

Summary

“Philosophy in *Hamlet*” is a revised and updated version of the magister’s thesis, “Analysis of the ontological aspects of Shakespeare’s tragedy *Hamlet*”, which was successfully defended, at the Faculty of Dramatic Arts of Belgrade University, on January 25, 2012, as the first thesis on *Hamlet* presented to this faculty.

The book is a comprehensive analysis of the ontological aspects of Shakespeare’s artistic masterpiece *The Tragedy of Hamlet – Prince of Denmark*, as one of the most enigmatic philosophical plays in the history of literature, and one which holds the key to understanding the nature of psychological factors and processes, the nature of consciousness, the nature of reality, subjective time, and art. Primacy in the interpretation of the tragedy of *Hamlet* belongs to philosophy, because of the immanently indicated fundamental philosophical problems in this masterpiece, and because it is primarily a metaphysical tragedy, in which idealistic philosophy is expressed.

This study has been undertaken with the aim of analysing and explaining the problems posed in the tragedy of *Hamlet*, in the light of new interpretations, in order to set guidelines for further philosophical and ontological research, and also to discover which philosophy is expressed in this literary masterpiece, since this is the question which, up to now, has most commonly been asked by many hermeneutists.

The most significant previous literary–theoretical, philosophical and psychological interpretations of *Hamlet* (primarily the interpretation of Lev S. Vygotsky) served as a starting point for the analysis of the ontological aspects, along with the theories of tragedy and the philosophical–aesthetic theories of Nicolai Hartmann, Roman Ingarden, Martin Heidegger, Peter Ouspensky, Pavel Florensky, Immanuel Kant, Karl Jaspers and Plato, which form the conceptual–hypothetical framework. 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 have been highlighted.

Since ontological and psychological analysis are not mutually exclusive, the achievements of analytical psychology, together with the concepts of collective unconscious and archetypes, have been used in an accompanying psychological analysis of the tragedy, as have the works of the philosophically-minded psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung about poetic creativity.

On the basis of the study of *Hamlet* by Lev S. Vygotsky, the book “Philosophy in *Hamlet*” points out the philosophical problems set in Shakespeare’s enigmatic tragedy. In this sense and to this end, the ontological problems raised in the tragedy of *Hamlet* are particularly discussed and interpreted: the problem of being, the problem of the nature of reality, or another reality and another world, the problem of the transcendent, as well as the problem of time which is associated with a four-dimensional perception of reality, feelings of absurdity and meaning, then the problem of the supernatural, *idem est* the metaphysical, and the philosophy expressed in the tragedy of *Hamlet*. These problems constitute the fundamental philosophical problems that appear to be a mysterious background in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*.

The book is divided into two parts. The first part comprises the foreword and an introductory note, which address the genesis of the author’s interest in Shakespeare’s tragedy, then the introduction, a review of Vygotsky’s book *The Psychology of Art*, the author’s personal experience of *Hamlet*, and the analysis of that experience.

The introduction provides an overview of criticism emphasizing the mystery of tragedy, which has cognitive value for philosophers, indicating the relationship between literature and philosophy. Since the tragedy has been analysed, attention is drawn to the etymological origin of the word tragedy, as well as to the place of Shakespeare’s tragedy in the world’s theatre heritage. Also discussed are the nature of artistic creativity and knowledge, which are of a different nature from scientific knowledge, with emphasis on the

need for their synthesis which would 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, special attention is paid to the analysis of Vygotsky's study of *Hamlet*, published in his book *The Psychology of Art*, and its reception, because this is so far perhaps the most extensive and most important study ever written about *Hamlet*. Vygotsky's study of *Hamlet*, in which he presents idealistic aesthetics, is the first attempt to interpret the tragedy as myth, i.e. mystical reality and religious truth manifested in a work of art.

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

In the fourth chapter the ideas conveyed through this experience (of strange occurrences and feelings, the four-dimensional perception of reality, two realities and two worlds, the transcendent, etc.) are analysed in the light of the ideas already expressed in Vygotsky's study and by other critics cited by Vygotsky.

These shared ideas are also analysed in the light of philosophical theory, the theory of tragedy and analytical psychology, in order to point out that identical insights and conclusions were arrived at independently, which demonstrates that Vygotsky's study of *Hamlet* is not an arbitrary, subjectivist interpretation of the tragedy, but that these are impartial interpretations by 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 comprises eleven chapters. At the beginning, the need for ontological analysis has been emphasized, as this is the deepest analysis that may help to reflect on various ontological and metaphysical aspects of the tragedy: the question of being, the nature of reality, time and the four-dimensional, as well as other worlds, the transcendent and the supernatural, which find their place in the tragedy.

Chapter One is dedicated to the problem of being in the metaphysical tragedy *Hamlet*. Therefore, it is necessary to refer to Heidegger's understanding of the origin of art and the function of the work of art. The reason 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 mystery contained in the tragedy of *Hamlet* are not artificial and fictional, but stem from the very nature of things, and therefore invoke 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 comprehensive.

In Chapter Two of the second part of the book, "The Nature of Reality in *Hamlet*", the metaphysical nature of reality in the tragedy is discussed in detail. The hypothesis of two realities is substantiated, referring to previous authors, such as Vygotsky, Nietzsche, Ouspensky, Brandes, James Kirsch and C. S. Lewis, who have noted the same metaphysical problem in *Hamlet*.

A 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 with 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 occurs by means of expanded consciousness, and this knowledge is difficult to communicate to anyone who has not had a similar authentic mystical experience. The subchapter refers to numerous authors, including William James and Anica Savić-Rebac, who have written about the mystical experience.

Chapter Three of the second part of the book is dedicated to the problem of time in *Hamlet*. It is suggested that Hamlet's assertion that "the time is out of joint" indicates an altered psychological experience of time in Hamlet's consciousness and the metaphysical nature of time. This verse also states the problem of time as the fourth dimension or coordinate and indicates the problem of time as a psychological and ontological category. The hypothesis of the metaphysical nature of time in Hamlet's utterance is corroborated by the interpretations of Goethe, Vygotsky and Deleuze, and attention is drawn to Plato's definition of time in *Timaeus*, as well as to Kant's "Copernican Turn".

In the subchapter (3a) of the third chapter, parallels are drawn between Jung's phenomenon of synchronicity and the tragedy of *Hamlet*, which can be seen in the emergence of two problems – the category of time and the category of meaning. It is suggested that a “self-generated transcendental meaning” is present in the tragedy of *Hamlet*.

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

In the subchapter (4a) of the fourth chapter, Jaspers' understanding of tragic knowledge and the concept of the transcendent are presented. This, through 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 the transcendent is encoded.

Chapter Five 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 is suggested that a four-dimensional perception of reality prevails in the tragedy and this hypothesis is supported by the opinion of Vygotsky, as well as by the ideas of Florensky, Hinton, Ouspensky, and Plato.

Chapter Six of the second part of the book addresses the problem of the co-existence of two worlds in the tragedy of *Hamlet*. The hypothesis is that Hamlet makes contact with an unknown world which has remained unknowable. The idea of the existence of two worlds in the tragedy is supported by the interpretations of Vygotsky, Dostoevsky, Kuno Fischer, Govoruha-Otrok, C. 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”. The only pathways to this other, noumenal, intelligible world are through art, poetry, mysticism, and idealistic philosophy.

Chapter Seven of the second part of the book, is dedicated to the sense of absurdity in the tragedy, and it points to the fact that Hamlet is a tragic hero of the absurd, and that the sense of absurdity is one of the causes of Hamlet's lethargy. The tragic sense of the absurd is the state of extraordinary lucidity, characteristic of philosophers. This assertion is supported by the psychological insights of Vygotsky, Nietzsche, Jan Kott, and J. Striković. Hamlet moves from the position of hero of the absurd to that of a philosopher who intuits the metaphysical root in the arrangement of the world, in the religious paradigm of thinking and acting.

Thus Chapter Eight of the second part of the book is dedicated to the sense of meaning in the tragedy of *Hamlet*. It is suggested that the tragedy has a hidden meaning, with reference to Vygotsky's assertion of the existence of two meanings. The intention is to point out that it is the sense of a “self-generated transcendental meaning”, as a relationship between us and an unknown agency, which springs from affection, and in this sense a parallel is drawn with Jung's synchronistic meaning.

Chapter Nine 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, an attempt is made to explain the possibility of supernatural phenomena by seeking a foothold in philosophy, i.e. by relying on philosophical theories of Plato, Solovyov, Florensky and Ouspensky, in which ideas about multidimensionality have been suggested.

In the concluding Chapter Ten the results achieved are summarized by recapitulating philosophemes used in the tragedy of *Hamlet*. Reading Pavel Florensky's book *The Meaning of Idealism* has helped in reaching the insight that Plato's idealistic philosophy is expressed in the tragedy of *Hamlet*, which is a novelty and a 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 expressed in the tragedy such as the problem of being, the problem of the nature of reality, or another reality and another world, then the problem of the supernatural, *idem est* the

metaphysical, the transcendent, and the problem of time which is associated with the four-dimensional perception of reality, connect the tragedy of *Hamlet* and Platonism.

On the basis of the research conducted and analysis of the ontological aspects of the tragedy, it is concluded that Plato's idealistic philosophy is reflected in the tragedy of *Hamlet* and that it is, therefore, a metaphysical tragedy, thus confirming the initial hypotheses. The argumentation and bastion for this conclusion have been found in the works of James Joyce, Ouspensky, Florensky and, finally, in excerpts from the original Platonic philosophy.

Keywords: ontological, metaphysical problems, nature of reality, two worlds, problem of time, four-dimensional, transcendent, supernatural, idealistic aesthetics, Platonism.