

PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS OF LONELINESS

Loneliness is one of the major philosophical problems of society. This feeling has been and remains an object of study of philosophers, psychologists and psychiatrists, sociologists, anthropologists, educators, representatives of other scientific disciplines. The concept “loneliness” is actually a state of mind, which causes people to feel empty, alone and unwanted. Loneliness is the perception of being alone and isolated

Theoretical understanding of this problem can be already found in ancient times. The Book of Ecclesiastes tells us that people were sensitive to loneliness in those distant ages and perceived it like a drama that led to a profound depletion of the individual.

Almost all the major philosophical schools and streams focused their attention on loneliness as one of the most important problems of the mankind. Plato and Aristotle pointed out the importance of communication as opposed to loneliness of an individual.

As the theoretical understanding of the problem of loneliness in the 19th century there were formed two main philosophical concepts: the concepts of the American Transcendentalists and the European existentialists. According to the American Transcendentalists, who were the first who made the difference between loneliness and solitude, loneliness is a voluntary solitude which provides an opportunity for the expression of the soul craving or desire for beauty, goodness and perfection. And solitude is the need for a creative individual to focus on his spiritual potency. One of the most prominent representatives of the American transcendentalists of 19th century was the American writer and philosopher Henry David Thoreau, who is best known for his book “Walden, or life in the woods”.

The existentialist school of thought views loneliness as the essence of being human. Human beings actively “engage” each other and the universe as they communicate and create, and loneliness is merely the feeling of being cut off from this process. The most prominent representatives of the European existentialists were J. Ortega-y-Gasset, J.-P. Sartre, B. Pascal, F. Nietzsche, S. A. Kierkegaard, and the Russian thinker N. A. Berdyaev.

The term “lonely crowd”, which had been launched by the American sociologist D. Rismen became the criterion of our time. The most painful human experience, apart from physical pain itself, is really loneliness. Aristotle said: “Man is a social being”. It means that he can’t live apart from society. For social animals like us, the worst feeling in the world is to be trapped on a desert island with no one who cares about us, interacts with us. We might find it relaxing for a few days, but after a while any island may become a hell for us.