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THE NOTION OF EXISTENCE IN JEAN-PAUL SARTRE'S
AND KARL JASPERS' PHILOSOPHY
IN THE LITERARY CONTEXT OF *ANNA KARENINA*

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Introduction

In the first chapter of the book *At the Existentialist Café* Sarah Bakewell writes:

It is sometimes said that existentialism is more of a mood than a philosophy, and that it can be traced back to anguished novelists of the

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nineteenth century, and beyond that to Blaise Pascal, who was terrified by the silence of infinite spaces, and beyond that to the soul-searching St Augustine, and beyond that to the Old Testament's weary Ecclesiastes and to Job, the man who dared to question the game God was playing with him and was intimidated into submission. To anyone, in short, who has ever felt disgruntled, rebellious, or alienated about anything.

(Bakewell, 2017, p. 1)

A popular belief that the subject of existentialism lies in the domain of philosophers, writers and prophets, albeit attractive, seems rather trivial. It came under attention of three prominent modern philosophers: Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre and Karl Jaspers. The works that represent *opus magnum* of each of these thinkers i.e. *Being and Time*, *Philosophy*, and *Being and Nothingness* respectively, now belong to the canon of existential thought, but according to Jean Wahl, philosophy of existence has ancient roots (Wahl, 2019). David E. Cooper claims, that "Sartre, Heidegger, and Karl Jaspers are existentialists not because of a shared philosophical position but simply because that is what they have been labelled" (Cooper, 2012, p. 28), so existential reflection can also be found in great works of such philosophers as Plato, Immanuel Kant, Martin Buber or Friedrich Nietzsche.

What is more, it is present in great literary works of such authors as Lev Tolstoy, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Thomas Mann, Albert Camus, Samuel Beckett, not to mention many other less prominent writers. Wesley Barnes in the book *The Philosophy and Literature of Existentialism* claims that the abundance of existential threads in literature warrants an idea of a coherent existential literary theory (Barnes, 1968). Polish researchers like Michał Januszkiewicz (1998) and Rafał Koschany (2016) speak in a similar tone. They point to a number of common features present in existential literature, stressing at the same time that existentialism cannot be attributed to a single, well-defined philosophical tradition. Walter Kaufmann notices that:

Existentialism is not a philosophy but a label for several widely different revolts against traditional philosophy. Most of the living "existentialists" have repudiated this label, and a bewildered outsider might well conclude that the only thing they have in common is a marked aversion for each other. [...] In view of this, it might be argued that the label

“existentialism” ought to be abandoned altogether. Certainly, existentialism is not a school of thought nor reducible to any set of tenets.

(Kaufmann, 1960, p. 11)

At present, existential thought can be found in many, seemingly distant fields of research. Existential and near phenomenological perspective is developed in psychiatry, psychology, psychopathology and cognitive science. “First-person” narrative or approach (defined as world’s experience from the first-person point of view) emphasized by existentialists is being developed by researchers such as Shaun Gallagher, Dan Zahavi, and Alva Noë (Depraz, Varela, Vermersch, 2003; Gallagher, Zahavi, 2008). We can find here the role of the notion of intentionality understood as an ability to be in relation with things as well as the phenomenological concept of human being thrown into the world.

As far as Polish field is concerned, one should not forget about outstanding researchers of existential thought, such as Małgorzata Kowalska (1997), Rafał Abramciów (2015), Piotr Mróz (1992), and Andrzej Kapusta (2014), who constantly strive to instil existential reflection in other research fields.

This raises a question of what makes the notion of existence so appealing. Bakewell writes of existential mood underlined by loneliness, anxiety and fear and William McBride defines existentialism as a popular, cultural movement (McBride, 2012, pp. 50–69). While we are all familiar with such states of mind, abstract philosophical theories seem far removed from our everyday experience. The issue of existence, as opposed to an abstract theory of the definition of a human being stems from our everyday life and forces us to reflect. As such, the notion of existence is both valid and pressing, and its presence in literature may help us arrive at being whose presence may render it more understandable.¹

This paper attempts to explain the notion of existence on the basis of a specific literary example. Firstly, we will analyse this concept in the thought of two most prominent representatives of existentialism²: Karl Jaspers and

¹ This kind of analyzes we can find in Sartre’s writing. According to Polish philosopher Hanna Puszko, Sartre’s literary works (protagonists, their behaviour and their lives) are illustrations to his philosophical works – see: Puszko (1993).

² It should be emphasized that the word existentialism, the philosophy of existence and existential philosophy means different philosophical traditions. Naming Jaspers an existentialist is a simplification. About differences in terminology see: Wahl (2019).

Jean-Paul Sartre. I am going to demonstrate that despite striking differences in the way both thinkers understand the notion of existence, they complement each other. I will characterize the approach of each philosopher, indicating the sources of their differences and points where they meet. In the next step I will apply the concept of existentialism to a specific literary example of *Anna Karenina*. I will analyse one, in my opinion very important scene from the novel in order to demonstrate how the theories of Sartre and Jaspers are reflected in specific human actions in given circumstances. I am not going to explain the whole concept of existence in Sartre and Jaspers' philosophy as it has already been well described by other researchers. I will rather focus on these areas where the concepts of the two philosophers who are frequently placed in opposition to each other, contain similar intuitions and can complement each other. The literary example is only an illustration of how philosophical considerations can be applied to an analysis of a life of a literary heroine, and in a broader perspective - in the lives of each of us, because according to Jarosław Jakubowski:

Interpretation of a given literary character will mean not so much describing his or her psyche (especially psyche understood traditionally as human's "inner life") but, first and foremost, it will consist in recognizing and elucidating existential situation in which they find themselves. In particular, it will be about showing the possibilities of action that are drawn before them and at the same time the motivations on the basis of which this action can be and could be realized. Love considered from such an existential angle will therefore not be a "matter of feelings", "inner life" [...] but it will be an entanglement into a boundary situation, in the Jaspersian sense of the word.

(Jakubowski, 2012, pp. 145–146)

Jaspers and Sartre – a psychiatrist and an existentialist

Philosophical writings of Jean-Paul Sartre hardly contain any mentions of a German psychiatrist and philosopher, Karl Jaspers. It is rather surprising, given that Sartre frequently refers to another existential philosopher who used to closely cooperate with Jaspers, i.e. Martin Heidegger. However, the fact that Sartre did not develop Jaspers' conceptions should not be interpreted as a complete lack of interest in Jaspers on Sartre's part. In fact, quite to

the contrary, Sartre was interested in Jaspers in early years, when the main research interests of the former concentrated on psychology.

It is worth remembering that psychology (to be precise: the role of an image in psychological context) was the topic of Sartre's thesis for Master's Degree written under the guidance of Henri Delacroix, who also encouraged Sartre to continue his psychological research. Hence, sooner or later, he was bound to come across the works of a prominent psychiatrist, Karl Jaspers. As Philippe Cabestan notices:

Sartre always displayed interest in psychology, reflected by his involvement in translating *General Psychopathology* (1913) of Karl Jaspers. It is also reflected in Sartre's *Imaginary. Phenomenological Psychology of Imagination* and his abandoned draft of *Psyche* [...]. All Sartre's psychological reflections are closely related to his first philosophical essay *The Transcendence of the Ego* (1937) where he discovered consciousness defined as pure spontaneity.

(Cabestan, 2007, pp. 9–10)

Karl Jaspers devoted his works to psychology and psychopathology and he claimed that the tendencies to treat psychology as science deprive it of its most significant – human dimension (Jaspers, 1990, p. 86). Researchers of Jaspers' philosophy Fuchs, Breuer and Mundt write that:

The central motive that connects Jaspers' manifold works is the idea of human existence. He conceives it as the foundation of all scientific theories which are based on the human being without being able to grasp it completely. Scientific investigation should therefore be complemented by a permanent reflection on prescientific human experience. This idea remains valid independently of Jaspers' existential philosophical terminology. It may be reformulated as follows: Science is based on the human life-world, i.e., on subjective and intersubjective experience. It starts from this experience and gains its final destination from it. Only in constant dialogue with the life-world is science able to attain relevant knowledge without decoupling itself from human self-understanding. This is true in particular for the sciences, whose subject matter is the suffering human being, i.e., medicine in general, and psychopathology and psychiatry in particular.

(Fuchs, Breuer, Mundt, 2014, p. 5)

In *Allgemeine Psychopathologie* Jaspers criticizes psychoanalysis for its superficial and trivial view of the nature of human beings. For him, the concept of existence is a concept that begins every possible consideration. In the Introduction to *Reason and Existence* we can read, that: “Jaspers’ philosophy as a whole is Existenz-philosophy [...] The world is not considered as something in itself, but as that in which Existenz is, and toward which Existenz may be oriented” (Jaspers, 1957, p. 11). In his main work, *Philosophie*, published in 1932, Jaspers attempted to delineate the differences between psychological and philosophical reflection: “Even the seeming relaxation of objectifications and rules, their transformation into an abundant »psychology of understanding« that seems to penetrate the inner man and his depths, will always leave the inadequacy that man is taken for an object” (Jaspers, 1969, p. 153).

Sartre, like Jaspers, accused contemporary psychology of becoming a science by splitting from philosophy. In his *Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions* Sartre writes:

Psychology is a discipline which claims to be positive; that is, it tries to draw upon the resources of experience alone. We are, of course, no longer in the days of the associationists, and contemporary psychologists do not forbid themselves to interrogate and to interpret. But they try to confront their subject as the physicist confronts his.

(Sartre, 1962, p. 14)

Sartre propounded to replace a methodological approach with a phenomenological one, as he turned towards Martin Heidegger and his notion of *Dasein*. According to Heidegger the notion of *Dasein* opens the world, which means that everything I experience is experienced through the lens of my *Dasein*. *Dasein* cannot be objectively examined, and such examination would certainly be an aim of psychology. Heidegger claimed that *Dasein* cannot be cognitively accessed. How, therefore, can it be examined? Heidegger proposed a solution based on existential analytics, i.e. an analysis of all the possible ways in which *Dasein may exist* in the world. Jaspers, on the other hand, held that we can gain knowledge of ourselves only through communication or border-situations. Finally, according to Sartre we cannot say anything about existence because existence is pure. It simply states: “I am”. Nothing more. The notion of existence defined by Jaspers as the essence of being a human did not play any significant role for Sartre who treated it only

as a point of departure and did not develop it any further. It should be added that the concept of essence also appears in Sartre's conception. As I will try to show, this concept of essence in Sartre's philosophy will have a similar meaning to the concept of existence in Jaspers' philosophy.

According to Jaspers, the notion of existence defined in a specifically philosophical way was formulated for the first time by Kierkegaard:

Kierkegaard's feat of grasping human Existenz as no one before him and yet keeping his belief in Jesus as the God-Man was accomplished by an act of forcible faith, by turning Jesus into an absurdity, a paradox, and otherwise abandoning factual Christianity and the church.

(Jaspers, 1969, p. 315)

Kierkegaard, on the basis of everyday use of the term *existence* defined it as a deep essence of human beings, their inner nature. The author of *Kierkegaard's Concept of Existence* claims that:

What is distinctive, however, about Kierkegaard is that he did not arrive at his penetrating understanding of existence solely through consistent dialectical reflection, but in his attempt to describe the complex of issues related to existence he drew upon sad and difficult personal experiences, plus the experiences he could borrow from his insight into other people's psychical and spiritual situations and conflicts. Kierkegaard very early realized that human existence consists essentially of three elements: the subject (the self), freedom, and the ethical — constituted in such a way that in his freedom the subject must continually make ethical choices. But this also means that existence always involves movement.

(Malantschuk, 2003, p. 11)

Jaspers followed in the tracks of the Danish thinker. He was not interested in examining a human being as such. According to Jaspers:

what happened and what was done, is for Kierkegaard always capable of being understood in a new way. As it is interpreted anew, it becomes a new reality which yet is hidden; temporal life can therefore never be correctly understood by men; no man can absolutely penetrate through his own consciousness.

(Jaspers, 1969, p. 33)

Sartre also claimed that he won't arrive at a new, general theory of human being. This approach is also emphasized by Bakewell, who claims that the key to existentialism is our inability to access our own inner essence by way of external experience. Yet, despite the fact that it cannot be described by empirical science, it can be analysed. How, therefore, does the notion of existence is defined in the philosophy of Sartre and Jaspers?

I exist – existence according to Sartre

The statement “I exist” or “being” was a point of departure for Sartre, initiating his philosophical enquiry. Sartre adopted Hegel's definition of being and nothingness. According to Hegel: “The beginning is not pure nothing but a nothing, rather, from which something is to proceed; also being, therefore, is already contained in the beginning. Therefore, the beginning contains both, being and nothing; it is the unity of being and nothing, or is non-being which is at the same time being, and being which is at the same time non-being” (Hegel, 2010, p. 51).

German philosopher claims that “now” does not exist. According to Sartre who is inspired by Hegel, reality exists either as the past or the future, i.e. it is simply nothingness: “But Being thus undetermined immediately »passed into« its opposite. »This pure Being«, writes Hegel in *Logic* (of the *Encyclopaedia*) is pure abstraction and consequently absolute negation, which taken in its immediate moment is also non-being” (Sartre, 2003, p. 37).

In Sartre's philosophy the core of my existence is being-in-itself understood as a general being. This is our existence, the pure fact that “I am”. So, first we have existence – “I am”. No more can be said about being-in-itself or existence that... it exists. Steven Crowell claims that: “being-in-itself is what consciousness reveals, and if one tries to characterize this transphenomenal dimension without any appeal to consciousness, one can only say that it »is«, it »is in-itself« and it »what it is«” (Crowell, 2012, p. 204).

In the next step Sartre affirms, that “I am” is connected with “I am some kind of” or “I am for some reason”. Here, we encounter another important category, i.e. being-for-itself:

To say the for-itself is a pursued-pursuing, or that it is in the mode of having to be its being, or that it is not what it is and is what it is not

– each of these statements is saying the same thing. The for-itself is not the in-itself and can not to be it. But it is a relation to the in-itself. It is even the sole relation possible to the in-itself. Cut off on every side by the in-itself, the for-itself cannot escape it because the or-itself is *nothing* and it is separated from the in-itself by *nothing*. The for-itself is the foundation of all negativity and of all relation. *The for-itself is relation.*

(Sartre, 2003, p. 384)

Being-in-itself provides a basis for being-for-itself. I may not find being-in-itself in a pure form as I cannot isolate myself from all the experiences coming from external world, because my world, my reality, my situation creates my being-for-itself. I am not able to describe my pure existence because I am always some kind of. Mark Meyers explains:

The categories “being-for-itself” and “being-in-itself” were intended to replace the more traditional Kantian dualism between phenomena and noumena – between the appearance of a thing as opposed to the thing’s bring “in itself”.

(Meyers, 2008, p. 79)

In Sartre's view people are “thrown into the world”. This state of being (being-for-itself) is immersed in the world and comprehends the world through being in the world. Its nature is active and dynamic. It transcends what is “stagnant” into what is “projected”. For Sartre, existence is pure, it is a level of “stagnant”. Existence as a statement of pure being does not contain any other terms. We cannot say anything about it. Hence, existence can be synonymous with the concept of being. Sartre's logical starting point for further reflection is the assertion of the pure fact that one “is” because only after stating that one “is” we can start talking about “how” one is and “why” one is. We cannot find this logical beginning in Jaspers' philosophy. The level of existence in Sartre's philosophy remains pure. There are no predicates or purposefulness, but we will find it in Jaspers' theory.

Existential elucidation as purpose of life in Jaspersian philosophy

Existence for Sartre was only a point of departure for further research. On the contrary, Jaspers emphasized a different aspect of the notion of existence, i.e. the very possibility of an individual gaining knowledge of oneself.

Jaspers, as well as Heidegger (albeit the latter applied different instruments) postulated that existence should be clarified. Jaspers emphasized the role of existential communication and of experiencing „boundary situations”. For Jaspers interpersonal communication was the main method of shedding light on existence, or, to use a different expression, elucidating it. “the clarification of Existenz lights up its possibilities, its relations to other Existenzen and to Transcendence; it is a clarification of Existenz to itself” (Jaspers, 1957, p. 11). He stressed the constancy of communication is as opposed to a temporary shock caused by „boundary situation”, which does not have to necessarily be experienced by every individual. For him it is communication that enables us to elucidate, i.e. understand our own existence:

Existence analysis is existentially noncommittal. It is performed in consciousness at large, which also comprehends itself in it. It shows the universal of existence. In existence analysis everyone will recognize himself, not as this individual, but as an I at large. It is unequivocally and directly communicable. Elucidation of Existenz, on the other hand, involves commitment. It speaks from the individual to the individual.

(Jaspers, 1969, p. 71)

In the act of communicating the other person shows me, through their reactions to my actions, who I am. Long-term communication between two people who are close to each other may result in each of them shedding light on existence of the other (Piecuch, 2011, pp. 137–145). Jaspers frequently compares communication with love. Constancio Rodriques interprets his theory in the following way:

Though love and communication are not identical, they are inter-dependent. Without love there cannot be communication. Jaspers has called communication a loving struggle. It is love that gives rise to truthfulness in this struggle. Love is the fountainhead of communication. It is a basic requisite. Jasper says, “It (love) is its (communication’s) font and its luminary”. Without communication no love is possible. Love must undergo the test of communication. The end of communication is the death of love. If love is real, communication will not cease but change its form.

(Rodriques, 2005, p. 31)

However, as Jaspers claimed, not every exchange amounts to existential communication (Jaspers, 1990, p. 18). Certainly, interactions consisting in

recreating social roles do not belong to the latter category. He stressed that genuine communication between those who love each other must be free from any agenda. I may not stop being myself, or fear being myself, but I also cannot close myself off from the other person.

Clarification of existence also takes place through the experience of the situation. The concept of situation is of great importance in Jaspers' (Piecuch, 2011, pp. 16–34) and Sartre's philosophy. According to Henryk Pizskalski, the situation in its simplest definition means the position of a human being in some circumstances and his reaction to given circumstances. (Pizskalski, 1978, p. 100). Jaspers presented his theory of boundary situations in *Allgemeine Psychopathologie* and *Philosophie*. Both Sartre and Jaspers repeatedly emphasized that human life consists of being in given situations. For Sartre, this assumption follows from his theory of consciousness conceived of as a movement. Jaspers distinguished between possible situations and boundary situations. While we have a certain degree of control over possible situations, boundary situations are the ones that lie beyond our control and happen to us regardless of our intent.

Here the real point of any thought or expression cannot be what is directly said or meant. It has to do only indirectly with the "I myself" which is by "freedom" and in "communication" as historic consciousness" – with the "I" that comes to itself in "boundary situations", becomes sure of itself in "unconditional acts", fulfils itself as "absolute consciousness", and has no existence as either "subjectivity" or "objectivity" but appears to itself in existence through the tension between these two poles.

(Jaspers, 1969, p. 84)

In the work *Philosophie* Jaspers distinguished five basic boundary situations such as the state of being entangled with the world (i.e. being entangled in situations), death, suffering, struggle, and guilt. Gladys Portuondo explains:

Boundary situations have a historical (geschichtliche) characteristic for the potential Existenz and this is unique for the individual, although one cannot modify or suppress it, but can clarify it by way of active participation in it. The task of philosophy consists in the clarification of the Existenz according to the existential physiognomy of the individual, to the extent that it can open up and encourage the possibility of (self-) reflection within boundary situations and by making it possible

to establish its scope. Death, guilt, struggle, suffering, and foundering as boundary situations express the finitude of the Existenz and, at the same time, its potentiality. Their meaning can only be communicated in a paradoxical way, as opposed to the empirical existence – to which the Existenz, however, has to hold onto, given that this is its only means to manifest itself.

(Portuondo, 2016, pp. 54–55)

Death may serve us as a good example of a boundary situation, as it is not possible for me to decide that I will never die. There are many ways in which death may come into existence in the world as a possible situation, but, since the causes of death are transcendent and incomprehensible, I will never be able to find an answer to the question of why I will die one day. Shedding light on existence consists in an ability to become aware that death is a final and doubtless event in the life of every human.

Existence amounts to a person's being, and more precisely – the possibility of being, which reveals itself only by the way in which a given person acts in a given situation. Jaspersian understanding of the term *existence* differs from its common usage. It also differs from the way it was used by Sartre for whom it meant the state of existing. Jaspers held that existence which has not elucidated itself remains in the sphere of a mere possibility, and shedding light on existence results in its transformation (Piszkalski, 1978, p. 114). In the case of Jaspers, we cannot speak of the fact that existence is pure. Jaspersian existence is defined through the prism of being in a situation, which in Sartre will appear later, as an essence as a logical consequence of the assumption of pure existence – being. Let's now see how the philosophical notions of existence, being, essence, situation and clarification of existence can be applied in the literary context.

Anna Karenina's existence and essence

The story of Anna Karenina belongs to the literary canon. A young wife of Aleksey Karenin, Anna, meets Count Aleksey Vronsky and becomes his lover. She abandons her husband and as a result becomes an outcast excluded from her social circles. She suffers from depression, exacerbated by her increasing jealousy of her lover. Anna's growing conviction that her lover has stopped loving her pushes her to suicide.

Vladimir Nabokov in one of his essays writes, that:

Anna is not just a woman, not just a splendid specimen of womanhood, she is a woman with a full, compact, important moral nature: everything about her character is significant and striking, and this applied as well to her love. She cannot limit herself as another character in the book, Princess Betsy, does, to an undercover affair. Her truthful and passionate nature makes disguise and secrecy impossible.

(Nabokov, 2002, p. 295)

In the Polish translation of this fragment we can find the word “mask” – we read that Anna’s nature “excludes the use of masks”. In the context of existential considerations, the concept of a mask is very important. Mask or “putting on a mask” is frequently associated with the concept of lies, insincerity, and inauthenticity. According to Nabokov, Anna does not wear such a mask. From Sartrean perspective, we can say that Anna rejects bad faith, that is, she does not adapt her behaviour, her actions to the principles and conventions prevailing in St. Petersburg at the time. As Walter Kaufmann noticed: “Tolstoy was quite determined to attack society and bad faith” (Kaufmann, 1994, p. 6). As Jaspers would put it, Karenina’s existence is authentic; she does not pretend to be someone other than she is. Of course, the reaction of the society to the woman’s open love story is very cruel, but the way society treats the love of this high-ranking woman deserves a separate text. For the purposes of this article I will focus on one scene – the horse race from chapter XXVIII. Nabokov emphasizes that the race scene contains “all kinds of deliberate symbolic implications” (Nabokov, 2002, p. 111). Let’s focus on Anna’s behaviour.

Anna attends horse races, where the competitors are officers of the Tsar Army, including Vronsky. Once the race starts Anna forgets about everything around her and her sole focus is on Vronsky. She does not hide her anxiety and fear that her lover may suffer an injury. Anna shows herself in XXVIII and in next chapter of the book: she now leads a double life, and the impossibility of her situation is cruelly and dramatically rendered in the moment of Vronsky’s accident, when she “can no longer contain her emotion before Karenin” (Thorlby, 1987, p. 61). As a matter of fact, Vronsky does have an accident in front of Anna’s very eyes.

Coming back to Jaspers, we may venture to state that what Anna experienced was a boundary situation. The heroin breaks under pressure.

Everyone was feeling horrified; so that when Vronsky fell to the ground, and Anna moaned aloud, there was nothing very out of the way in it. But afterwards a change come over Anna's face which really was beyond decorum. She utterly lost her head. She began fluttering like a caged bird, at one moment would have got up and moved away, at the next turned to Betsy. Let us go, let us go! She said.

(Tolstoy, 1940, p. 461)

In the face of experience that was so emotionally loaded, Anna is no longer able to act in line with social conventions. She gets up from her seat and shouts (in the 2012 film adaptation, she shouts the name of her beloved Vronsky). Marianne Sturman writes that Anna "is the most natural character of all the urban noblemen in the novel. The strength of her inner nature enables Anna to cast off conventional society" (Sturman, 1993, p. 73). Overcome by emotions, she acts on impulse. Her behaviour does not result from a cool analysis – if this had been the case, it would not have been a situation that elucidates existence. In accordance with Jaspersian theory, this elucidated aspect of Anna's existence shows that she attaches more importance to the feelings she has for her lover than to social conventions. The heroine ignores her husband, who, in fear of social embarrassment pleads with her to compose herself. Anna's behaviour and her impulsive behaviour fit Jaspersian theory of a boundary situation that sheds light on one's existence.

Sartre would not have wondered how Vronsky's accident affected Anna. His reflection on Anna's existence would have been limited to an assertion that Anna exists. However, our heroine is being thrown into the world every time she experiences certain situations. Each experience influences her and leaves its mark, changing her and shaping her essence. Anna, as a subject acting in the world, constantly reacts to it. Her reactions affect her environment, i.e. her social circles consisting of the members of Russian upper class. Sartre did not believe in elucidating existence. If he were to analyse *Anna Karenina*, he would have started from his ontological reflections but would have not proceeded to teleological concepts the way Jaspers did. However, Sartre would have undoubtedly been interested in the following scene of Tolstoy's novel. On her way back from the races, Anna confesses to Karenin the truth about her love affair:

No, you were not mistaken, she said deliberately, looking desperately into his sold face. You were not mistaken. I was, and I could not help

being in despair. I hear you, but I am thinking of him, I love him, I am his mistress; I can't bear you; I'm afraid of you, and I hate you... You can do what you like to me. And dropping back into the corner of the carriage, she broke into sobs, hiding her face in her hands.

(Tolstoy, 1940, p. 466)

Karenin is aware of the events happening because during the scene, as Nabokov rightly points out:

Firstly there is the Karenin slant. In the pavilion at the races a military man, Karenin's social superior, a high-placed general or a member of the royal family, kids Karenin, saying – and you, you're not racing; upon which Karenin replies deferentially and ambiguously, "the race I am running is a harder one", a phrase with a double meaning, since it could simply mean that a statesman's duties are more difficult than competitive sport, but also may hint at Karenin's delicate position as a betrayed husband who must conceal his plight and find a narrow course of action between his marriage and his career. And it is also to be marked that the breaking of the horse's back coincides with Anna's revealing her unfaithfulness to her husband.

(Nabokov, 2002, p. 111)

In Sartrean interpretation, Anna transcends the future – she projects in her imagination possible future developments, she creates her being-for-itself. She *is* but also she *is some kind of* – in this situation she experiences feelings of insecurity and anxiety, fearing what is awaiting her and her family.

If we interpret this situation through the lens of Jaspersian theory, it may be stated that Anna's communication with her husband also elucidates her existence. Anna, filled with emotions, tells Karenin that she loves another man. She is frank and honest in her confession, as she bares her soul to her husband. Aleksiej is bewildered. Suddenly Anna reveals herself to him as a different woman as she tells him of her hatred. Karenin's reaction is one of emotional numbness, he doesn't know how to behave at what to do. We cannot tell whether or not he experiences his conversation with Anna as a boundary situation. Jaspers distinguished only five types of boundary situations; however, they are general enough to leave room for various boundaries that individuals may experience. Experience of a boundary situation is solely ours, as it belongs to our inner world.

Conclusions

Sartre's ontology, based on the dialectics of existence and essence is devoid of teleological dimension. The term "existence" refers here to the state of existing, whereas the term "essence" refers to the manner in which something exists. In *Being and Nothingness* we will not find references to Jaspersian elucidation of existence. In the view of the French existentialist any elucidation of being would have to hide mystical element, as he put it a possibility of insight into one's pure being-in-itself. And this, he claims, is logically impossible, as being-in-itself, i.e. existence always remains veiled by the escape consisting in transcendence towards being-for-itself. If we limit our reflection to the notion of existence, we cannot venture beyond an assertion that something exists.

Obviously, we may also reflect upon Anna's freedom, her responsibility for her own actions, the concept of bad faith characterizing the society, some ethical aspects of her life but all such considerations lie in the domain of essence, i.e. *how* something exists. Nevertheless, Sartrean notion of existence provides a great departure point to consider the ways in which an individual exists in a given situation. Jaspers did not present a detailed analysis of the ontology of being in the way Sartre did, but he can ask for example, if love between Anna and Vronsky was a form of communication.

We may notice the emerging scheme: first, according to Sartre's theory, we will say that Karenina *is*. The statement that the heroine exists is a logical and ontological starting point for further considerations. In the next step, it should be determined that our heroine *is some kind of*. At this point we leave Sartre's level of existence and move to the level of essence. The essence of Anna Karenina is for example: her character – sincere; emotions – sensitive; feelings – in love; attitudes – mother, high-society woman, wife, lover; opinion – she does not want to live in bad faith because of social norms; behaviours – she reacts very emotionally to her lover's accident, and so on. All these terms are the essence of Anna and are revealed in specific situations that our heroine experiences. They create Anna, but they do not wholly constitute her as according to Sartre, Anna is still a possibility, is constantly being created, is an unfinished project. Jaspers goes a step further. He states that Anna's existence is elucidated gradually, also in given situations and communication. Anna learns who she is through situations she experiences.

We can note here that it is Sartrean notion of essence and not the notion of existence that can be juxtaposed with Jaspersian concept of existence. Sartre's essence and Jaspers' existence are a certain possibility, they are not cognitively accessible to us, they are revealed in situations (Jaspers' communication in Sartre's philosophy is a situation of being with another human being), and they will never reveal themselves completely.

Despite many differences, Jaspers and Sartre share certain intuitions. Sartre's ontological conception is an interesting addition that complements Jaspers' analyses. Sartrean philosophy of existence is devoid of Jaspersian teleological approach in which transcending movement should aim towards elucidation of existence and result in one gaining a deeper insight into oneself. For Sartre such considerations were superfluous. This is why he referred to his existentialism as atheistic and distanced himself from Jaspers. But, as our analysis shows the concepts of these two philosophers are to a certain degree complementary. What is more, Sartrean philosophy provides us with a certain kind of ontological logic while Jaspers enriches it with elements of usefulness and teleology. Thus, Sartre and Jaspers present us with a very coherent and multidimensional theory of a human being in the world, the theory that can be applied not only to the literary examples but also to our lives.

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THE NOTION OF EXISTENCE IN JEAN-PAUL SARTRE'S
AND KARL JASPERS' PHILOSOPHY
IN THE LITERARY CONTEXT OF *ANNA KARENINA*

Summary

This paper attempts to explain the notion of existence on the basis of a specific literary example. Firstly, we will analyse this concept in the thought of two most prominent representatives of existentialism: Karl Jaspers and Jean-Paul Sartre. Despite striking differences in the way both thinkers understand the notion of existence, they complement each other. I characterize the approach of each philosopher, indicating the sources of their differences and points where they meet. In the next step I will apply the concept of existence to a specific literary example of the *Anna Karenina*.