being is objective with the founding principles.
- The state with the liberal motto and separated from the God.
- Communist society that has nationalized the national wealth on the one hand and Capitalism with people turned down to the position of a commodity.



The Christian philosophy sees the problem of being as the fundamental one. They see the difference between the being and existence. Being is the God and all the rest are the derivatives. The only being is God.

The second problem is the belief and knowledge. They believe that any discovery should comply with God and the Bible. There can be different comments on this statement, but what is clear and essential that all the human achievements should be under the moral control.

As for the Eastern countries they are in the process of change. Some of them are struggling against modernization while the others are encouraging the modernization. Some of these arguments concern the role of religion. But still the key arguments for the Love of God are there. Only the endless love to God can make this world humane.



The greatest thinker of the XX-century was Svami Vivikanda who makes a point that the voice of Asia was religion. There are three stages on the way of a human to God. At first the God appears as some great force in front of a human; the second is in everything around and the third when a human finds in himself. None of the religions could get to the bottom of the absolute and therefore none of them can have an advantage of being superior.

In the second half of the XX century Leopold Sengor has worked out the concept of Negritude with the sensible description and the contribution of the African culture for the development North and South America.

Glossary:

ENGLISH	RUSSIAN	KAZAKH
Existence	Существование	Өмір
Essence	Сущность	Маңыз
Boundary	Граница	Шек
Situation	Ситуация	Жағдай
Vacuum	Вакуум	Вакуум
Tragedy	Трагедия	Қасірет
Destruction	Разрушение	Қирату