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PHILOSOPHICAL AND ETHICAL PROBLEMS OF THE CATEGORY “LIFE” IN MICHAEL KOZORIS’S NOVELLA “CHORNOHORA SPEAKS”

Abstract

The article reveals the content of the philosophical and ethical category of “life” in the example of Mykhailo Kozoris’s novella “Chornohora Speaks”. Comprehending the categories of “life” and “death”, the writer in work by depicting the fate of the heroes proves that each of them understands the meaning of his existence in his own way. The heroes of the novella adhere to their own concept of life and strive to achieve world harmony, but the author takes the position that humans are doomed because he cannot predict the course of his existence. The writer reveals to the reader the unique world of Hutsul life, different from the realities of civilized society, but deduces the thesis that despite the unity with the natural world, the heroes do not achieve natural harmony.

Keywords: category, philosophy of existence, life, Hutsul region, harmony.

Every person’s daily life is full of various situations that involve understanding the problems of his life. Dynamic processes taking place in society force the individual to respond to them, so he is in a constant state of finding a solution to a situation. The life category of the search for truth and the realization of own human needs is the sphere of his existence. Human realizes their own existence by understanding such essential categories as “life” and “death”. In the philosophical sense, these are the most profound catego-

ries, reflecting what a person learns about the world.

Many world artists of the word turned to the interpretation of these categories. Almost every work of art of any era contains philosophical reflections of the hero or author on the meaning of human existence. Each historical epoch has made its own adjustments to the interpretation, but the fact of the most significant interest in the artistic environment in these important philosophical categories remains true.

In Ukrainian literature, the content of the philosophical categories of “life” and “death” was studied in the works of H. Skovoroda, T. Shevchenko, I. Franko, P. Kulish, M. Kotsiubynskyi and others. M. Kozoris raises the philosophical problems of human existence in his works of art, particularly in the novel “Chornohora Speaks”.

The creative activity of the writer and his philosophical and literary views became the subject of research by scientists J. Kubas, I. Tkachuk, Y. Zeta, L. Pidhainyi, O. Rublev, P. Arsenych, G. Rys, F. Pohrebennyk, I. Prykhodko, M. Khorob, N. Osmak, S. Barabash. However, the content of the philosophical and ethical category of “life” in the example of his work has not been thoroughly studied.

The story “Chornohora Speaks” by M. Kozoris is a qualitatively new stage in his creative biography, the development of individual style. The main problem of the work is based on the search for the meaning of life, and its place in the world, in which the features of existentialism and expressionism, modernist trends, popular in the first half of the twentieth century. The origins of this problem are connected with the philosophical and literary tradition. One of the current problems of humankind, its philosophical component, is revealed in the thoughts of A. Schopenhauer, meaning that a person can think all his life that he decides and chooses fate himself. However, in fact, the actions of people are driven by someone else’s will: “Personality is never free, although it is a manifestation of free will because it is an already determined manifestation of the free wish of this will” (Schopenhauer, 1992, p. 289). Furthermore, S. Kierkegaard emphasized the absurdity of life, human doom, and the constant fear accompanying him. This absurdity, in his opinion, cannot be understood by the mind: “I may comprehend the truth, but I am still far from knowing the soul’s bliss. What should I do? They will say: “Get down to business. Which one? What should I do? Maybe I will warn humanity of my sorrow, trying to present new evidence of the sad insignificance of human life?”

(Kierkegaard, 1994, p. 16). M. Kozoris tried to embody these deeply philosophical truths of human existence in the images of the fates of the heroes of “Chornohora Speaks”, depicting the influence of historical circumstances on human existence.

Ordinary Hutsuls become the main characters of the work. They live by the laws of nature and consider themselves her children, but this happens until the mountain land becomes the property of visiting lords, and the relict forest is destroyed and becomes a means of enrichment of dealers, the railway laid by entrepreneurs through rural lands destroys the Hutsul ecosystem. Moreover, the natives themselves become secondary inhabitants. The story “Chornohora Speaks” presents the Hutsuls following the romantic tradition of Yu. Fedkovych is a “people of hot temper”, but over time, even they are forced to give in to the influence of civilization. The world becomes absurd for them, they look for new meaning in life, are forced to adapt to reality, and do not find a place for themselves in their homeland, so they are forced to leave it.

The philosophical category of “life” is understood in the novel from the standpoint of the author’s nostalgia for the lost “Hutsul Atlantis” (Hans Sbiden), his native land. The work is imbued with the sympathy of M. Kozoris for Verkhovyna and its inhabitants.

The author perceives life in the Hutsul region by showing the fates of its inhabitants. The author emphasizes that often the problems that arise in the early twentieth century are not only the fault of people who come to the Hutsul region but seek to bring their rhythm of life into the slow flow of life in the Carpathians. First of all, according to the artist, the natives become guilty, and the reasons for their guilt can be different. By depicting the relations of Hutsuls with their native land in “Chornohora Speaks”, the author, on the one hand, seeks to psychologically motivate the actions and behaviour of the characters with a specific outlook on life, and on the other - urges them to change attitudes from the consumer to spiritual unity. Depicting the principles of

Hutsul life, the author aimed to reveal the features of their philosophical vision of the world and proved that, to some extent, they could present all the characteristic principles of national existence.

Accordingly, the inner plot of the story develops simultaneously with the plot event. This approach allowed the prose writer to characterize the moral aspects of human existence. The inner world of the characters is vital for the plot of the story, hence the use of plot elements that move the action in a specific direction - contrasting details, editing short stories, chronotope of the road and psychologization of plot twists and turns, an unexpected transformation of one event into another with opposite content. Affects the ideological and aesthetic load of the work.

At the same time, the writer-philosopher emphasizes the importance of each character for understanding the meaning of life in general. The heroes of the work are versatile personalities with various character traits, both positive and negative. The work’s characters do not always understand the depth of their actions and consequences, but the writer emphasizes that each of them has a choice in life. For example, the author introduces one of the main characters Mykola Zelenchuk to the reader at the moment of marriage, the happiest stage in the life of the heroes. However, the image of a Hutsul wedding strikes with its pessimistic character. Negative traits, laziness, selfishness, indifference to the bride and passion for alcohol are reflected succinctly: “a drunken smile plays on a red face, and Lenin’s pride sways on a curled moustache”, he did not sing, and “squeaked in a drunken voice all over his mouth, like a rooster, with squinted eyes” (Kozoris, 2013, p. 206). This family took physical violence for granted: “What do you say, Parasco? / – What can I say? – Nothing... I came to you, uncle. She swallowed the words, restrained them, and locked them in her high, trembling chest. / – How are you, Parasco?... Has your husband already beaten? / – Not yet. / – Did he do harm? / – Did...” (Kozoris, 2013, p. 215).

The reader learns about Mykola’s parents’

social status and attitude from the messages: his father is ill, “he korpav (worked. – *Author*) all his life”, and he managed to allocate land for Mykola to support his own family. However, valuing himself, the character did not appreciate other people’s work, including his parents. The hero gradually becomes a person who becomes alien not only to society but also primarily to the natural environment of the Hutsul region: “Mykola was walking home on slopes like a mountain stream. ... There was a beauty in the yard – a spotted mountain night, like a Hutsul girl on holiday. / And Mykola struggled with snags like an angry bear, waved a sharp bartka (small axe – *Author*), caught his hands on the prickly branches and scratched up. / It seemed that he was ready to climb to the highest peak, to expose his chest, wide as a slab, and to call to battle all the lisovyk, scheznyk, and that violent Polonyn wind, which in the mountains bends the katrafi (hard mountain tree – *Author*), as stems, and in the bottoms turns over with the roots of old beeches and spruces” (Kozoris, 2013, p. 218).

Over time, the hero changes when he feels the need for his work. He becomes responsible, organized, and able to lead the team and work for the result: “Mykola is thinking about all the little things, a whole rush of energy is awakening in him. He entered the ordinary Hutsul life, the movement he had known for a long time, giving him the will and strength. He forgot about the inn, about vodka, gets up first, and goes to bed last...” (Kozoris, 2013, p. 257).

The writer portrays a character with a knack and desire for change, despite the respective low benchmarks in life. At the same time, as a neorealist, he emphasizes that the social factor influences result in life when despite personal desires, the hero does not become a model master – other people with different life principles intervene, and they are more cunning. Mykola could not solve the set tasks because he was uneducated, and therefore, he did not understand enough about commerce. That is why Dzindzel, taking advantage of Mykola’s inability to keep accounts, conducts his “gesheft” (speculative trade

operation – *Author*). Therefore, the hero once again loses the meaning of life, finally changing in a negative direction. He chooses the principle of life “to beat the weak” to appear strong and perceives life as distorted through a position of moral and mental dissatisfaction, the main reason for which lies in the low level of material security.

As children of nature pity the weaker, Hutsuls sympathize with Mykola in his inability to improve his fate: “And I say my own: ... sorry guy. Because he is already as if the climb under him broke off, and he flies... If he grabs a branch or a root, who knows, maybe he will still be saved... Nevertheless, it is challenging for our Hutsul to change his mind because it is as fast as this stream, which flies headlong from the mountain” (Kozoris, 2013, p. 278). In these philosophical considerations, the hot Hutsul character that controls the protagonist’s actions is subtly noticed. According to the author’s concept, he cannot emerge from life’s vicissitudes and make informed decisions, much less understand his own mistakes. The writer uses oneiric motives and allusions to characterize and explain the character’s actions. Depicting the character, he captures at the same time the fact that Mykola is doing an evil deed for his native land. The main hero is involved in the destruction of the original life of the Hutsul region and, therefore, cannot be re-born into a thoroughly dignified personality. He becomes an uncontrollable force, unable to assess his actions adequately; life for him becomes only a way of living the days left to him in this world.

The conceptual sphere of “life” is also filled with ethical features in work when the author raises the ecology of nature and the ecology of the character’s soul to the same level. Using the technique of sleep, the author appeals to the consciousness of the hero in the words of the deceased father so that in the last rush before the impossibility to return to everyday life to condemn the conscience of the hero: “Because if you want Verkhovyna to love you and feed you, then you have to respect her. In addition, if you

are going to cut the butyn (forest area – *Author*), it is as if you cut off your mother’s breast...” (Kozoris, 2013, p. 359).

Symbolic is the comparison of the hero with the eagle, and the author emphasizes the falsity of the chosen path. The golden eagle “sits on the highest spruce and rolls his eyes at the whole top and thinks that it is all his, instead of looking at what is going on around him. Then the shooter came up and – boo! Furthermore, from the spruce to the ground, he beats the moss with bloody wings and opens his beak, wanting to bite that hand. And that shooter is no longer afraid of that beak because you will not bite, oh, sarako (poor man – *Author*), you will not bite” (Kozoris, 2013, p. 359).

Mykola realizes that the dream has prophetic intentions, and the eagle is his position on life values. Having got into the net to an even bigger swindler Vladzo, the character understands his inability to “bite”, but the author gives the hero a chance in the spirit of his “hot temper”: being impressed by sleep and recent events in an unconscious rush he wants to bring home his offenders. Reflecting on the choice of leaving them alive or throwing them into the abyss, the hero “morally awakens” his whole journey as a driver in the mountains is accompanied by his father’s instruction “you will not bite” as evidence of his inability to change the course of life. The course of Mykola’s thoughts shows an inner dualism – on the one hand, the hero wishes death for the offenders, and on the other hand, he has suicidal intentions (he has no “mercy” for the life of the offenders or his own). The hero remains far from humanistic ideas. The culmination appears logical in the story: the murder of Dzindzel and Vladzo, as well as “gifted” by the higher forces of life to Mykola: “I understood that everything is over, that another minute and everything will end... As the horses jumped into the abyss, behind them leaned a cart, instinct or some internal protest forced Nicholas to jump out of the cart. I heard only a severe pain in my knees, then a short, terrible crack... and everything calmed down” (Kozoris, 2013, p. 366).

The drama of the situation is sharpened – the writer deliberately “saves” the hero from death to show the further development of the character and changes in the character’s attitude to life. The reader is faced with the full range of emotions of the character, his dichotomy in choosing a new way of life, when, it would seem, everything is destroyed materially, including personal life. A conflict begins in Mykola’s soul when the result of his future fate should be one of two decisions: he will confess to the murder, or he will choose the path of a migrant worker – he will cross the border and flee to Moldova. The character’s second desire wins. The author portrays a hero who has never been able to confess to the crime. Although he killed even greater offenders in the Hutsul region, he appears in his work as a criminal. His own sins cannot cover the deaths of the great criminals. He is a stranger to the Hutsul region because he violated the laws of life. Fleeing from himself, he involuntarily faced the fate of the “eternal sinner” Marc Cursed.

The author often includes in the plot outline the reaction of personified images, including mountains, which come to life under his pen, become the main characters, sometimes judges of the heroes, when ordinary human judgment is unable to make the right decision about the heroes. Thus, Mount Pip Ivan, evaluating the actions of Nicholas, points out the erroneousness of the chosen path, condemns for crimes and at the same time, regrets his lost life. The author emphasized the main idea of the work in the words of the personified spirit of the mountains: only in the native land a person finds meaning in life, it is filled with inner meaning, and isolation from the family does not bring moral and mental peace, cannot satisfy both material and spiritual needs. Despite the desire to start life from scratch, the spirit of the mountains confirms the truth that it is impossible to build a new life on the death of others.

The author personifies the images, reproducing the state of nature, full of audio and video effects. In the perspective of the landscape, the drawing depicts nature, which is a particular hero

of the work, full of symbolism. Chornohora is witnessing internal changes – outwardly, the natural world is clean and inviolable, and the mountains have become old.

All events in the work take place in the bosom of nature, among the mountains. The family life of the Hutsuls and their interpersonal relations are an instant phenomenon in time for the eternal Chornohora. However, it is essential – even the fleeting life of Hutsul society under certain circumstances, reflected in work, can significantly affect its fate. Chornohora meets the heroes, sympathizes with them at the beginning of the work, and protects them at the end of the work – thus, we have the effect of plot framing.

M. Kozoris raised in work an urgent problem of the Hutsul region – the destruction of relict and beech forests, which significantly affects the fate of its natives. In the work, the author captures the fact of Chornohora’s hibernation, and then she does not see the destruction of the mountains; there is an environmental tragedy.

The writer emphasizes that local Hutsuls, such as Mykola, are also to blame for nature’s destruction, corresponding to the scale of this environmental catastrophe. Chornohora is depicted as a mad creature in pain when it learns of the death of the forest, and it refrains from the sounds of death with a refrain and apocalyptically predicts the terrible fate not only of the Hutsul region but also of its short-sighted inhabitants.

Mykola does not feel a spiritual connection with his native land in his work. In search of a better life, he forgets about everything; the course of his life, as in a movie, unfolds before the eyes of Chornohora. At the end of the work, she witnesses the choice of Nikolai’s fate. Her reflections – a polylogist with mountains – prophetically determine the future thorny path of the Hutsul region.

It is striking in the work that the author naturally reveals the crucial problem – the lack of proper appreciation of family relationships, the origins of which go back to the family upbringing of children. The author does not show bright, pure ideal relationships in married life, and no

character has family happiness.

The writer depicts the family life of Hutsuls, who are not burdened by family relations. Numerous betrayals, and changes of partners, regardless of age, are perceived among Hutsuls as a special mountain hedonism or temperament. They treat such betrayals calmly, even joking about those who sometimes betray. The balanced Hutsul Lesio has his own thoughts on the consequences of such love, but he also believes that domestic violence is a sign of harmony and a manifestation of sincere love.

Almost all the characters commit physical violence against women in the work. They motivate this conduct by the woman's nature, the need for "education", and sometimes a spontaneous expression of their own emotions. At the same time, Hutsuls do not condemn "Swedish" families, perceiving them as salvation from loneliness and a way of bodily gratification.

An interesting episode in the work is when Hutsul young men had to choose a bride. The most desirable girl was considered to be the one who was physically more robust and intelligent, could repel weak suitors, and after her love to leave a physical "memo". Thus, Mykola recalls the origin of the scar on his face in the story of the courtship of Yavdokha, when she was still a girl and allowed herself to "joke" about young men, as a result of which they were maimed. Yavdokha lowered large dogs on the boys when they tried to court her at night. Unlike his crippled mate, Mykola managed to get to Yavdokha's house, thus "winning" her love.

However, from the standpoint of mountain etiquette, the author presented all these immoral pictures of rural life as natural events, as the peasants reacted to them. He repeatedly emphasizes that such "freedom of communication" does not apply to members of another social status. Paraska, constantly physically crippled by her husband, begins to meet Vladzo, who "elegantly" courted her.

The villagers, despite the mystery, learn about the meetings. The village's voice and attitude to adultery with a Pole are reproduced in the epi-

sode of the meeting of father Lesio with the old Hutsul Lezhbita. This aged woman is depicted rather repulsively, reminiscent of a village gossip girl, not an experienced wise Hutsul. With the portrait of the heroine, the author conveys her inner emptiness. She "tastes" Paraska's sin. The reaction to Paraska's father's story testifies to the importance of the village's general opinion for each member of society.

However, the village remains indifferent when everything ends in tragedy, including the death of his daughter. The author emphasizes this with separate remarks about the characters, authentic wailing, without specifying the girl's cause of death, especially without specifying the name of her killer. The duality of the attitude of the villagers to the events during Paraska's burial is expressed, on the one hand, by the bitter statement in the conversations about the lack of punishment of the murderer from the Lesio family, the so-called "Hutsul vendetta", and on the other hand, the peasants, as witnesses of the rich funeral rites, envy the wealth of the old Hutsul.

Paraska longed for family happiness. As a bright and kind soul, she expected the best from marriage – family peace and comfort. However, the author notes that her dreams do not come true because she already feels that life with such a man would be unhappy at the wedding. Without an example of perfect family life, in search of unrealized female happiness, Paraska falls in love with Vladzo. For her, he is the ideal of true love. In her opinion, his gentle attitude towards her manifests his inner "T", that he is a good and sensitive man. However, in a fit of emotion, she did not feel that this man was ugly because of his insincerity, cunning, and insidiousness. The writer, introducing her lover, reports numerous other girls who "got into the net" to him. Unlike others, Paraska was attracted by her inaccessibility and pride. The author recreationally recreated the flow of the feelings of Paraska, who wants to reveal herself as a woman, and her husband cannot understand her.

In the tradition of depicting Hutsul love, the writer depicts the Hutsul's acquaintance with a

Pole. The spruce forest is full of breaths of new life and erotic desire to find a couple. That is why Paraska felt herself, going down to the village, a part of this incredible action, natural unity. The author depicts the unity of women with nature; the movements of the heroine are full of erotic desire. The nature of the mountains evoked romantic feelings, and a chance to meet near a mountain river changed her life.

Life acquires new colours and sensations for the heroine; she feels like a child of the natural environment. The writer qualitatively and artistically perceptively recreated the unity of nature and the human soul. The relationship of the two heroes in the bosom of nature results from the influence of the energy of the mountain region on the flow of inner human feelings.

Paraska and Vladzo have different life priorities, which is why their relationship was doomed to a tragic end. The woman was oppressed: he openly expressed a desire to "take possession" of her. The author's word is filled with a penetrating description of the hero's low essence: "It was clear to him that Paraska did not want to move from the position of a mistress to the role of a village prostitute. It was unpleasant for Vlad. He did not love her... He dealt with more than one woman, treated it as a sport, and had heartfelt feelings far from him. He had the ambition of a male, the ambition of Don Juan, the lord's pride that did not allow any ordinary woman not to want him or resist him" (Kozoris, 2013, pp. 263-164). Realizing that in front of him is a self-sufficient woman, he seeks in any way to make this woman his mistress. With cunning and insidiousness, he manages to persuade the woman to betray Mykola: "The most important thing was that she already felt like a mother, and she did not know who the father of her child was. Uncertainty and fear that her child might be born with a stain as a bastard, and the belief that in the future she still could not avoid human tongues and resentment, even when it is a child of Nicholas – all this tormented her day and night..." (Kozoris, 2013, p. 262).

Noble's intentions to save his own family's peace lead to tragedy in Paraska's life. The woman feels sorry for the man who got into the net of Vladzo and Dzindzel. In order to save her family, she secretly goes to ask Vladzo to have mercy and not to take away the land. In the episode of the meeting of former lovers, the author reveals the true essence of each of the characters. Paraska was worried that "Vladzo would not ask her about Stefanko, would not ask such a question, which she drives away from herself from the moment she heard a new life in herself", but Vladzo "did not ask, he did not have time for this, because his mind was occupied exclusively with Paraska's body, her firm breasts, rounded thighs" (Kozoris, 2013, p. 321), and this led to disappointment in the lover.

However, Mykola learns from the village gossip about the woman's betrayal, and despite her explanation, he loses control of himself. The writer reproduces in detail the "transformation" of Mykola into a family despot from the episode when Yavdokha-rival informs him that "they (Paraska and Vladzo – *Author*) consulted how to take that soil from you and rewrite it on your bastard..." (Kozoris, 2013, p. 327). In the scenes of clashes between two "competitors" in love in the same territory, in a Hutsul house, the author shows the doom of Paraska, who protects the remnants of her own family's happiness. The words that Paraska throws at her rival turn out to be prophetic in her destiny: "There is no place for two here. Either I or she" (Kozoris, 2013, p. 332). Mykola kills her to death.

Mykola suspects Paraska of adultery, despite his wife's convictions, considers the boy a stranger and does not treat him with paternal love, and does not love his wife. In the Hutsul environment, such an attitude is not the norm, and the author makes a causal link between the destruction of the family and the material and social circumstances of Mykolai's life. However, M. Kozoris takes the position that no material reason can explain Zelenyuk's spiritual degradation.

We believe that M. Kozoris melodramatically depicted the family conflict of the Zelenchuk family, and Mykola is too cruel in his work. The existence of a Hutsul family is realistically reflected in the story “Chornohora Speaks”, where the unnatural death of the heroine is motivated by a demonstration of the degradation of Zelenchuk’s personality, who does not feel guilty for his sins. The writer leaves the finale of the work open: Mykola, having destroyed his own family, and killed his offenders Vladzo and Dzindzel, flees through the mountains to another country. This author asks a rhetorical question: will the hero be able to realize his dreams in a new place; will he be able to improve morally and realize the truth in Moldova, far from his homeland?

The actualization of the problem of relations in the family follows from this. According to the author’s concept, life for such a hero continues, but the reader does not know whether the hero will be able to cleanse himself morally far from his homeland or whether he will cause much trouble there and will not suffer punishment for it.

Conclusion

In M. Kozoris’s “Chornohora Speaks”, the philosophical and aesthetic problems of life are revealed by depicting the interaction of humans and nature, as well as the choice that a particular character must make to improve their own lives. The vitalist category in M. Kozoris’s novel is filled with multivariate content based on assessing life situations in which the characters fall. In each character, the author emphasized not only the desire for life but also managed to outline the concept of its existence.

According to the author, the characters (heroes) of the story – each individually – seek to achieve world harmony, but through the main plot line of the work can be traced the author’s philosophical position on human doom. In fact, it is fatalism because people cannot predict the course of their existence. Unfortunately, the fina-

le of life stories is sometimes not optimistic – the dreams of the heroes do not come true: death significantly adjusts their plans.

The main philosophical idea of the work is the position that detachment from one’s own kind and land cannot bring moral and mental peace to a person. The consequences of the gradual degradation of society are traced through it. Mykola Zelenchuk does not atone for the sin committed in the family. The lack of desire for moral repentance of the hero brings him closer to Dmytro Marusyak from G. Khotkevych’s “Fireplace Soul”, Chipka Varenichenko from the epic “Do the oxen roar when the manger is full?” by Panas Mirnyi and I. Bilyk and Roman Sivash from the dilogy “Among the Dark Night” and “Under the Silent Willows” by B. Hrinchenko. The story shows that not only did the new social relations influence the formation of socially degraded individuals, but the characters themselves were morally weakened in the struggle of life, degraded to looting and murder.

In the world of the living, the author leaves the most significant antagonist in the work, who, at first glance, has no moral right to do so because he commits many crimes against society and remains unpunished. However, the story has an open ending – the hero has a choice: to start a new life or bear penance for the crimes committed.

The ecovitalist concept of the work can be traced to the expressed idea of the ecology of nature and the hero’s soul, and this concept is a continuation of the theme of the confrontation of two worlds – human and nature. It reaches global scales and religious dimensions: the natural world is perfect; God created it for world harmony, which must stand in defence of the Hutsul region. Therefore, nature in the story becomes a carrier of top values.

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