

## «THE LITTLE PRINCE» AS A PHILOSOPHICAL DRAMA: COGNITIVE – DISCOURSEOLOGICAL ASPECT

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**Abstract.** The article is devoted to the problem of interpreting the work of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry “The Little Prince”. A new interpretation is proposed in a modern philosophical and discursive key. The challenges of the present make it possible to rethink the image and the deep semiotic content with which it is endowed. The interpretation of the author's philosophical idea is not limited to dry statements that this is a philosophical fairy tale. An attempt is made to bring the work with its basic references to a higher level of verifications and generalizations. The work, small in volume, contains semiotic depth with its variability and semantic chalcidony.

The Little Prince is considered as a holistic image – at the epicenter of the canvas, which is complemented by other characters. All together form a single and multifaceted background of human reality. The new reading is conditioned by the problems of humanity at the beginning of the 21st century, discourse studies, communication technologies, issues of globalization, as well as trends in the spread of depressive moods in the modern world, on the European continent in particular.

**Keywords:** discourse, communication, worldview, text, The Little Prince.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The modern picture of the world has taken an unexpected turn towards madness and has acquired a threatening color and in real time has approached apocalyptic threats (Melnyk, 2023). There is no hyperbole or cheap pathos in this formulation. Without any doubt, humanity (at least its progressive and educated part) must throw maximum resources into attempts to understand the nature of the challenges and offer effective recipes for getting out of the current situation. Such a scenario is not a utopia, because we have witnessed how humanity responded to the outbreak of coronavirus infection with multi-billion dollar investments, as well as the involvement of leading world centers and human resources in the development of a vaccine, and in less than a year the first experimental drugs were already undergoing clinical trials. We can sadly say that the world community has not yet realized the planetary threats posed by Russia and other totalitarian regimes that have “played out» too much for war and are juggling nuclear warheads. In fact, an apocalyptic picture is emerging, which has been depicted in detail by science fiction writers and film directors. In the context of the need to analyze and interpret the challenges of our days, we would like to draw attention to the fact that the description of the global spiritual disease of humanity should involve not only political scientists, cultural scientists,

philosophers, psychologists and other specialists, but also linguists (who work in the field of discourse studies and communication technologies) and specialists in the media sphere, cultural scientists (who work in the field of metasystem studies, studying the causes of the collapse of civilizations of past eras); neurobiologists (who interpret human behavior in the context of biochemistry, hormonal background and various levels of cause-and-effect relationships); social psychologists (who deal with issues of "burnout" of cultures, devaluation of values and causes of various addictions; also the origins of collective depression – according to statistics, over the past 50-70 years in Europe, the amount of antidepressant consumption has increased by 400-700 times – now an entire pharmacological industry is working on this problem); conflictologists (who systematically study the causes of aggressive behavior, total antipathies of the collective "I", as well as the stability of these moods and their organic integration into the picture of the world), who would explain ethnic, religious, military, etc. confrontations in different regions of the planet – it is obvious that they are not identical in nature; specialists in the field of theology, who would explain the devaluation of religions, the departure from spiritual canons and the drift of the spiritual sphere towards soullessness, indifference and various kinds of hypocrisy – which are unsuccessfully masked under various kinds of narratives, etc. In other words, we are faced with a picture of a global and systemic disease that requires a multifaceted solution – involving specialists from various fields of knowledge. So we will try to make an attempt to describe these challenges multiplicatively (fragmentarily) and look for at least micro-episodic answers to the painful questions of today.

We have repeatedly presented in our publications and in the format of other messages information about the "separation" of the scientific and technical sphere of our reality from the spiritual. We are talking about a rapid spurt in the development of this industry, which began in the middle of the 19th century. In the middle and second half of the 19th century, there was a tendency towards synchronization – the development of educational institutions (for different social groups), interest in fiction and art in general, the improvement of the legal sphere, and many others, but the development of philosophy was only a tendency. The metamorphoses of the 20th century. inevitably put our civilization on the rails of technical development and war. This is how we entered the 21st century. The results of such dynamics did not take long to wait – we observe the hotbed of war in different corners of the planet and it seems that there are no tendencies to fade. Given the many world leaders, politicians, thinkers are afraid to make predictions even for the near future.

## 2. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

So, in the context of the above, let's take a look at some works that at first glance do not contain pronounced humanistic or philosophical problems. The work of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry "The Little Prince" came into the field of our intellectual reflections (Saint-Exupéry, 2014).

The Little Prince in the context of the information and communication space, various plot configurations, dialogues and monologues is a unique character in view of the problem of our civilization at the beginning of the 21st century. At some point, when humanity crossed the line of centuries, it felt abandoned, the meaninglessness of all existence. Cosmic cold burst into human space, life lost its comfort and, like the Little Prince, felt useless, lonely. In the era of globalization and absolute integration into the information space, which should give a sense of belonging to a multi-billion family, feel organically merged into a huge cluster of human entities, as well as an unlimited range of possible

communications, humanity is experiencing a crisis of a planetary scale. And in fact, there is no sphere of our existence that would not be affected by crisis phenomena (this has affected the white race the most. An illustrative argument is that the use of narcotic drugs in Europe over the past 50 years has increased 300 times, and antidepressants, as already noted, 400-700 times, the number of suicide cases has significantly increased). Here, appealing to the laws of dialectics, a lamp of hope flickers, because it is precisely according to these laws – after the recession and crisis phenomena – that the sinusoidal curve of evolution will inevitably move upwards, into the zone of positive indicators.

And try to write out organic-contextual connections and generalize the complex of inconsistencies. Actually, they should highlight the problem as a source of destructive elements (Derrida, 1993).

The modern paradigm of our existence shows us how we are drifting further and further into the zone of absurdity. And what is important, we have recruited all the thinkers, philosophers, prophets, writers and poets of past eras into our team, successfully packed them into a suitcase and are heading in the opposite direction from common sense. The past teaches us nothing.

So let's focus on the world of the Little Prince, on his thoughts and narratives.

First of all, let's pay attention to the fact that he is endowed with absolutely anthropomorphic features – that is, he is a person, not a fairy-tale abstract character. But he comes to the human community small, unprotected, and at first glance childishly naive. In the context of this image, the author in the preamble (dedication) notes “To Leon Vert, when he was little” – that is, this is a look and address to the past (childhood), to his, but also to his own, to any. So both to himself and to us past.

The plot begins with the confrontation of two forces (elements) – the boa constrictor wants to swallow its victim; and, in the end, it swallows and the victim, together with the boa constrictor, turns into a hat. This experience of observing the world is the first analysis of the confrontation of two elements. The author- narrator (hereinafter referred to as the “narrator”), observing, grew up, became a pilot, entered the world of adults – where adults play by adult rules.

From the beginning of the storyline, the text structure is pierced by the depths of the semiotic-semantic monad – the idea of the Little Prince. Its one hundred percent anthropomorphism directs the course of analytical thought to the essence of human existence. Therefore, it is not accidental that the Cosmos-cosmos of the desert, in the immensity of which two solitudes meet. At first glance, with a somewhat capricious request, “draw a sheep”. This simplification of the text suggests referring the work, the story of the meeting, the communicative episodes to the genre of a fairy tale or a fairy tale for adults, but we insist that in general the plot, the idea, the text is primarily a parable in its plot and semantic-semiotic features. Specialists from the literary criticism department may object to such an interpretation, but from the standpoint of hermeneutics, in the context of global messages, philosophical subtext, this visual simplification, provisional simplicity, naive-childish communications mask immense philosophical wisdom and depth. (Wittgenstein, 1995, p.38). Imitative accessibility with elements of the primitive plot requires immersion, deep reflections and provokes the search for keys (Bartes, 1968) to understanding our reality. These total features allow us to transfer the work to another genre. The difference is only in the text format – parables are usually endowed with laconicism, and in our case, we will assume that the parable is detailed and invariant.

The Little Prince's next requirement is “*I want a lamb that will live a long time*”. Not frail and not old, so that the temporal framework of his existence is expanded. This life-affirming idea, which sounds in the desert from the lips of a little boy, is one of the leitmotifs, the idea, the author's plan. According to the

plot, our character offers an alternative – he drew a box in which a small animal is placed. It is no coincidence that the author introduces this image into the plot (at the beginning of the work), because in many cultures and Abrahamic religions the lamb is a symbol of purity, vulnerability, someone who needs care. The "lamb" in the work is a deep symbol, a metaphor, a multifaceted image. It requires immersion in the knowledge of its idea and essence – to the point that new horizons open up not only for the characters introduced into the text, but also for all of us – outside observers.

On cold nights and hot days, with the famous African starry sky, a miracle happens in the fate of the hero-narrator – the appearance of the Little Prince, who longs for communication – does not require treats, toys, comfort, but longs for communication. *"The Little Prince asked me about everything, and it seemed that he did not hear my questions"*. Dialogues with a little boy in the desert gradually reveal his world, views, values. At some point, the author learns that the Little Prince has his own world, and everything is small there.

Then the Little Prince seriously remarked – *"it's nothing, everything is very small there for me"*. This suggests the idea that the human planet is also small, also lost in the boundless and cold cosmos.

Communication between two people in a completely unusual format – a strange pilot who had an accident and an equally strange guest – a little boy with unusual questions, requests, narratives. The Little Prince periodically offers formulations that have become self-sufficient ideas and aphorisms. Actually, he enriched earthlings and our wisdom with his childish observations, syllogisms, generalizations, and they entered the world's intellectual and spiritual experience with golden formulas. Also, the idea formulated by the Little Prince and enclosed in a general text composition is a kind of pearl, an ornament of the entire text. And in this regard, contextual features play an important role – and *"perhaps, a little sadly added: If you go straight ahead, where your eyes look, you won't go far"*. The little inhabitant of a distant and small planet draws from his life experience.

The emotional state that the Little Prince most often experiences is surprise. He observes the world of the adult inhabitants of planet Earth and experiences surprise. And he imposes his own logic on what he sees – the logic of the Little Prince, which does not coincide with the logic of earthlings.

The format of human existence contrasts with the world of the Little Prince – *"adults love numbers. When you tell them about your new friend, they are never interested in **the most important thing**. They will never ask: what kind of voice does he have? What games does he like?...."* The most important thing is the world of a child or an adult, the world around him with all the curiosities and things that cause surprise. The benchmark of the world of the Little Prince's philosophical positions is the experience of this world, impressions, emotions, surprise. But the expressed opposition to it is the formula of adult earthlings – *"I saw a house for a hundred thousand francs... That's beauty!"*

The Little Prince operates with high philosophical categories that are included in his childish definitions, in somewhat unexpected generalizations – *"if you want to have a sheep, then you exist"* – these ideas are consonant with the thoughts and narratives of the narrator and merge into one monolith – the world of the narrator and the Little Prince – a single whole. After which follows the next and somewhat unexpected statement – *"Children should be indulgent towards adults"* – this is the highest manifestation of humanism. But here a question arises for the Little Prince – *"how to deal with the responsibility of adults towards little princes and the entire population of the planet of childhood?"*. In the context of these reflections, a thought-memory comes associatively. More than a year ago, information spread across the Internet that in one of the European countries, a taxi driver, returning home at midnight, saw

in the headlights of his car a 3-4 year old boy who, in the light of dim streetlights, was walking in the middle of the road (the dividing strip) and mumbling something, or singing. He had no fear, no hysterical feelings, did not call for his mother or people, but simply walked. The taxi driver was shocked by what he saw and immediately called the police... Universal loneliness and abandonment abandonment and uselessness focused on this boy. Here everything, all philosophical narratives, the messages of the prophets and the Messiah, all humanistic literature are reinterpreted – after this (and there are many) case, can we talk about philosophy, meaning, aesthetics of life, about the rationality and expediency of the human picture of the world. A person hides behind embellished, rhetorical and pathetic narratives and masks his spiritual inadequacy with them. In this context, we can recall thousands of deprived, crippled and killed Ukrainian children as a result of Russian aggression, as well as 20 thousand kidnapped and taken to foreign lands, who do not fall under any logic and are the pinnacle of absurdity of everything that is nominated as a person, spiritual evolution, humanism in the human context.

«*I don't want at all*», says the author of the story, “*that my book be read for entertainment – it's sad when friends are forgotten*”, he continues, and at this stage of reading the text, it is striking that the concept of friendship, friendship as a category, is one of the key and system-forming units. It is gaining signs of conceptuality.

The ability to see and recognize (which is a category of semiology) is organically incorporated into the text, sewn into its canvas. This concept is periodically appealed to by both the author of the text and the Little Prince – *my friend never explained anything. Perhaps he thought that I was the same as him. But, unfortunately, I do not know how to see sheep through the walls of a box. Perhaps I am a little like adults...* Contemplation and observation of the world are the main actions that fill the life of the Little Prince and resonate with the philosophies of ancient India, Taoism, Jainism, Buddhism, and one of the maxims was the generalization of life experience – *only the heart sees well...* One of the key actions in the intentions and behavior of our hero is watching the sunset. Such a meditative action – as a theme, idea, aesthetic reflection, a special state – merging with the world – sunset – is a phenomenon of a universal scale and the observer merges with the elements, which, by the way, have two principles, two opposites, but they are in a state of antagonism. We are talking about the sun, light – on the one hand, and darkness on the other. The border, the limit, the transition from one state to another is sunset or dawn. But the Little Prince and the characters of this work prefer sunset. Because after it opens up the cosmos with stars, the infinity of galaxies and the universe. In addition, the magic of hot and cold colors excites a special magical mood, evokes from the depths of historical memory impressions, voices of long-gone eras.

There is also other symbolism in the storyline of this work. Such categories as “small and large”, “near and far” acquire a special semantic content. The Little Prince, as follows from the nominative itself – is small. This has its own deep symbolism, which requires a separate analytical view. But, let's say baobabs, they are gigantic, “*and if the planet is very small, and there are a lot of baobabs, they will tear it to pieces*”. This metaphor masks the deep dialectic of our life – the Little Prince is in opposition to giant trees and fights with them – you need to pull out the baobabs as soon as you see them. Because large baobabs will certainly become the path of self-destruction. They will not only tear the planet apart with their roots, kill it, but as a result they will also die themselves. Therefore, the Little Prince calls for observation, the ability to recognize and distinguish. In this case, the sprouts of baobabs and roses are the same and observation, vigilance and analytical mind are needed to distinguish evil when it is still

small, insignificant. To eradicate it and prevent it from spreading to cover the entire planet, so that it does not become large. It is difficult to eradicate a great evil. Therefore, this text contains a maxim, wrapped in childish formulations, but behind which lies a global philosophical idea – *"you cleaned yourself in the morning – carefully clean your planet too"*. A careful attitude towards the planet and constant monitoring of everything on it and so that baobab seeds are not accidentally sown. The fight against baobabs *"cannot be postponed – there will be trouble"*. And here a maxim sounds in the format of biblical rhetoric and stylistics – *"Children! – I say. – Beware of baobabs!"* – and so associations with the "baobabs" of our reality arise, how they create the climate on the planet – start wars, cause ecological disasters – form a large palette of evil. – *"And when I painted baobabs, I was inspired by the consciousness that this is an urgent matter"*. Here, a light watercolor brushstroke is used to combine a hint of the need for a new epistemology, a new vision and a new interpretation of everything, that our acquired knowledge and experience are damaged, oriented towards false values.

The author of the story explains – *"little by little I understood your sad life"* because the Little Prince has only one entertainment – admiring the sunset. But we understand that this is an adult entertainment. The colors of the sunset are not so much entertainment as they set the tone for deep philosophical reflections, knowledge of the universe and the universe in oneself. They provoke reflections on the meaning of life and attempts to understand oneself in the context of the elements of cosmic infinity – *"you know... when it becomes very sad, it is nice to watch the sun rise"...* – not children's toys or any entertainment, but the observation of cosmic evidence – accessible to the eye, becomes the Little Prince's need.

The little hero of this story periodically plunges into silence. Actually, it harmonizes with the sunset and cosmic infinity. In it he finds answers, questions and interpretations of existence. This fact is also a marker of a deep merger with the universe and higher wisdom – *"when you saw the sunset forty-three times, were you also sad"* – But the Little Prince did not answer. – *He asked unexpectedly...* – As if it was the result of long silent reflections.

Criticism of the world of people constantly emanates from the mouth of the Little Prince. His quiet, watercolor –transparent, unexpected and controversial questions sound not like the naive phrases of a little boy, but like an insignificant impulse, a push into another sphere of thinking. In this way he demonstrates a different logic of thinking and the logic of being – the logic of the Little Prince. – *I am busy with serious business!* – *He looked at me in surprise: – Serious business!* – and here the author put not a question mark, but an exclamation – *You speak like adults!... And he ruthlessly added: You confuse everything... You have completely mixed everything up! – I know one planet where a gentleman with a crimson face lives. He has never smelled a single flower. He has never looked at a star. I have never loved anything – and I repeated – I am a serious person!... But it is not a person, it is a mushroom:* from the point of view of the little hero, to be a person it is necessary to look at the stars, to smell the flowers. – And against this background the Little Prince derives his formula of love – *If someone loves a flower, which is the only one in the world and only on one of millions and millions of stars, this is enough: you look at the stars and feel happy* – this is how the reflections of the little boy coincided with the philosophy of Plato and the ideas of Platonic love. Not to pluck, not to appropriate for oneself, mistakenly considering *"what has been plucked as one's own"*, but to observe and enjoy meditative thoughts and reflections, observing the harmony of the world. And this is much higher than human existence with scenarios of human behavior (Karpenko, 2018; Kononenko & Vorobets, 2023).

One of the key episodes in the story of the Little Prince is his communication with a little flower. This became a successful metaphor for human existence, a kind of epicenter and culmination of the work. It expounds the world of playful plots of the relationship between two principles – male and female. A complex paradigm is built in which the rational and irrational are woven into reality, completely illogical, flirtatious, demanding and at the same time unprotected, which made another line of communication possible. She is playful. She conquered the Little Prince and forces him to play the game called life, according to her own rules. – *She wanted to lie naively and exposed herself – she disappeared, then coughed two or three times – Let the Little Prince feel his guilt -, she coughed harder – she decided to punish him with pangs of conscience...* – A rhetorical question arises – Why “punish» the Little Prince and what is his fault in front of the flower? Words from human reality sound from the lips of the little flower – Words that had no weight, he took close to his heart and felt very unhappy... – *I shouldn't have listened to her... You should never listen to flowers...* In the mouth of a flower, words depreciate, lose their weight, they become not so much a means of communication as a means of manipulation – And here the Platonic formula works again – you don't have to listen, you have to look at them and breathe in their fragrance... – *and I didn't know how to enjoy it. – Behind those naive tricks I should have guessed tenderness... And then he confesses – ... I was too young to know how to love...* From this follows another formula of life – you need to mature for love, grow up; go through the path of evolutionary improvement, – it is the essence of the mature.

The King offers the Little Prince a different format of communication. Meeting him on one of the planets forces him to look for new formulas of communication. The King can only give orders. But the positive thing was that.... – *he was very kind and therefore gave reasonable orders.* – Another maxim follows from this – only a reasonable King gives correct, positive orders. – The basis of power should be reason – the King summarizes, – *I have the right to demand obedience, because my orders are reasonable...* Then comes the conclusion that appeals not to reason, but to wisdom – *If you can judge yourself correctly, then you are truly wise...* – Leaving the King's planet, the Little Prince feels the inadequacy and inconsistency of the worldview of people with his worldview – *These adults are strange* – he concludes, leaving the planet of the old monarch.

The next cognitive inconsistency was a character like “The Ambitious Man”. The little prince was surprised by the aspirations and imperatives of the inhabitant of this planet... – *For the arrogant, everyone else is their admirers. – He had a strange hat on his head, so that he could take it off when bowing to the admirers. And he liked the applause in his honor. The little prince “got tired of this monotonous game in five minutes” – communication with the ambitious man. And he generalizes – Proud people hear nothing but praise. – So flattery, flattery and praise, even if it is false, become the most desirable communicative “message” for the ambitious. They form an atmosphere of insincere words around themselves, and it is the best and most desirable environment for them. The Little Prince is surprised by such a desire, but he wants to understand the essence of such intentions and he asks – But what good does it do you? – and again noting the inadequacy of adults, he leaves his planet in surprise.*

His next interlocutor was the Drunkard. He puzzled the Little Prince with his generalizations and explanations. His punny explanations of his behavior demonstrate a hidden attempt to escape from reality. He hides his shame from alcohol addiction in alcohol. But the positive thing is that this feeling of shame is generally inherent in him. And when he met the Little Prince, he felt sorry for him. Still, he was

"confused, he went away". And once again, such a meeting caused a feeling of confusion and misunderstanding of the adult world. – *"These adults... are very strange people"*.

The next meeting was with a Businessman who was absorbed in calculations. He calls the stars "golden things". His business also caused complete surprise – he buys and accumulates stars, but is unable to comprehend space, to enjoy the starry sky – he is completely absorbed in his work. And the Little Prince, realizing the absurdity of his actions, declares – *"But it's not very serious!"* – and leaves his planet.

Finally, on the path of his travels, he meets the Lantern Maker. His job is to light and extinguish the lantern. The Little Prince liked this, who claims – *"It is really useful, because it is beautiful"*. He was also strange, but he took care that there was light. From the point of view of the little hero, the Lantern Maker's activities make sense and he stands out against the background of the previous characters. He is the only one who could become my friend. But his planet is too small – he thought.

The Geographer, who wrote "thick books", completely confused the Little Prince with his thoughts. He also revealed to him the meaning of the word "ephemeral". Transience, impermanence, transience, and relativity of this world are temporal categories and an integral feature of existence. And his recommendation to visit planet Earth – "it has a good reputation" – was good and appropriate for our traveler.

The first meeting on planet Earth took place with the Snake. It is noteworthy that our hero's conversation with the snake, unlike his previous communications (except for the Lantern), is meaningful and falls under logical models that are understandable to both the snake and the Little Prince. She reveals truths to him. The first maxim was that – *"it's lonely with people too"*. She also told him that she was small, but had more strength than the king – and wrapped her arms around the little boy's leg. And she said – *"But you are innocent and came from a star"...* – also the snake is the first character who feels sorry for the Little Prince, sympathizes with him and offers help. The snake also answered the question of why she speaks in riddles, that I solve riddles and this phrase has a deep meaning hidden in it, which can be decoded if the snake is associated with death. *After these words – "they fell silent"*.

The little Prince's subsequent meetings are also filled with philosophical meaning. Having met a flower in the desert, he asked her – *"Where are the people?"...* – *there seem to be only six or seven of them – she replies – because she saw a caravan many years ago*. And then the flower generalizes, *"people – ... are carried by the wind. They have no roots, it is very inconvenient"*. The absence of "roots" is a strong metaphor that can unfold to considerable depths and is a symbol of impermanence, transience, changeability and loss of connections with past and future eras.

The next observational experience (when he saw the mountains) gave rise to successive definitions – *... people lack imagination. They only repeat what they are told...* – Here, communicative projection highlights another aspect – a person should absorb information, synthesize and make high-level conclusions, and should also take care of imagination – go beyond existing stereotypes.

The Little Prince has a hard time experiencing the surrounding reality. It often traumatizes him and he cries. In general, the theme of tears, as a philosophical idea – of deep emotional experience, indifference and not only in relation to his own planet, but to the Universe as well, is composed in the text. – *... She is so mysterious, this country of tears..., ... did not want the Little Prince to see her cry. She was such a proud flower..., – He suddenly sobbed. It got dark. I put down the tools. – and, falling on the grass, he cried.*



The next key episode, a kind of ideological and semantic culmination, is communication with the Fox. In search of people, our little hero meets the Fox, who opens up the following episodes of philosophical understanding of reality to him. The first category that aroused interest was "taming"... – *And what does "taming" mean? – This is a long-forgotten concept, – said the Fox. – It means "to attract to oneself..."* Then they have a dialogue around "taming". And in the process of the dialogue, the Fox asks the Little Prince – *...Please... tame me!... The little Prince replied that he has little time, because he wants to find friends, learn many things. But he answers... You can only learn what you tame... People no longer have time to learn anything...* – Then the Fox draws attention to the fact that... *language is a source of misunderstanding ...* And reveals the secret of happiness, which lies in – *... I will start to worry and worry; I know the price of happiness!...* After the Little Prince tamed the Fox and it was time to say goodbye, then the Fox revealed a secret – *"only the heart sees well. The most important thing is invisible to the eyes"*. And the final and culminating moment of communication with the Fox was the maxim that frames the entire work with all the characters, episodes, dialogues... – *People have forgotten this truth, – said the Fox..., you always take responsibility for the one you tamed.* – This became the highest wisdom, a kind of leitmotif and tuning fork of the work and to the work of A. Exupery. This is the highest manifestation of morality, dignity, humanism, which in its scale can be compared to the Holy Scripture. But this formula of being, according to the Fox, has long been forgotten by people.

Meeting with the Rifleman The following truth was revealed to the Little Prince – *when adults sleep on trains or yawn... – small children lean their noses against the windows... – watch the world.* Because it is open to them, like children's souls to the world – *...only children know what they are looking for, – the Little Prince noted ...* And the Rifleman summarizes in a short phrase – *they are happy...* – stating the fact of the purity, sincerity and openness of children's souls and a person is happy only in childhood. And also that happiness is when you know what you are looking for.

The subsequent plot apperceptively deduces the image and meaning of water as a deep metaphor. In the desert, it is not just a liquid to quench thirst, it becomes an all-encompassing meaning of existence, an analogue of bread in the Holy Scriptures... – *Do you know what thirst is? – our hero asked the Little Prince, but he did not answer, only noted... – the heart also needs water.*

The desert in the final episodes of the work becomes an element with deep semantic content. It is the background, the background of our reality, a part of the universe, with its own rules and laws. And it, as a potential element that can take life, is opposed by a small spring, a well, a drop of water lost in the sand. This is a boundless ocean of hot sand, where the real value is not gold coins or other precious things – they lose their meaning here, but a drop of water. Actually, it is composed in the work as a philosophical category through which you can see another world. And the Little Prince helps to do this. – *The desert is beautiful because there is a spring hidden somewhere in it... – Walking like that... I saw a well..., – I want this water, – said the Little Prince, – give me a drink... – he drank, closing his eyes. – Like with that water. When you gave me a drink, it was like music...*

a deep existential meaning, when the author-narrator testifies – *I felt that some strange things were happening. I hugged him like a small child, but it seemed to me that he was slipping away somewhere into the abyss, and I could not hold him back ...* – this is a person, humanity, the inhabitants of the Earth, civilization unable to save the Little Prince and his philosophy. Unable to comprehend the depth of meanings, to realize the glass through which a child looks at the world and sees those phenomena of our existence that are no longer accessible to adults. He sees the truths. It, this philosophy is the foundation of human

existence. It is a continuation of the ideas of Buddha, Confucius, Jesus Christ. The following comment is suggested here: if humanity had not thrown out of its value space the world picture of the great prophets, the messiah, the humanist philosophers, and with it the Little Prince, then at the beginning of the 21st century we would not have witnessed thousands of "little princes" dying, and hundreds of thousands becoming refugees and anxiously waiting for their parents from the front lines, and we emphasize that this is in the era of supercomputers, space tourism, and artificial intelligence. It is obvious that a global failure occurred in the development of civilizations and at some stage of our evolutionary path we "took the wrong turn". The Little Prince reminds us of this more than once (Melnyk, 2022).

So we can move on to generalizations and thematically outline the range of problems and their format in the context of the creative work of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. "The Little Prince" from the moment of publication was recognized by genre as a philosophical fairy tale, or a fairy tale for adults. But evaluating this work in the context of the 20th century, and especially the 21st – in the format of cataclysms, moral decline, social upheavals and socio-mental degradations, we are forced to revisit once again both the Holy Scriptures and the humanist philosophers and writers of all eras in order to grasp the essence of phenomena and processes and finally come closer to understanding the phenomenon of man. In this vein lies the meaning of a new reading and the legacy of the outstanding French writer.

So, the Little Prince is a wanderer, and is in the format of constant loneliness, sadness (this sadness is not oppressive and destructive. This sadness is bright. It is sadness for a person and is associated with the ancient Greek philosopher who searched for a person at noon with a lantern. These factors bring the image of the Little Prince closer to the great figures of the past – prophets, philosophers, and finally the Messiah, who are periodically in a state of absolute loneliness and solitude (Christ in his wanderings was also in the desert or the Garden of Gethsemane, and Moses received the tablets, being without human surroundings...). In these wanderings, truths are revealed. The Little Prince is a phantom figure – he is everywhere, appears unexpectedly, and disappears just as unexpectedly. He has no permanent place of residence, except for his distant and small planet. Here the parable from the Gospel is mentioned... – *"foxes have holes, and the birds of the air 'The Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head' ( Evangel. Mot. VIII) (The Holy Scriptures, 2020).*

### 3. CONCLUSIONS

The Little Prince tries to understand the meaning of human existence. And it is worth noting that, communicating with the Flower, the Fox, and the Snake, he finds more consciousness and adequacy in their realities than in people. When a person loses meaning (the meaning of life) or reduces it to excessively primitive parameters, then he starts wars.

The Little Prince is an opposition to hypocrisy and Pharisaism. He is sincere, frank, almost childishly naive, but this is his style – the style of a deep and wandering philosopher, this is the path of knowledge and self-improvement. The Geographer, Businessman, King, Drunkard, Ambitious or Rifleman look unworthy in the face of eternity. And each time our hero is forced to state – *"these people are strange"*.

The inferiority of Man is multidimensional. All characters are endowed with shortcomings that are difficult to hide behind the category of "strangeness". The imperfection of people is everywhere. It is omnipresent. Like cosmic radiation, it permeates all human existence. It becomes organic to man himself. Somehow it holographs in its experience not goodness and love, but negativity, dominated by a

clot that manifests absolute evil. People – both on the planets (starting with the King) and on earth – are infected with the virus of imperfection. But the most characteristic thing is that people “do not know how to see with their hearts”. And this is not just a metaphor. This is a global flaw in everything that is connected with the nominative “Man”. The beauty and harmony of the cosmos are opposed to the pettiness of man. And in some cases, the Little Prince cries from his helplessness. And only in the case of meeting our romantic and mysterious narrator, who suffered a plane crash in the Sahara, among the endless sands, does he find a close, native and kindred soul. And they develop a relationship that is worthy of the highest appreciation. Not mercantile, but utilitarian-pragmatic. Fate has given them the highest good – the joy of communication.

The Little Prince is not indifferent and indifferent to this world. Indifference destroys the world. **An indifferent person is an accomplice to evil.** He does not fight human ailments. He observes them and often falls into sadness. He is almost like an ancient Greek philosopher – a master of asking questions, but most often does not receive a clear answer. Unlike the vast majority of positive fairy-tale characters, he does not fight evil. **For him, it is a given that he wants to understand.** The contrast to these shortcomings are the maxims and aphorisms that are woven into the text. Therefore, the Little Prince and a number of characters, in particular the Fox, deserve respect and are valuable. And our hero is in the light of Pythagorean philosophy, in which the Creator's plan is read. He wants to understand the nature of good and evil. Hence the hero's loneliness.

And yet, the Little Prince did not get acquainted with individual phenomena. He did not encounter frank cynicism, with demonstrative and arrogant stupidity and collective madness. It would be interesting to see our hero's reaction to the pictures of total zombieness and support for war, as well as the tolerance by individual leaders of the so-called “civilized countries” of an executioner, a murderer of thousands of children and a Satan who razes entire, once flourishing cities to the ground, who come to meet and greet, extending a hand and holding “intellectual” conversations. In these pictures, one can understand the Demon himself, but the behavior of the visitors who tolerate bloodshed does not lend itself to any logical interpretation. How can one welcome a hand that threatens to “press the nuclear button and turn the world into nuclear ashes”? It is obvious that Babyn Yar, Majdanek, Salaspils, Auschwitz, Hiroshima did not become a lesson for our civilization, and Janusz Korczak did not become an ideal.

Man, according to the Little Prince, does not live in harmony with the Universe, but creates his own world, isolates himself, forms a world of his alternative values. In fact, he is filled with a mass of shortcomings and flaws. As a result, he becomes ugly. The Little Prince is made happy by one, albeit picky and wayward Flower, and five thousand roses in one garden do not fill people with a feeling of love.

The Little Prince is a perfect communicator. He knows how to conduct dialogues, ask questions, find original analogies and answers. And also, which is very important, he knows how to listen. And from here – he knows how to see. He does not immerse himself in complex philosophical conversations, only with a small, barely noticeable stroke gives clues. Teaches to see. This gives the right to assert that the Little Prince, as a holistic, organic image, is a philosophical concept that complements, and in some cases surpasses, thinkers of the past. He has his own ethics and concept of good. This is his strength and uniqueness.

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Ярослав Мельник. "Маленький принц" як філософська драма :когнітивно – дискурсологічний аспект. Журнал Прикарпатського університету імені Василя Стефаника. Філологія, 11 (2024), 96–107.

Стаття присвячена проблемі інтерпретації твору Антуана де Сент-Екзюпері "Маленький принц". Пропонується нове тлумачення у сучасному філософсько-дискурсологічному ключі. Виклики сьогодення дають змогу переосмислити образ і глибоке семіотичне наповнення, яким він наділений. Інтерпретація філософського задуму автора не обмежується сухими констатаціями, що це філософська казка. Здійснена спроба вивести твір з його базовими посиланнями на вищий рівень верифікацій та узагальнень. Невеликий за обсягом твір містить семіотичну глибину з її варіативністю та смисловою калсидокопічністю.

Маленький принц розглядається як цілісний образ – у епіцентрі полотна, яке доповнене іншими персонажами. Усі загалом формують єдине і багатогранне тло людської дійсності. Нове прочитання зумовлюється проблемами людства на поч. ХХІ ст., дискурсологією, комунікативними технологіями, питаннями глобалізації, а також тенденціями щодо поширення депресивних настроїв у сучасному світі, на європейському континенті зокрема.

**Ключові слова:** дискурс, комунікація, картина світу, текст, Маленький принц.