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## Harper's songs and the origin of existentialism in ancient Egypt

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Among monuments of ancient Egyptian literature, numerous texts describe the afterlife; these ideas played a crucial role in people's worldview, reflecting their deepest fears and hopes for existence continued in another incarnation. A key written source on existential experiences in Egyptian culture is *Harper's Songs*; it contains unique information about the phenomenology of existentialism in Ancient Egypt. Its analysis allowed establishing characteristics of how inhabitants of the Nile Valley experienced the ultimate concerns of existence, including belief in gods and their power over the fate of deceased, belief in the afterlife, and conviction in effective power of rituals. Comparison with another important text of the same period, *The Dispute Between a Man and his Ba*, allows concluding that two opposing approaches to human subjectivity coexist and develop in the expanse of the existential choice.

*Ключевые слова:* existentialism, phenomenology, ultimate concerns of existence, other existence, Harper's Songs.

### Introduction

*Harper's Songs* is a corpus of literary works dating back to the Middle Kingdom, the leitmotif of which is philosophical reasoning about life and death, the meaning of existence and freedom. Most of the texts are known from late copies dating back to the New Kingdom; these works have been preserved on walls of tombs, on stelae, and on papyri. The peculiarity of the corpus is that some of its texts are not connected by plot, while others are complete or abbreviated versions of the same story. *Harper's Songs*<sup>1</sup> received its name because the hieroglyphic text was usually accompanied by images of blind musicians — harpists, who,

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<sup>1</sup> The title is usually used to denote both the corpus as a whole and each of texts that comprise it.

as assumed, performed the rhymed text to the accompaniment of an instrument<sup>2</sup>. Apparently, this is one of the most ancient literary monuments to freethinking, conveying doubts about the existence of the afterlife in the genre of elegy<sup>3</sup>.

Since the end of the 19th century, *Harper's Songs* have been into the main focus of attention of historians, philosophers, theologians, cultural scientists, and philologists, however it has not been analyzed from the standpoint of existential psychology so far, while such analysis could be of great importance for the history of science, especially medicine (a section of psychotherapy) and psychology, since they testify to the most ancient ideas (recorded in sources) on the afterlife and accompanying experiences. How did people who lived three and a half thousand years ago see death and what factors determined this vision? What was the phenomenology of existential experiences in Egyptian sources? The present paper aims to establish (based on *Harper's Songs*) characteristic features of how existential experience in ancient Egyptian literature in the 2nd millennium BC was described, as well as to identify specific features of experiencing the ultimate concerns of being.

### Main part

Egyptologists focused their attention on written and epigraphic sources containing *Harper's Songs* almost since their discovery in the last third of the 19th century. The present paper analyzes the text which has been preserved on the northern wall of the passage leading from the courtyard to the sanctuary of Tomb 50 (TT-50) in the Theban necropolis (modern Sheikh Abd el-Qurna). It belonged to Neferhotep, the high priest of the god Amun. This man lived under the last ruler of the 18th dynasty Horemheb (14th century BC). The reliefs of the tomb feature not only the owner but also his wife, and mention relatives who served in the temple of Amun in Thebes<sup>4</sup>.

The hieroglyphic text of *Harper's Songs* from the tomb was first published by a German Egyptologist J. Dümichen<sup>5</sup> in 1867. In 1889, a French archaeologist G. Bénédite published the entire tomb<sup>6</sup>. In 1873, a famous German specialist L. Stern published the first commented translation<sup>7</sup>. The tomb's decor and the texts preserved on its walls have repeatedly served as the subject of research for various specialists — historians, archaeologists, philologists, etc.<sup>8</sup> *Harper's Songs* also attracted attention of Russian orientalists: it was translated by B. A. Turaev, who stood at the outskirts of Russian Egyptology<sup>9</sup>, his student, a prominent Soviet Egyptologist, art criticizer M. Matthieu<sup>10</sup> and other scholars. However, despite commented translations, this literary work is still not fully studied and understood. To a certain extent, this is due to specifics of the ancient Egyptian language: hieroglyphs were largely context-dependent; taken out of context, the words lost their original meaning, thus altering the meaning of the entire text. The present paper includes an attempt to translate and analyze

<sup>2</sup> Allen 2000: 343.

<sup>3</sup> Матъе 1956: 77; Францов 1972: 444–446.

<sup>4</sup> Porter, Moss: 1960: 95–97.

<sup>5</sup> Dümichen 1867.

<sup>6</sup> Bénédite 1889.

<sup>7</sup> Stern 1873.

<sup>8</sup> Goodwyn 1874; Mond, Emery 1927; Manniche 1985; Kampp 1996: 254–255; Wasmuth 2003: 89.

<sup>9</sup> Тураев 2002: 239.

<sup>10</sup> Матъе 1956, 78.

*Harper's Songs* from the tomb of Neferhotep in line with the existential-phenomenological approach, since the author believes it to be the best for analyzing the key aspects of emergence and development of psychological knowledge in Ancient Egypt.

Before turning directly to the analysis of the literary work, it is necessary to give a general description of existential philosophy and phenomenology (according to E. Husserl), since the synthesis of these approaches opens up new opportunities in the study of the meaning-forming factors of a person's inner world. It can be cautiously noted that existential psychotherapy, equipped with phenomenological tools, acts as a bridge connecting ontology, ancient texts on the walls of the Egyptian tomb, and the experience of ultimate concerns of being that every person inevitably encounters.

Existential psychology is based on works of outstanding philosophers, scientists and thinkers who seek to resolve the problem of meaning of life. A Danish philosopher, theologian and writer S. Kierkegaard (1813–1855) made a great contribution to development of existentialism. In his works *Stages on Life's Way* (Stadier paa Livets Vei, 1845), *Edifying Discourses in Diverse Spirits* (Opbyggelige Taler i forskjellig Aand, 1847), *The Sickness Unto Death* (Sydommen til Døden, 1849), etc., he insisted on human freedom, on the responsibility of each person for his or her own destiny within the limits that were predetermined from above. In addition, S. Kierkegaard claimed that knowledge of life was possible only through its direct experience, through total involvement in what was happening. The philosopher believed that the key to what A. Maslow later called self-actualization was attentiveness to one's experience and reliance on it in assessing existence. As will be seen below, the author of *Harper's Songs* also pointed to this.

An outstanding German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) denied the positive role of religion, reckoning it a tool with which a person hides from suffering, helplessness and awareness of limitations of his or her abilities<sup>11</sup>. The scholar also pointed out the need to live in the real world and not to succumb to the temptation to drown in dreams, generated by the belief in the afterlife where one can supposedly find justice; a person had to show the will to power, the desire to gain strength that would testify to his or her development<sup>12</sup>. These ideas, as follows from *Harper's Songs*, were also consonant with that of the ancient Egyptians at certain stages of history.

Finally, another German existential philosopher, M. Heidegger (1889–1976) argued that a person must study his or her own nature and determine his or her own role in society independently<sup>13</sup>: this is also to be done when an individual is faced with search for the meaning of life<sup>14</sup>. Recognition of individual responsibility for one's own existence, which inevitably arises when realizing the finiteness of being, marks the formulation of the most important question within the framework of existentialism — the question about free will<sup>15</sup>.

The list of outstanding existentialists is more extensive; it also includes J.-P. Sartre, A. Camus, G. Marcel, S. de Beauvoir, K. T. Jaspers, and others. However, describing the main ideas of S. Kierkegaard, F. Nietzsche, and M. Heidegger is sufficient to characterize

<sup>11</sup> Nietzsche 1982: 187–188; Dion 2014: 1–21.

<sup>12</sup> Nietzsche 1895: §2, 15, 18–19, 41.

<sup>13</sup> Heidegger 1972; Polt 1997: 50; Horrigan-Kelly et al. 2016.

<sup>14</sup> Heidegger 1972: 178.

<sup>15</sup> Tonner 2010: 2–5.

the philosophical basis on which existential psychotherapy was built. As for phenomenology, its most important content was revealed by E. Husserl, who largely developed ideas of a transcendental philosophy of I. Kant. E. Husserl called for turning to experience of the cognitive consciousness within the framework of the maxim “to the things themselves” (German: *Zu den Sachen selbst!*) to overcome causal reductionism which prevents identifying essential features of objects located outside the material world<sup>16</sup>. The phenomenological approach to lived experience, superimposed on the structure of Socratic questions, can be discerned in a few works of ancient Egyptian literature, including *Harper's Songs* and *The Dispute Between a Man and his Ba*.

Existential phenomenology is based on the search for meanings that guide a person through life, the values that he or her adheres to, and the choices they make in relationships with themselves, other people, and the world<sup>17</sup>. Scientific research into these issues in the psychological space became more active after World War II. A Viennese psychologist and psychiatrist V. Frankl (1905–1997), who went through four Nazi concentration camps, played a special role in these studies. While struggling for survival and enduring all sorts of hardships, he maintained a scientific interest in the way of thinking and behavior of people who found themselves in prison, which later allowed him to create a new direction in existential psychology — the logotherapy<sup>18</sup>. While observing prisoners, V. Frankl concluded that the most important factors for survival were not health or positive expectations from the future but the presence of meaning in life<sup>19</sup>. In 1946, his most famous book, *Man's Search for Meaning* (German: *Ein Psycholog erlebt das Konzentrationslager*), was published<sup>20</sup>. In it, the author points out that to overcome difficult life situations a person needs to have, or rather, to find the meaning of life, from which he or she will draw resources.

Later, other areas of focus developed in the field of existential therapy: existential analysis by A. Längle, Dasein analysis by L. Binswanger and M. Boss, etc.<sup>21</sup> All of them turned their attention to the search for the individual meaning of life<sup>22</sup>. The result of this search was the recognition of the intrinsic value of a man, as well as the presence of potential for personal development in him. Thus existentialism combined with humanism has formed an existential-humanistic approach in psychology.

According to one of the most authoritative modern American representatives of existential-humanistic psychology I. Yalom (born 1931), each individual inevitably encounters four obstacles on his or her life path — death, existential isolation, freedom, and meaninglessness<sup>23</sup>. Each of these obstacles represents an ultimate concern of being and is related to the deepest needs of a man. Thus, according to I. Yalom, the most terrible thing about death is its inevitability and the loss of identity that accompanies it. In an attempt to avoid disappearance, a person turns to religion, seeks and finds an opportunity for self-transcendence through faith in the afterlife. It would not be an exaggeration to note that the desire to avoid death, as well as the belief in reality of the afterlife, formed the core

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<sup>16</sup> Husserl 1976; Tymieniecka 2002: 5–6, 30; Mohanty 2008: 115.

<sup>17</sup> Luijpen 1969; Giorgi 1970; Cohn 1997; DeRobertis 2024.

<sup>18</sup> Marshall 2012.

<sup>19</sup> Frankl 2006: 178–179.

<sup>20</sup> Frankl 1946.

<sup>21</sup> Längle 2019: 309–311.

<sup>22</sup> Steger, Frazier 2005: 574–575.

<sup>23</sup> Yalom 1980.

of Egyptian culture and encouraged inhabitants of the Nile Valley to build majestic tombs, compose hymns to the gods, and create complex literary works describing the existence of a person after the death of his or her physical body. As will be seen below, an indication of this fact is present in the text of *Harper's Songs*.

Another ultimate concern of existence, existential isolation, is a point where every person's life begins and ends. Birth and death are most closely associated with a feeling of total loneliness, the fear of which a person seeks to reduce by building connections with other people (socialization) and believing in the afterlife. The flip side of isolation is freedom, the ability to make one's own choice independently of other people. A person is forced to pass between Scylla and Charybdis: belonging to a group gives a sense of security and helps cope with loneliness but deprives one of freedom which can be found in meaningful actions. According to I. Yalom, a meaningful life is a great blessing and the main source of motivation in the fight against the ultimate concerns of existence. This is also indicated by some of ancient Egyptian texts written more than thirty-five centuries ago — *The Dispute Between a Man and his Ba* and *Harper's Songs*<sup>24</sup>.

Having characterized the key aspects of existential phenomenology as an approach, we can turn to the analysis of *Harper's Songs* from the tomb of Neferhotep. The owner of the tomb, Neferhotep, and his wife are depicted sitting in front of a table with offerings. Next to them is the harpist, on whose behalf the narration is conducted. The text is placed between two love lyrics which conditionally flank it; it has not been preserved in full and contains lacunae. The following translation from ancient Egyptian, that had been made by M. Lichtheim, was modified and supplemented by the author of this paper in accordance with the relief drawing from a publication of the text by R. Hari<sup>25</sup> and the photograph from a monograph of M. Lichtheim<sup>26</sup>.

It begins with words of the harpist, which set the mood for the entire piece. The musician points to the high position of the owner of the tomb, the priest of the god Amun.

[1] Thus speaks the harpist who is in the tomb of the Osiris,  
the divine father of Amun, Neferhotep the justified; he says.

The mention of the connection with the cult of Amun, as well as the righteousness of the deceased, testifies to the fact that the Egyptians attached great importance to the social status and activities of a person, as well as the moral assessment of his or her life. It was assumed that the texts placed on the walls of the tomb would magically influence the other existence of the buried person and would contribute to his or her well-being in another world<sup>27</sup>. Then the harpist turns to the idea of the finiteness of being.

[2] How reposed is this righteous lord! The kindly fate has come to pass. Bodies pass away

[3] since the time of the god<sup>28</sup>, New generations come in their place. Re shows

[4] himself at dawn, Atum goes to rest in the Western Mountain.

Men beget, Women

<sup>24</sup> Реунув 2024.

<sup>25</sup> Hari 1985: pl. XXVI.

<sup>26</sup> Lichtheim 1945: Lp. VII.

<sup>27</sup> Pinch 1994 85.

<sup>28</sup> That is, from the beginning of time. — Yu. R.

[5] conceive Every nostril breathes the air, Dawn comes,  
and their children

[6] have gone to their tombs.

“Kindly fate” refers to the possibility of finding well-being in the afterlife. Neferhotep's high status gave him the right to be buried in his own tomb, a privilege available to a chosen few. Having a tomb increased the deceased's chances of a happy afterlife, although did not guarantee it. The relief images of the deceased, as well as the sacred texts accompanying them, were intended, according to Egyptian beliefs, to provide the deceased with comfortable conditions in the other world, where he had to spend the eternity. From the above passage, it follows that the fear of disappearance, the erasure of personality due to death, was perceived by the Egyptians as a terrifying outcome that they wanted to avoid.

[6] ... Make holiday, O divine father!

Put incense and fine oil together to your nostrils

[7] And garlands of lotus and mandrake flowers upon your breast,  
While your sister whom you love

[8] sits at your side. Put song and music before you,

[9] Cast all evil behind you. Bethink you of joys

till that day has come of landing at the land that loves silence,

[10] where the heart of the son-whom-he-loves does not weary.

In this passage, the harpist addresses Neferhotep as if he is still alive. The musician points out the brevity of existence on the earth and calls for not wasting allotted time on suffering. Instead, he suggests rejoicing and appreciating the company of loved ones. Apparently, the word “sister” here refers to the spouse with whom the owner of the tomb had such trusted relationships that she became like a sister to him. The mention of family members of the deceased is generally typical for texts placed in tombs. In addition, the closest relatives were often depicted in relief compositions directly next to the owner. The last line of the cited passage apparently refers to the commemoration that children performed at the graves of their parents. Was this the Egyptian way to overcome existential loneliness?

[10] ... Make holiday, Neferhotep the justified!

You excellent divine father, pure of hands<sup>29</sup>!

I have heard all that happened:

[11] Their buildings have crumbled, their dwellings are no more<sup>30</sup>.

They are as if they had not come into being since the time of the God.

In this passage, the harpist points to equality of all, the rich and the poor, before death. The struggle to achieve a high position in society, the will to power, the construction of luxurious tombs — all activities that were socially approved goals in ancient Egyptian society — appears to be sandcastles that are inevitably washed away by the oncoming wave. This passage demonstrates one of the techniques used by therapists of the existential-humanistic and of other approaches (for example, acceptance and responsibility therapy) when they call on a client fixated on a problem to look at life in perspective, with a broad outlook,

<sup>29</sup> That is, performing rituals before which ablutions were required. — Yu. R.

<sup>30</sup> This refers to rich people and rulers. — Yu. R.



to move from the self-as-content to the self-in-context (the concept of the flexible self). The above lines indicate that the prototypes of some modern psychotherapeutic techniques arose in ancient times, long before the advent of scientific psychology.

[12] On the shore of your pond,  
That your soul may sit under them,  
And drink their water,  
Follow your heart wholly.

While analyzing the text from a psychotherapeutic point of view, it may be noted that the harpist seems to call on the owner of the tomb to reason from the position of here and now. Psychologists of various directions (Gestalt, MBSR, MBCT, ACT, CFT, etc.) often resort to this technique during consultations to help the client disengage from anxious thoughts about the future or stop dwelling on past experiences. Switching attention from thoughts to sensory signals, to sensations (sit down to drink water) can also serve as a universal recommendation when working with trauma.

[13] Give bread to him who has no field,  
So you shall gain a good name for the future forever.

The call to share food with the needy clearly indicates the great importance that the Egyptians attached to mutual assistance. On the one hand, this call reveals the specificity of the communal worldview which presupposes mutual assistance and responsiveness to the problems of other people, and on the other hand, it reflects the desire to leave a good memory of oneself after death. This passage traces the acknowledgement of a person's responsibility to manage his or her resources, that is, the very freedom of choice that allows a person to make life filled with things which are important to him, to act in accordance with values. This freedom allows one to bring meaning to an initially meaningless existence. Thus, in the given passage, one can simultaneously find a connection with two ultimate concerns of existence (according to I. Yalom) — freedom and meaning.

[13] ... You have observed [these priests clad in skins]  
[14] of the panther. They pour libation to the ground;  
The loaves are offering bread;  
Songstresses are in tears...

A panther skin is a traditional attire of high-ranking priests making offerings. This fact is well known from pictorial sources — tomb paintings and relief compositions on the walls of temples. The priests are shown wearing skins thrown over their shoulders there. By “songs” here, the harpist obviously means chanted religious texts, hymns to the gods, and appeals to higher powers. They often had a predominant motif of longing for the passing life, fear of the coming fate, the afterlife and its dangers. Unlike the concept inherent in Abrahamic religions, according to which a person's fate after death no longer depends on he or she, the ancient Egyptians believed that in the other world they would have to overcome a difficult and dangerous path before finding themselves at the judgment of Osiris. A properly performed ritual was supposed to help them with this, and repeating the name of the deceased as the carrier of his sacred essence played an important role<sup>31</sup>.

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<sup>31</sup> Zago 2021.

[15] Their mummies are set up [before] Re,  
While their people are in mourning.  
You do not...

Unfortunately, this fragment of the text has not been preserved in its entirety. It describes how the dead appear in the afterlife before the sun god Ra (Re). He, being one of the oldest and most powerful divinities, himself defeats evil every night, fights against lies, and sees the truth, which is of great importance for someone who is awaiting the final judgment<sup>32</sup>. At the same time as the owner of the tomb appears before the divine judgment, his loved ones are in mourning, which can be seen as a form of experiencing existential loneliness.

[16] [Death] comes in her time,  
And Fate reckons his days...

Obviously, this refers to the natural limitations of life expectancy and the inevitability of death. According to Egyptian ideas, a man, on the one hand, is limited by the breath given to him by the gods<sup>33</sup>; it is entirely determined by the will of the gods and is unchangeable like the worldly order of things, reflected in rituals<sup>34</sup>. On the other hand, he is free to live his life morally and with dignity; and the very freedom of choice that V. Frankl wrote about is manifested in this belief in freedom of will<sup>35</sup>.

[16] ...Awaken...

[17] Dwelling powerlessly in that which was made for his shade.

This passage indicates that after death the deceased becomes, in a sense, a prisoner of his own tomb — his shadow, that is, the subtle substance, the soul, is found there in order to hear the prayers and good wishes addressed to him, which, as the Egyptians believed, would be embodied in reality in the next world and brighten up his stay in eternity.

[17] ... Make holiday, O pure of hands,  
Divine father Neferhotep the justified!

[18] No work for the granaries of Egypt,  
While his court is rich in ...

[19] ... again in order to know what remains over from him.  
Not a short moment has been left out in...

The exact meaning of this passage is difficult to establish due to the gaps in it, but the deceased is addressed here not by the harpist but by his son. The text may refer to economic problems in the country and social inequality (“no work for the granaries” and “his court is rich”). These phenomena first formed the backdrop in Egyptian literature during the First Intermediate Period. Doubts about one’s own strength, one’s ability to cope with difficulties, as well as gloomy expectations about the future formed the preconditions for a radical revision of traditional beliefs. Reflection on what was happening around shook the seemingly unshakable belief in the afterlife which had constituted Egyptian culture since predynastic times.

[20] ...desert. Those who had granaries with bread to offer,  
And those, [who had none],

[21] likewise, they shall spend their happy hour in [the land of the dead, when it is]

<sup>32</sup> Darnell, Darnell 2018: 181; Zago 2022: 160.

<sup>33</sup> Assmann 2001: 183.

<sup>34</sup> Wang 2022: 48.

<sup>35</sup> Frankl 2006.



[22] time. The day that grieves the hearts,  
That puts the house in [sorrow]...

In this passage, the harpist equates the poor and the rich after death. He points out that passing away will be equally sad for everyone, regardless of social status and income. The harpist also notes that the death of a loved one is a tragedy for the family members living nearby. Here too, the experience of existential loneliness is evident.

[23] Think of the day when you shall be dragged  
to the land that [mingles people]

[24] greatly.

There is no coming back.

It benefits you [peace and well-being there]...

[25] Thou art one righteous and true.

Whose abomination is falsehood.

The harpist again points to the equality of all before death and foretells a favorable outcome for the owner of the tomb by the virtue of his righteousness. Such repetitions were characteristic of both didactic works and songs performed with musical accompaniment. Repetition contributed to emotional strengthening of the most important ideas contained in the text.

[25] ...When there is love of rightness...

[26] the weak from the strong [do not appear].

Not carries he who [failed to accumulate wealth],

[27] [as well as the one] who has no protector. A commander who...

[28] Increase thy happiness to perfection, [and you will be protected by]

[29] Maat, Min, and Isis.

The nourishment which gives [you satisfaction. Death]

[30] summons you in old age to the place of truth without [lies and injustice, where you will find repose].

In this final passage, the harpist testifies to the patronage granted by the gods to those who have lived their lives righteously, regardless of their income level. At the same time, he calls for “growing happiness”; modern psychologists and psychotherapists might consider this appeal as a recommendation to pay attention to events and phenomena of life that bring joy and satisfaction. This is akin to development of awareness, allowing one to disengage from difficult emotional experiences, cognitions and normalize one's state. Thus, this passage also contains an ancient prototype of effective and actively used today psychotherapeutic interventions.

### Conclusions

The analysis of *Harper's Songs* from the tomb of Neferhotep makes it possible to draw the following conclusions. This literary work contains examples of phenomenological descriptions of existential experience, reasoning about the meaning of life and the fate after death. It precedes the famous Old Testament Book of Ecclesiastes by more than a thousand years, which makes it possible to clarify the genesis of existential ideas in the world culture.

It is established that belief in the afterlife, in the effectiveness of magical rituals, and in a fair trial that did not depend on the level of wealth and social status of the deceased and are the characteristics for describing existential experience in Ancient Egypt. The author of the

text expresses doubts about the advisability of constructing luxurious tombs with rich decor, which can be considered a provocation in relation to the ancient Egyptian cultural norm. The importance of “personal piety” (according to J. Assman) as opposed to ostentatious religiosity is repeatedly emphasized.

In form, *Harper's Songs* is a dialogue<sup>36</sup> between the musician (the performer) and the owner of the tomb, in which a collective image of an ancient Egyptian rich man can be guessed. In the harpist's reasoning, in his appeals to the deceased owner of the tomb, one can see the prototypes of modern psychotherapeutic interventions: the principle of here and now, a change in perspective, a focus on positive events, self-in-context (flexible self), etc. This indicates that many therapeutic techniques known today are actually much older than is commonly believed, they arose in the pre-scientific period of psychology and are thousands of years old.

Finally, in *Harper's Songs* one can clearly trace the reflexive experience of all four ultimate concerns of being (according to I. Yalom), namely death, existential isolation, freedom and meaninglessness. This fact allows us to conclude that the named concerns are of a universal nature and are characteristic of different cultures at various stages of historical development.

In comparison with another important monument of Ancient Egyptian literature, *The Dispute Between a Man and his Ba*<sup>37</sup>, written at about the same time, the *Harper's Songs* contains reasoning which to a greater extent is built on a religious picture of the world, including belief in gods, the afterlife and the effectiveness of rituals. This fact testifies to the simultaneous existence in one cultural space of different approaches to understanding existential experiences and to their phenomenological description.

The results of the research can be further used to clarify individual aspects of the history of medicine (a section of psychotherapy), to identify culturally determined predictors of the success of psychotherapeutic interventions, as well as in studying the cultural, psychological, and philosophical aspects of the image of the world at different stages of social development.

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<sup>36</sup> The dialogic structure is more visible in the text from Intef's tomb. One can assume that in the work from the tomb of Neferhotep, the response lines were lost.

<sup>37</sup> Реунов 2024: 184–185.

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## "Песнь арфиста" и зарождение экзистенциализма в Древнем Египте

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Среди памятников древнеегипетской литературы сохранилось немало текстов, в которых описана судьба человека после смерти. Эти представления играли важную роль в мировоззрении людей, отражая их самые потаенные страхи и надежды на продление жизни, но уже в другом качестве. Один из ключевых письменных источников, повествующий об экзистенциальных переживаниях в египетской культуре, именуется «Песнью арфиста». В нем содержатся уникальные сведения о феноменологии экзистенциализма в Древнем Египте. Анализ этого текста позволил установить характерные особенности переживания предельных факторов бытия обитателями Долины Нила. К ним относятся вера в богов и их власть над судьбой покойного в посмертии, в существование загробного мира, а также убежденность в действенной силе ритуалов. Сравнение с другим важным текстом того же периода, «Разговором разочарованного со своим ба», позволило сделать вывод о параллельном существовании и развитии двух противоположных подходов к субъектности человека в пространстве экзистенциального выбора.

*Keywords:* экзистенциализм, феноменология, предельные факторы бытия, инобытие, «Песнь арфиста».

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