

INNER CIRCLES, GOODNESS, AND LIES IN "A WORD CHILD" BY IRIS MURDOCH: A COGNITIVE FACET OF LITERARY ANALYSIS

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Abstract: This article offers a cognitive perspective to a literary analysis of the novel "A word child" by Iris Murdoch, illustrating how the well-preconceived elements of the text have prompted our interpretation of the author's philosophical concept. Conceptual, semantic, and structural features of the novel imply the idea of meaningful circularity of the protagonist's life, which is transformed from immature spirituality to awareness of the universal Good.

Keywords: circularity, cognitive construing, cycle, intertextuality, mental representations, textual concept.

1. Introduction

Iris Murdoch was one of the most sophisticated and prolific English writers of the 20th century. She created a congruent mixture of realism and symbolism in her literary works written to bridge elite and mass cultures. Following her interest in philosophy and psychological patterns in human relations, she placed her characters in dramatic situations full of gruelling moral conflicts. Yet, Murdoch's readers are unlikely to find

a clear moral comment on these conflicts. Instead, they observe the lives of her characters, which develop in a kind of a predestined pattern determined by the author's philosophy. Her deep philosophical and psychological works have been a popular subject of literary reviews and research for several decades, but experts, as well as readers in general, are far from finding common ground in their interpretation, which makes it an enjoyable challenge.

Most studies of Murdoch's novels have focused on their genre, psychological, and philosophical aspects, outlining the novelty of the form and intricacy of the major ideas of the texts (Михальская & Аникин 1985; Толкачев 1999; Урнов 1984; Heusel 2001). We suggest shifting the focus from the question, "What is stated in the text?" to the perspective, "How can one realize what is stated in the text?" In this way, we turn some subjective claims about our reading experience into a metacognitive analysis of how we perceive some elements of narrative as preconceived and bearing communicative value, and how we deploy this information while interpreting the novel "A word child" by Iris Murdoch.

Our objective falls in line with two major approaches of cognitive narratology to research on links between narrative and mind. The first one, Herman (2013) states, views narrative as a target of interpretation and studies how "interpreters use various kinds of semiotic affordances to engage with narrative worlds." The other approach treats narrative as resource for making sense, an instrument of mind used for structuring and understanding situations and events.

The first approach is adopted in cognitive poetic analysis, which focuses on the creative dialogue among writers and readers that leads to poetic experience, and which entails discovery of covert configurations of knowledge that underlie individual or collective interpretation of the literary text (Воробйова 2009b; Stockwell 2002). Despite a large theoretical body of works on literary meaning, most views of literary cognition can be grouped into text-centered and reception-centered (Popova 2014). Text-centered

theories dwell on the issues of form and content: textual features, temporal and causal ordering (Jakobson 1960; Todorov 1971), internal structures (schemata) that foster interpretation of narratives (Rumelhart 1975). The recent development of text-centered theories can be found in corpus based cognitive poetic studies (Hoover, Culpeper & O'Halloran 2014; Toolan 2008). Reception-centered theories (Ryan 2015; Sternberg 1978) are often based on pragmatic understanding (Walsh 2007) and explore the reader's ability to construe and maintain mental representations of textual world (Cook 1990; van Dijk & Kintsch 1983; Fauconnier & Turner 2003).

These theories are now undergoing re-evaluation in order to address such issues as narrative's universal triple effect (suspense, curiosity, and surprise); difference between real-time communication and represented communication; asymmetry of perspective between knowing speaker and groping addressee (Vandaele & Brône 2009). The functional stance adopted in these issues promotes the idea that narrative understanding is an interactive experience.

Popova (2014: 6-8) suggests taking a more radical turn and defines narrative understanding as a form of enactive cognition, i.e. experiential, intersubjective sense-making that appears in a literary act of communication between the reader and the narrator. The latter is thought to be the reader's mental representation of a fictional agent who, nevertheless, is perceived as psychologically real due to such features as agency, intentionality and physical perspective. However, the hypothesis that the reader enacts "a particular narratorial consciousness" (ibid., p. 11) raises the question of the extent to which textual clues or specific storytelling strategies potentiate or scaffold the reader's response (Herman 2013).

We agree with Chugu (2017) in her reasoning that the form and the content of a fiction text are intentionally paired by the author in such a way that some specific cognitive patterns are framed and triggered. Moreover, authors sometimes intentionally hamper text processing by providing specific contexts, thus evoking certain mental operations

in the reader's mind (Ермакова 2010: 63). Fiction as any other form of art can be regarded as a specific kind of "cognitive engineering", which is intended to influence the minds of an audience by invoking emotions, memories, shaping public response, and even behavior (Donald 2006: 4-5).

Thus, we will side here with those who also stress the author's part in dialogue with the reader (Caracciolo 2012; Dancygier 2012; Schmid 2010). As Dancygier (2012: 10) states, the meaning of a story is negotiated by the author and the reader within the boundaries of the artistic model of the world, which is created in fiction. In a similar vein, Ryan (2007: 28) claims that "narrative is the outcome of many different mental processes that operate both inside and outside stories." This idea builds a bridge to the second approach to cognitive narratology studies.

The second approach allows us to look at narrative as a cognitive tool kit. The text is then viewed as a psychological reaction of the author to the surrounding world, which is revealed in multiple shades of intellectual, emotive, and aesthetic content (Ткачук 2009). By studying a literary text, we are able to reconstruct (to some extent) "the workings of the writer's mind as the initial source of multiple sense generation" (Vorobyova 2009a: 75). This idea is essential for analysis of Murdoch's fiction as most researchers indicate fusion of its literary and philosophic functions (Jacobs 1995; Jerončić 2013). She developed her unique dialogue of philosophy and fiction on Wittgenstein's claim that life could only be shown, not explained (Heusel 2001). Therefore, Murdoch's novel can be viewed as the author's quest for philosophical insights.

Though cognitive poetics offers a vast range of means to explore "an authorly version of the world", as well as "a readerly account" of what is textually manifest, its major concern is literary effect and value of a particular text (Stockwell 2002: 5-7). In the case of "A word child", we find its literary value in versatile insights that readers may

get by participating in a thought-provoking linguistic, artistic, and intellectual game preconceived by the author.

2. Cognitive construing as an interpretative clue to Murdoch's "A word child"

Conceptualization in the process of interpretation of a literary text, as well as its creation, essentially involves the operation of linguistic structures and mental representations (van Dijk 2006: 169). We define cognitive construing as a process of deliberate elaboration of particular patterns of thought, which serve as a basis for conceptualizing the meaning of the text.

The main **aim** of this paper is to investigate how our comprehension of the author's philosophical, ethical, and aesthetic ideas develops due to our construing of meaningfulness of semantic, semiotic, and narrative planes of the novel. Our research **material** is the novel "A word child" by Iris Murdoch. In this study, we use semantic, conceptual, semiotic, cognitive poetic analysis, narrative analysis, and elements of pragmatic analysis as **methods** of research.

The research deploys the theory of conceptual blending by Fauconnier and Turner (2003), complex analysis of textual concepts by Kahanovska (Кагановська 2018), cognitive metaphor theory by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), Schmid's (2010) model of double communication in fiction and his idea of the possible iconicity of the verbal plane of the text (Schmid 2014: 722), Sternberg's (1978) notion of two narrative temporalities, and cognitive semiotic analysis of fiction by Volkova (2018).

Firstly, our narrative analysis will concentrate on interplay between two temporalities: "the represented time" (the time of the narrated) and "the communicative time" (the time of narrating), which as Sternberg (2001: 117) puts it, result in the universal narrative effects of suspense, curiosity, and surprise. Prospective narration generates suspense; curiosity is referred to an instance of retrospection, and surprise is attributed to recognition. Constant monitoring of not only *what* is narrated, but also *by whom, in*

what sequence, in what way, etc., is one of the reader's processing strategies that leads to "thickening" of the narrative world (Herman 2013), i.e. to its conceptualization. This idea of the reader's forays between several temporal planes is to some extent akin to van Dijk and Kintsch's (1983) description of text interpretation as a recurrent movement from local propositional structures to macrostructures of literary discourse. Emergence of the general message of the text can be viewed as the moment of collision between hypothetical projections that readers make and the actualized basic projection of the meaning of the text (Ермакова 2010: 62).

The idea of intricately mixed narrative temporalities inevitably leads us to the notion of double communication system (Schmid 2014: 33). The author's communication involves the concrete author and addressee, who are contemplating fictive represented world. Represented world includes the narrator's communication, in which narrated world (part of represented world) is presented in the act of narration. This double communication allows the reader to view the narrative from two perspectives (the author's and the narrator's) and perceive him/herself as a participant of both communicative acts. Thus, literary cognition essentially involves collecting and interpreting data from both planes, as well as their scrupulous comparison and search for plausible explanations in case of discrepancies.

The fact that the reader seems to be participating in conversation not only with the real author, but also with a fictional essence (the narrator) is possible due to the mechanism of mental simulation (Ryan 2015: 83), a special type of imagination or mental mimicry that allows our mind to create a rich three-dimensional environment on the incomplete script of the text. Our ability to place ourselves in a specific imaginary situation, live its evolution moment by moment, adopt the outlook of the characters, and anticipate possible denouement (Ryan 2015: 84) is largely attributed to the plasticity of the mirror neuron system responsible for our social cognitive skills (Воробйова 2009b; Popova 2014).

We should also point to a specific ability of our brain to complement the visual with the virtual. Imagining physical objects and visual environments provides true sensational experiences (Seif 2014: 59). This ability of human mind to construct a fictional world is most obviously exploited in computer games where a player's mind is wandering around a virtual world, scarce elements of which are shown on the screen. The player is partly unaware of this incompleteness of virtual world because his/her "inner eye" (his/her mind) sees not only what is designed graphically, but also what is implied. The same is true about any reader. To follow the ongoing narrative reader builds fictional spaces combining what is shown explicitly and what the reader's consciousness replenishes due to some minute cues supplied by the author or his/her general background knowledge. While some empirical research is still to be conducted to clarify the matter, we may see how this assumption finds its way into the theory of conceptual integration, because the sources of inputs for mental simulation seem to be certain mental spaces.

Mental spaces, their configuration and integration are essential aspects of cognitive construing (Fauconnier & Turner 2003; Stockwell 2002: 96-97). Fauconnier and Turner (2003: 58) define mental spaces as "small conceptual packets", "very partial assemblies containing elements, structured by frames and cognitive models". As the narrative unfolds, various mental spaces are construed, modified and connected to each other in multiple ways. A network of blended mental spaces integrates content from various inputs, often in unexpected ways, giving rise to a new meaning (Fauconnier & Turner 2003: 210). Conceptual integration helps us deal with the ever-changing circumstances of a real or fictional world (Langacker 2008: 528).

Vorobyova (Воробйова 2009b: 37) presents a four-dimensional model of conceptual integration networks claiming that important insights occur at the intersection of symbolic, textual (compositional, intertextual, interdiscursive), and gnoseological planes, which are viewed through cognitive lens. The major merit of this model lies in the shift from the 'flat' representation of imagery and symbolism of a literary text to a

multifaceted analysis of their role in defining the conceptual base of the narrative. Thus, semiotic cues are deployed in a more extended and versatile analysis.

Semiotics constitutes a framework of understanding of how humans use sign-interpretation to "shape raw sensory information into knowledge-based categories" (Seif 2016: 2). In text analysis, the symbolic code is viewed as the second cipher of a literary work alongside with the language system (the first cipher) (Лотман 1992). The reader has limited prior knowledge of the second cipher and gets some clues only through reading. Identification of the symbolic meaning of the literary image and its interpretation via an appropriate code enhance the reader's ability to understand the narrative as coherent and meaningful (Volkova 2018: 366).

The cognitive metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson 1980) explains symbolic decoding as mapping the source-domain schema onto the target-domain schema, which helps to retrieve similarities recognized consciously or subconsciously by readers. Such analysis serves as a powerful tool for reconstructing conceptual patterns and connecting superficially dissimilar linguistic expressions as manifestations of a single underlying logic (Kimmel 2011).

Another kind of semiotic analysis is based on discovering the narrative iconicity that reifies different symbols at the texture of literary narrative (Schmid 2014; Volkova 2018). We side with Volkova (2018: 472) in her claim that iconicity can be revealed by focusing on the narrative structure in general, as well as on definite syntactic and lexico-semantic features of the text.

The analyses mentioned above contribute to interpretation of the general conceptual scope of the literary text. Presently, we can speak of different definitions of concepts in reference to a literary text. According to Nikonova (Никонова 2008), *literary concepts* exist within a particular idiosphere as part of the image of the world, invoked by the author's associations, and hinting at possible meanings, the echo of previous

linguistic and cultural experience, which expresses the author's individual comprehension of objects and phenomena. In contrast to the variable content of linguistic and cultural concepts, the scope of the literary concept is fixed (ibid). Yet, multiple layers of the literary concept (e.g., notional, image- and sense-bearing (Davydyuk & Panasenko 2016) have much in common with structural division of linguistic concepts, which are lingo-mental representations, accompanied by emotional and evaluative content (Приходько 2008; van Dijk 2006: 169). The fact that emotive, evaluative and symbolic planes of the literary concept serve sense-bearing function (Davydyuk & Panasenko 2016) prompts the ways of discovering "an extensive and multifaceted conceptual substrate" (Langacker 2008: 463) that largely remains implicit.

Kahanovska (Кагановська 2018: 40) suggests looking for the idea of the literary work as expressed through the system of explicit and implicit literary meta-images, accessed through verbalised concepts that make up *textual concepts*. The latter are defined as mental and speech essence of the contextual plane characterized by intensity of multiple senses and supercategorization, which implicate certain features of meta-images of the fiction text that are explicated in the text. The pyramid hierarchy of metaimages in the literary text presents subordinate relationships between the megaconcept and mezoconcepts, macroconcepts, cataconcepts and their conceptual components (ibid.). Scrupulous semantic and cognitive analysis of textual concepts can illustrate how the sense of the text is "thickened" with discovery of different layers of meta-images. In our opinion, textual concepts are lingo-psychological phenomena that are the basis for construing the meaning of the literary text.

2.1 Murdoch's "A word child" (1975): The plot

Nicol (2004: 109) describes Murdoch's novel "A word child" as an "obsessional close-up novel", typical "Murdochian Gothic", in which heroes, provoked by fatal passion, descend to a particular kind of underworld – the destructive mechanisms of the unconscious. We agree with this interpretation only up to a point. Our claim is that the

author shows the protagonist's spiritual growth in a painful and complicated way making him cope with perplexing moral predicaments.

The general plot of the novel runs like this. Hilary Burde, a talented polyglot, fights his way up from a miserable childhood to work at Oxford University. His future, as well as his sister's, is full of alluring prospects. Hilary is greatly encouraged by Prof. Gunnar Jopling and his wife, Anne. Unfortunately, he falls in love with Anne. His rage, his unrestrained passion and overwhelming desire to be "lovable" made him partially guilty of her death. Although the man was "crashed and unmanned for years", he experienced neither repentance nor redemptive suffering, but simply grieved over his frustrated hopes, having made recluses of himself and his sister, Crystal. After 20 years, Gunnar Jopling unexpectedly becomes Hilary's senior at the office. Gunnar's new wife, Lady Kitty, meets Hilary several times asking him to help her to "cure" Gunnar of his agonizing past. A tiny hope for reconciliation appears. Yet, Hilary fatally falls in love with Kitty. This time, Gunnar's wife proposes that they have a secret love affair and a baby. Hilary faces an excruciating moral dilemma, which he resolves in this way: "*I can't deceive Gunnar a second time. If I've helped him and if this is a service to you, I'm glad and joyful and this is a kind of blessing I never thought I'd have in my life any more. I must be content with that. And I've held you and kissed you and that is the gift from the universe, which will bless and gladden me forever. ... I've got to go, Kitty, absolutely and forever, and I've got to go now*" (I. Murdoch "A word child", p. 370).

That very moment Gunnar appears and starts a fight giving Hilary no chance for an explanation. Kitty accidentally falls into the river and dies of exposure. Christmas comes. Hilary's friend Clifford commits suicide. Crystal finally marries her friend, Arthur Fisch. Tommy, Hilary's lover, does not marry another man and decides to rekindle his love. Is Hilary's life an entire catastrophe? Or is it, probably, the beginning of a new life? Murdoch lets the readers draw their own conclusions according to their understanding of her text.

2.2 "Inner circles" in "A word child"

All Murdoch's novels belong to intellectual prose. Yet, many of them are criticized for their repetitions and coincidences. However, we are going to show that perceived circularity in Murdoch's novel is not a drawback of the author's style. It patterns the readers' interpretation of the narrative in such a way that the open end of the novel, as well as its seemingly unresolved conflicts, acquires a clear moral judgment in retrospection.

Circularity is traditionally sustained by means of syntactic parallelism, repetition, and tautology. From a cognitive point of view, they represent "a mechanism of mapping the structures of knowledge <...> onto the syntactic structure of literary text" (Volkova 2018, p. 449). Speaking about metastructural organization of the text, Hoey points out the importance of repetitions, because they are mentally compared by the reader and classified as compatible or contrasting (The linguistics encyclopaedia 1991: 546). Repetitions that seem trivial and boring can actually be triggers (Volkova 2016: 365) to the mental activity of comparing and provoke readers to construe certain mental models or reframe the previous ones (Cook 1990: 231-232) in order to find plausible interpretations of a given narrative.

The following extract shows a string of repetitions, which (if we bear syntactic iconicity in mind) resembles a chain (a-b – a-b – a-a – a-c – a-c – a-b – d-a-a-d), whereas the stylistic figure of chiasmus reverses the order (d-a-a-d) and represents a symbolic loop that locks the chain: *I worked (a) to a man called Duncan, now (b) briefly seconded to the Home Office, who worked to a Mrs Frederickson, now on maternity leave, who worked to Freddie Impiatt, who worked to Clifford Larr, who worked to someone too exalted (c) to be in question here, who worked to someone more exalted still, who worked to the head of the department Sir Brian Templar-Spence, who was now about to retire. Arthur (d) Fisch worked to me. Nobody worked to Arthur (I. Murdoch "A word child", p. 8).*

After restoring the logical sequence of relationships among the referents, we see that the chain is circular: in the interim between "Arthur Fisch worked to ...", and "Nobody worked to Arthur" the narrator mentions his own persona (*me*); so the previous information about the organizational hierarchy (*I worked to ...*) can be easily incorporated here. In this case, the information is restructured in the following sequence: d-a – [a-b – a-b – a-a – a-c – a-c – a-b] – a-d. The symbolic meaning of this 'locked chain' can be related to the image of a convict kept in chains. This image, in its turn, activates the IMPRISONMENT concept. The concept is sustained further by the image of captives, which refers to the employees of the office: *In our daily bondage what can be more preoccupying and ultimately influential than the voices of our fellow captives? How they go on and on: nothing perhaps, in sheer quantity, so fills up the head* (ibid., p. 33). Thus, at the very beginning of the story we prospectively become aware of Hilary's attitude to his drudging job as a form of captivity, or punishment, which – as we will learn later – is self-imposed and futile.

Circularity becomes even more accentuated by the combination of lexical, syntactic and stylistic cues due to the effect of "accumulative homology", which is defined by Tseng (2004: 4) as structural and/or semantic resemblances at various linguistic levels, mutual reinforcement of linguistic devices that contributes to the meaning expressed, e.g.: *And I reflected too, as I walked and walked **around** London, on the absolute doneness of what was done* (ibid., p. 201). Brooding over the past mistakes, "his crime", the main character roams the city, literary in circles, visiting his favourite locations. He is locked in his desperate mind as a prisoner in a cell, and his physical movements are also restrained by invisible boundaries, which make him walk around London as an enclosed space or ride along the inner circle of the underground. The persuasive power of the text is amplified here by metaphoric iconicity joined with accumulative homology (Tseng 2004: 7). Physical activity imitates mental activity, and the narration imitates them both.

Further, readers are bound to spot circularity and cyclicity of the narrative (see Fig. 1). Advocating the usefulness of graphic representation of our ideas, we can cite Langacker's (2008: 10) claim that "we are witnessing the emergence of "scientific visualization" and the growing recognition of its importance to theory and research". Stockwell (2002: 14), in his turn, states that the circle serves as a "superforegrounded figure" – a dominant that influences the dynamic organization of the text. In our scheme, every cycle denotes situations that occur several times in the novel until a crucial moment breaks the cycle. Meanwhile, the narrative circle (Inner circle – A word child) is a schematic presentation of a more complicated process of our subjective perception of the author's, the narrator's, and the reader's communication. Let us analyse this circle first.

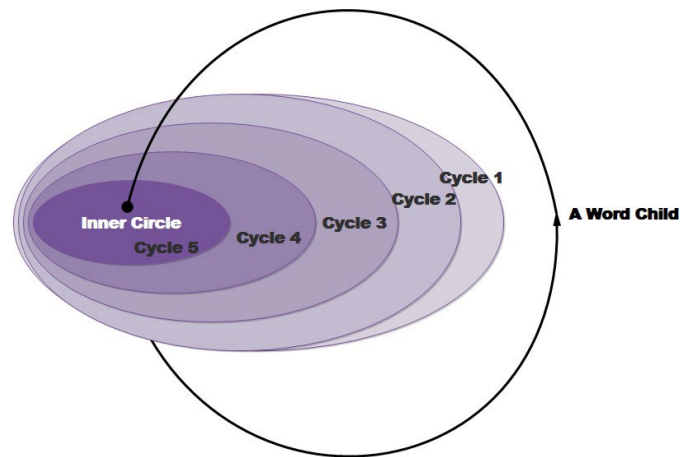


Figure 1. Narrative circularity and cyclicity in "A word child"

The notion of circularity is first introduced by the narrator who is also the protagonist of the story, Hilary Burde. By imparting his previous intentions to entitle the novel *The inner circle* or *The memoirs of an underground man* (I. Murdoch "A word child", p. 38), he claims the authorship of the novel. He does it several times by means of prospective narration and direct address to the readers, e.g.: "I may have seemed in these pages (*so far: and there will be no improvement*) to be a monster of egoism" (ibid., p. 68); "It was now Monday afternoon (*it looks as if nothing ever happens on Sundays, but just wait a while*)..." (ibid., p. 137). Yet, the readers are well aware of the fact that Iris Murdoch, the real author of the book, has entitled it *A word child*.

Thus, at the beginning of the story Murdoch presents an unusual collision to the readers: the fictional entity seems to be contemplating and finally accepting its creator's idea of naming the story:

Iris Murdoch – the real writer – names the story *A word child*;

Hilary – the fictional writer – intended to name the story *The inner circle* or *The memoirs of an underground man*, but entitles it *A word child*;

Hilary – the narrator – tells the story and already knows its end;

Hilary – the protagonist – "lives in the story".

This moment raises several questions: 1) Why should Hilary be the narrator of the story? 2) Why are the other suggested titles unsuitable? 3) Why does it matter that Hilary agrees to present his story as that of a word child, not that of the underground man? The answers become evident only at the end of the story when the intricacies of the spiritual growth of the main character are traced and deciphered by the readers. However, the open end of the story (marked by the question: Will Hilary live through the second disaster?) demands returning to that very moment when the narrator is leaving out unsuitable titles, because now this moment should be revised to confirm the reader's interpretation of the narrative.

Therefore, the beginning of Hilary's narration in fact presents a chronological end of the story: Hilary is not only alive, but also capable of telling his story, speculating on certain assumptions or arguing with his own previous thoughts, even amicably addressing the readers. Hilary's ability to become such a narrator shows that he is not a ruin, he is a word child rather than an underground man trapped in the inner circle of his destiny (the symbolic meaning of these images will be discussed further). We shall also see further that the Inner Circle signifies the notions of fatalism and punishment characteristic of Hilary's state of immature spirituality. This symbolic meaning will clash with another meaning of a circle as a symbol of revival, second chance, and victory over spiritual death.

The notion of circularity is sustained further on in a set of cycles in the narrative structure of the novel. They connect different events and situations within themselves and correlate with each other.

Cycle 1. The first cycle represents Hilary's lifeline, which seems to follow some predestined pattern. We represent it as a scenario (see Fig. 2) because of the dynamic character of this mental model. One can see that apart from some minute details, two identical events take place in the interim of about 20 years.

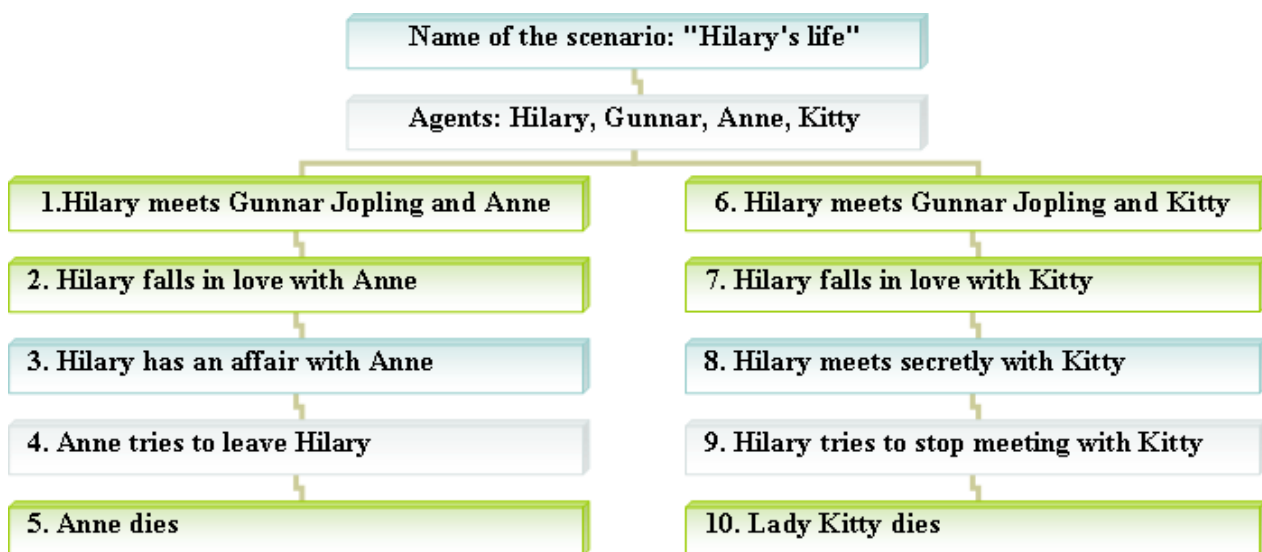


Figure 2. The scenario "Hilary's lifeline"

Points 1-5 form a kind of a frame (Hilary Burde falls in love with Gunnar Jopling's wife and the woman dies in an accident). It is also recognizable in points 6-10. The greatest difference between them lies in points 4 and 9: whether Gunnar's wife decided to leave Hilary or Hilary decided to leave Gunnar's wife. If we take into consideration only cycle 1 (i.e. only the general plot of the book), we are prone to conclude that no matter what Hilary's decision would be, both women were destined to die. That is why we find it important to analyze the other four cycles.

Cycle 2. The second cycle represents Hilary's daily routine – "routine that discourages thought" and saves him from "the hell of freedom" (I. Murdoch "A word child", p. 27). Each day of the week is prescribed for some kind of activity. He has dinner with the Impiatts every Thursday. Friday is Tommy's day (his lover). Saturday is his day for his sister, Crystal. Every Monday Hilary visits his friend, Clifford Larr. On Tuesday he has supper at Arthur Fisch's place (his subordinate and Crystal's boyfriend). The regularity of events is very clear, even the chapters are named according to the days of the week.

Meanwhile, various sets of mental models are quickly formed and evoked in readers' minds. These models are dynamic and experientially developing (Stockwell 2002: 79). They are not based on abstract knowledge of stereotypical events or objects, but on the personal knowledge of the readers of the text (van Dijk 2006). Murdoch's narrative circles remind us of circles on the water after a pebble has been thrown into it (it is worth noting, Hilary constantly mentions water): every coming circle is wider than the previous, widening our knowledge of Hilary's life and his inner conflict.

For instance, Hilary's visits to Clifford Larr are mentioned five times in the book. The script can be the following:

Name: "Visit to Clifford Larr"

Agents: Hilary, Clifford

Time: Monday evening

Scene 1: Clifford prepares dinner.

Scene 2: Clifford touches Hilary's hand.

Scene 3: Clifford mocks Hilary and they have a row.

Scene 4: Hilary goes away saying that he will never come back.

Of course, there are some adjustments in each separate case, for example, the cause of the quarrel. Yet, the implied regularity makes us feel that we can easily guess what will happen next time.

One more repeating cycle is evident in Hilary's visits to his sister (Table 1): the same time of meeting; the same topic of discussion; the same mutual dependence and opposition. Crystal is probably the most important person for Hilary. Therefore, the development of their relationship can signify the changes in Hilary's personality. In the course of the narrative, they become more straightforward and capable of making their own decisions. Hilary overcomes his egoism and, despite his own grief, tries to make Crystal happy.

Table 1. Hilary's relationship with Crystal

Agents	Hilary and Crystal					
Time	Saturday evenings					Christmas eve
Place	Crystal's flat					Church
Event	the discussion of the idea of marriage in general	the discussion of Hilary's relationship with Gunnar	the discussion of Hilary's relations with Kitty	Crystal retells the story of her sexual encounter with Gunnar	the discussion of Hilary's decision concerning Kitty	Crystal gets married to Arthur
Hilary feels	uneasy	exasperated	"naïve faith", love	shaken	firm	stunned, "the decision came like a bombshell"
Hilary acts	pretends to be calm and indifferent	accepts Arthur as his future brother-in-law	tells about his love for Kitty	stumbles out of the door and runs out into the street	decides to go to the last meeting	"feigned pleasure at the marriage, enthusiasm towards Arthur, happy anticipation of nephews"
Crystal feels	anxious to know Hilary's opinion	vulnerable	resentful	frustrated	resentful; resolute	firm, apologetic
Crystal acts	hesitates	stops crying, some hope appears	breaks her engagement; decides to tell her secret	cries	warns Hilary; decides to resume her relationship with Arthur	goes to Yorkshire with Arthur; remains unaware of Hilary's disaster

Thus, Murdoch deliberately imposes on us the idea of the cyclicity of time and life. However, the more confident we are of what is going to happen next, the more unexpected the end of the novel seems to us. In the end, after the collapse, the days of the week are no longer mentioned. Instead, the chapters are entitled Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Crystal gets married. Clifford Larr commits suicide. The effect of defeated expectancy achieved here involves construing conflicting mental spaces, in which a set of operations that take place in real space (in this case narrator's world) are not relevant to a certain set of operations that take place in a hypothetical or expected space (Kupchyshyna & Davydyuk 2017). This conflict cannot but alert the reader to the fact that the cycle is broken and that it presumably means that Hilary's real life, as well as his spiritual life, will never be the same.

Cycle 3. If we consider spatial characteristics of the text, we shall see that Hilary spends much time outdoors, in the parks, near the water. The conventional belief is that descriptions of nature reflect the mood, the inner state of the characters. Yet, a set of situational models connected with the description of nature supplies us with additional information (Table 2).

Table 2. Descriptions of recurrent natural phenomena

Event	Hilary meets Biscuit for the first time	Hilary goes for a walk with Tommy (reconciliation)	Hilary meets Lady Kitty	Hilary meets Kitty for the second time
Time	Saturday morning	Saturday morning	Monday morning	Tuesday morning
Agents	Hilary, Biscuit (Lady Kitty's maid)	Hilary, Tommy (the girlfriend)	Hilary, Kitty, Biscuit	Hilary, Kitty
Place	Kensington Gardens: the Serpentine "a great diffused brightness", "asphalt paths", "distant dogs ecstatically raced"	Round Pond "a vivid russet yellow light diving ducks, swans, Canadian geese, sparrows excited dogs mad with canine joy"	Kensington Gardens: the Serpentine "the chill mist, a few cold fluffed-up ducks"	Kensington Gardens: "near the river the trooping clouds were lighter, sandy track no one, not even a duck"

These descriptions are short, commonplace, without much poetic eloquence. Frankly speaking, they claim our attention more by their recurrence than by the things, which they portray. Despite the content, the descriptions invariably contain such features, as water, atmosphere, ground, and living-beings. We assume that such accounts dwell on the philosophy of agrarian cult: nature has a circular character – day by day, year by year, changes take place but the main elements (water, air, and ground) remain. Every sign of decay is the beginning of a revival. No wonder the main character gets a chance for spiritual revival at the end of the book.

Cycle 4. Big Ben is a mysterious and versatile image, which seems to be haunting the main character throughout the book being mentioned at least 14 times. Its symbolism is not transparent at once. To comprehend the link that exists between Hilary and Big Ben, the readers need to trace the changes in Hilary's perception of Big Ben throughout the story. In Figure 3 we show the conceptual integration network that represents only a few of the diverse links, which we draw between mental spaces related to Hilary and Big Ben (Note: *BS* means "blended space" in Fig. 3).

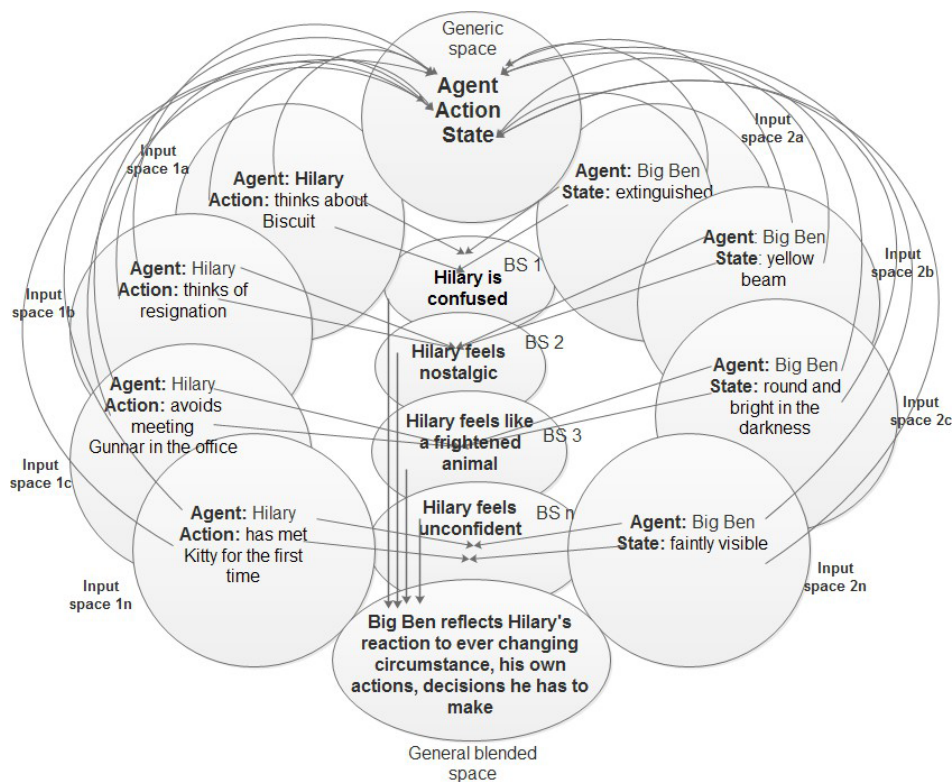


Figure 3. Conceptual integration network: A link between Hilary Burde and Big Ben

Big Ben serves as a mirror that reflects Hilary's feelings and actions. Whenever his mood changes, his perception of Big Ben changes as well: Hilary has met Gunner after many years, and feels ashamed and enraged – Big Ben is "a kind of reddish blur high above people" (a sign of blushing or/and rage); he has taken petty revenge on his colleagues – Big Ben is visible even through mist; Hilary starts thinking about his reaction to Crystal's decision to get married – there is a power cut and Big Ben's face is forcefully extinguished (the man subconsciously refuses to face the fact that his sister can leave him); he is at a loss what to do – Big Ben is faintly visible (no solution is visible); Hilary gets a second chance with Kitty, he is "almost happy", he believes that "all will be well" – Big Ben strikes the quarter hours, has "a bright hazy face". Big Ben is described as a clock, a bell, a tall construction, and a landmark in the story. Yet, what is it to Hilary Burde?

We assume that Big Ben represents a kind of mystical, supernatural power. For example, we read, "*Promise me, swear to me. Swear by – By Big Ben*" (I. Murdoch "A word child", p. 56), so it is something sacred. "*I will miss it*" – Hilary says this about Big Ben, as if it is something dear and always present, customary. This mystical power (probably, fate) displays itself then and now in Hilary's life until Big Ben strikes for the first and the last time in the book. We realize at once that the crucial moment has come: Hilary will soon have to make the hardest decision ever. At the end of the novel, Big Ben vanishes from Hilary's narration. This can imply that he has regained control over his life. The chiming of church bells mentioned in the last lines of the story seems to replace this image, but the meaning of this change is often overlooked by readers who criticize Murdoch for a weak, obscure ending of the brilliant novel. We shall speak about our interpretation of this ending further in the article.

Cycle 5. We have illustrated that everything in Hilary's life (objective reality, relations with other people, natural and supernatural powers) is of a circular nature. We believe that the last cycle – Hilary's spiritual life – is the most important because of the author's philosophical concept that lies at the heart of the text. The images used to describe

Hilary's spiritual life – the underground man, Peter Pan, the Christ Child, Word, the Good – are actualised in multiple ways in the text. We believe that this system of images sustains the global coherence of the text by outlining its conceptual nucleus – the SPIRITUAL GROWTH concept.

2.3 *The SPIRITUAL GROWTH concept*

The nucleus of the SPIRITUAL GROWTH concept comprises two features: growth and spirituality. According to Kahanovska's (Кагановська 2018) hierarchy of textual concepts, they are "mesoconcepts" contributing to the "megaconcept". GROWTH as a personal way of developing (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, *s.a.*; Macmillan Dictionary 2002) is manifested in transition from the state of immaturity (childhood) to maturity. There are three child figures in the book: Peter Pan is a child, Jesus Christ is persistently called the Christ Child, and Hilary considers himself a word child. These images constantly appear in the course of narration, serving as a semiotic and semantic thread that makes the notion of growth prominent. Like a child, Hilary needs to grow, not physically or mentally, but spiritually. SPIRITUALITY as the capacity relating to the human spirit, soul, incorporeal, ecclesiastical, or supernatural phenomena (Macmillan Dictionary 2002; Merriam-Webster Dictionary, *s.a.*; Oxford English Dictionary, *s.a.*) is associated with religion, morality, guilt, punishment, redemption, love, and forgiveness (a set of textual "cataconcepts") in the text.

All these textual concepts are recurrently verbalised and explicated through a set of images, which make a complex contribution to the major concept (textual "megaconcept") of SPIRITUAL GROWTH. It is the encapsulated meaning of the whole text that reveals the intricate way of the protagonist's gradual transition from spiritual immaturity to higher awareness of his capacity to be good and to do good. By combining the evaluative features of the concepts GROWTH and SPIRITUALITY (high (+) vs. low (-)), we can describe Hilary's gradual moral development as a three-stage process, each of the stages being represented by a set of images (see Fig. 3).

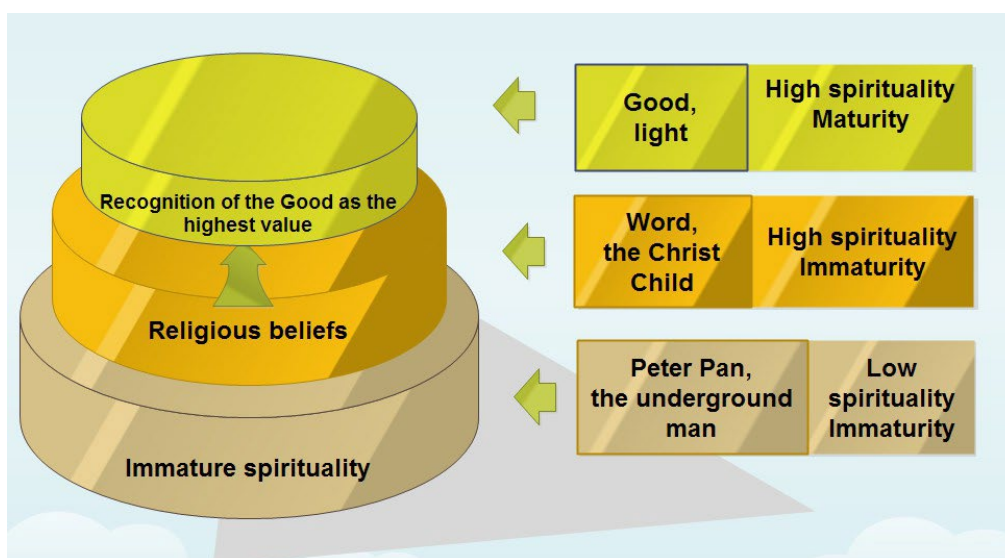


Figure 3. Three stages of the protagonist's spiritual growth

The conceptual network is verbalized through a vast range of lexico-semantic means, as well as activated on the semiotic plane of the text. In the text, significant concepts are voiced by different speakers, embodied in sculpture and pantomime, evoked in reminiscences and even mentioned in a case of pure grammatical drilling. Meanwhile, the real comprehension of each of them, of their multiple symbolic facets and depth, can only be possible within the framework of the whole text.

2.3.1 *Immature spirituality: Underground man*

Hilary Burde calls himself an undergrounder (I. Murdoch "A word child", p. 38). Being the narrator of the story, he even contemplated entitling the story *The memoirs of an underground man* or just simply *The inner circle*. He spends much time in the London underground and considers it his natural habitat. To interpret its symbolic meaning, one should resort to the intertextual ties that exist between the novel "A word child" and Dostoyevsky's (1864) "Notes from Underground" (Глембоцкая 1996; Клименко 1989). Conceptual network of mental spaces that present Hilary and the man from underground replenishes some information about Hilary's state of resentment and misery.

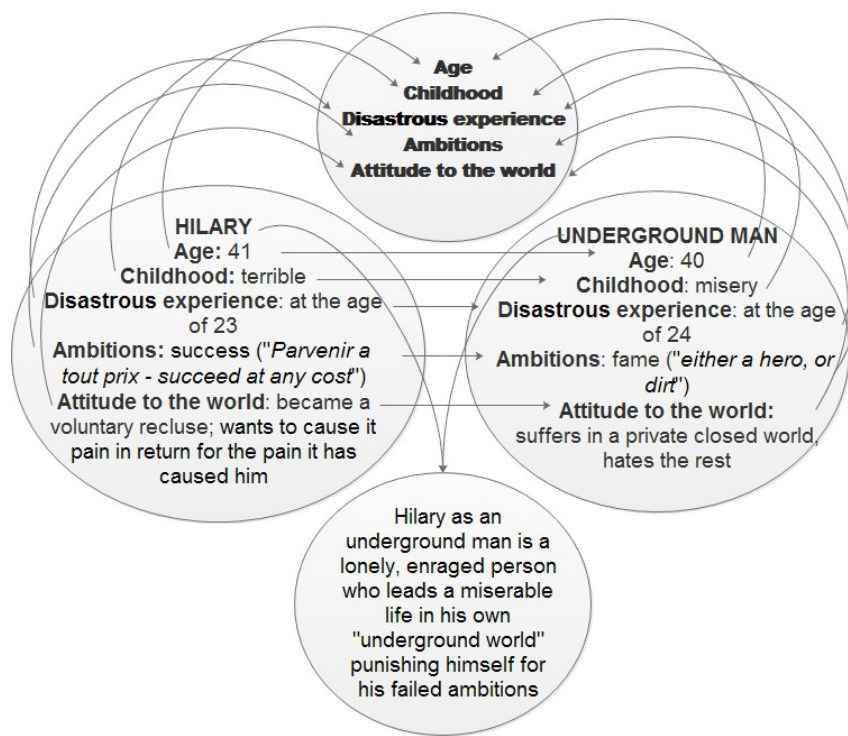


Figure 4. Conceptual integration network: Hilary as an underground man

The image of the underground man corresponds to the lowest stage of spiritual growth: it is a frustrated, lonely, enraged person who leads a close, miserable, aimless life (like going around the Inner Circle again and again). For almost twenty years, Hilary has lived as the underground man obsessed by a sense of guilt, rage, and self-pity. He fails to succeed and punishes himself by destroying his and his sister's lives (*"For the world was lost indeed and I had lost it not only for myself but for Crystal"*) (I. Murdoch "A word child", p. 126). He is a violent and destructive man, unable to see the humble truth, but this man suffers greatly (Михальская & Аникин 1985).

In general, Dostoyevsky's influence is quite perceptible in the novel. Murdoch raises the same universal themes of good and evil, guilt and redemptive suffering, and conflict between faith and intellectualism. She also makes Hilary speculate on the problem of crime and punishment. His words, *"I knew I had killed Anne ... almost as surely as if I had hit her with an axe"* and *"every crime is The Crime"* clearly refer to Dostoyevsky's novel "Crime and punishment" ("Преступление и наказание", 1866). Naturally, Hilary is not Raskol'nikov – the protagonist of Dostoyevsky's novel who commits an

ideologically driven murder; the motives of their crimes are different, but they both gradually realize their guilt and grow spiritually through redemptive suffering.

2.3.2 *Immature spirituality: Peter Pan*

Hilary's immaturity, weak will, and fears are embodied in another figure as well. His office is going to stage the skit "Peter Pan" for their Christmas party. In the novel, Peter Pan is considered to be an "*immature spirit*", "*a sinister boy*" (I. Murdoch "A word child", p. 203) who wishes time stopped and he never grew old, which means he would never have to face problems. Yet, they fail to find someone who will play his part. The fact is not surprising for us because we realize that Hilary is Peter Pan.

The image of Peter Pan originates from Barrie's novels (Barrie 2003) "The little white bird" (1902) and "Peter Pan and Wendy" (1911). Eventually, they were adapted into the play "Peter Pan", which became known worldwide. Originally, Peter Pan was a symbol of a sunny innocent soul, a freedom-loving childish personality capable of breaking the norms of society. He became so popular that his statue soon appeared in Kensington Gardens (the statue is often mentioned in the novel I. Murdoch "A word child"). Since the time of its first publication, this image has appeared in more than 34 novels. Today various interpretations of the image exist. Yet, Murdoch prompts the readers at once that neither Freudian criticism (the meaning of a literary work lies in the psyche of the author), nor Marxist criticism (literary works reveal the state of the struggle between classes in the historical place and moment) explain the image correctly. "*Why not a Christian interpretation?*," asks Hilary Burde in the book, outlining the possible interpretations for the readers of the novel.

Considering this, we find it difficult to agree with Bove's (2011: 154-155) interpretation of the image of Peter Pan as a projected Oedipus complex that Hilary develops while falling in love with the wife of Gunnar Jopling, who is a "father" figure for him. In the course of narration, Peter Pan turns out to be the embodiment of an

irresponsible, careless, immature personality who cannot surrender his pretensions and avoids facing any problems, especially those of moral character.

The novel provides numerous hints for the fact that Hilary is Peter Pan. It is he who wishes time would stop (*"The notion that there was for her, a time limit filled me with anguish and with the kind of irritated disgust"*) (I. Murdoch "A word child", p. 36). He does not know his parents and always needs someone to play the role of his mother, e.g.: his lover Tommy – *"Tommy held my hand and I let her, feeling myself like a child"* (ibid., p. 177), *"I feel as connected with you as if I were your mother"* (ibid., p. 282); his friend Laura – *"I know you want me to mother you, but I won't"* (ibid., p. 51); his lover Anne – *"She enjoyed giving little presents and "mothering" the younger bachelor dons"* (ibid., p. 117); or Crystal – *"My younger sister had to be my mother, and I had to be her father"* (ibid., p. 18).

Hilary wants someone to decide everything for him: *"The final thing I thought before I fell asleep was that now, at last, in the end, Lady Kitty had taken over and she would dispose of everything in the best way possible. Lady Kitty would arrange it all"*. He is so afraid of facing his guilt and pain that he *"tries to hide in a childhood, a refuge, a pure sullied place"* (ibid., p. 257). That is why he is reluctant to let Crystal get married because loss of Crystal's innocence will mean that the tie with childhood is broken. At the same time, Hilary admits that aging is one of his secret sorrows – *"I'm getting old"* (ibid., p. 12).

"Peter Pan" is Hilary's favourite play (ibid., p. 10). Peter Pan lives in Never-Never Land, Hilary *"likes to live in other people's worlds and have none of his own"* (ibid., p. 8). Peter Pan lives with a few boys on the island; Hilary has a lodger Christopher Cather who always invites friends over. When Hilary, finally, drives them all away he has to admit that *"the house seems empty and sad without the boys"* (ibid., p. 365). Other characters compare Hilary to a child: Clifford – *"Poor Child"* (ibid., p. 358),

Kitty – "*You were so honest and so helpless like a child*" (ibid., p. 313), Gunnar – "*Deaf and dumb child*" (ibid., p. 267).

In the story of Peter Pan we find such a description: "*The lost boys were looking for Peter Pan, the pirates were looking for the boys, the Indians were looking for the pirates, the wild animals were looking for the Indians to eat them. They all went circle by circle with the equal speed*" (J.M. Barrie "Peter Pan", p. 81). This circularity of narration matches the circularity of Hilary Burde's life in the novel "A word child".

Using Gunner Jopling as her spokesman, Murdoch explains this image in such a way: "*Peter personifies a spirituality which is irrevocably caught in childhood and which yet cannot surrender its pretensions. Peter is essentially a being from elsewhere, the apotheosis of an immature spirituality*" (I. Murdoch "A word child", p. 227). However, the author does not trap her main character in this state and pushes him to shift his ground. First he regards himself as a "*simple unsophisticated boy from the province*", later regrets that he is "*no longer a young man with an unspoiled life*", then states that he is "*already old and cold... quite a mature adult*" and at last realizes that "*an era is ending*". This mental shift leads to further transformations of Hilary's personality.

2.3.3 Religious beliefs

The image of Peter Pan has a kind of direct opposite in the book – the Christ Child who is, on the contrary, ready to face anguish to save the world. The question of Hilary's religious beliefs is quite controversial. He claims that he has "*no religion and no substitute for it*" (I. Murdoch "A word child", p. 28), he does not believe in God (ibid., p. 367). He did an awful thing in his youth, and the burden of it ruins his life. He realizes that crime and punishment are inextricably mixed. "*Misery and sin are inextricably mixed and only repentance can change sin into pure pain*" (ibid., p. 126), "*Sin and pain are inextricably mixed*" (ibid., p. 108) – again and again he returns to this idea.

Eventually, Hilary comes closer to the Christ Child. At first, he supposes that the Christ Child could relieve him of pain. Then he asks Crystal to pray for him. He is full of self-pity, and considers himself "*a martyr, pierced and pinned, writhed in agony*" (ibid., p. 117). Then the cycle repeats: once again, he falls in love with Gunnar's wife, but this time he does not betray him, and he does his best to rescue the woman. It is obvious that though there are no great changes in the objective reality, there are obvious changes in the inner world of the character. Suddenly he makes a stunning discovery. All the previous years he experienced no "*repentance, penance or redemptive suffering. As often... guilt sprang from the punishment rather than from the crime*" (ibid., p. 38). What really impressed him was not the crime itself but the instant and automatic nature of the first retribution, the loss of Oxford, his position and the fruits of his labour. He realizes that his previous selfish suffering has not purified him.

Suddenly the second disaster and the consequences become meaningful. No matter how distressing the situation is, this is a great opportunity to correct his previous mistakes, repent for them, and even have a chance for consolation: "*I wondered about the future... Did not the same crime twice committed meant more than double retribution? Or was it now quite a different scene? I was older, I lacked the recklessness of youth and its generosity ... would such a desperation or such a mean carefulness ... guard me from the self-destruction to which I had earlier doomed myself?*" (ibid., p. 367).

At last Hilary is convinced that "*Everything is in the light of God*" (ibid., p. 340) and comes to the Christ Child "*who was leaning from his mother's arms to bless the world. At the other end he hung dead, cut off in his young manhood for me and for my sins*" (ibid., p. 380).

The Christian God is often represented in the novel by the powerful image of the Word. The notion of "the Word" is rather complex; its direct and implied meanings appear simultaneously and interact all the time in the novel. On the one hand, being a polyglot

Hilary deals with real words all the time. On the other hand, we realize that "the Word" is a biblical allusion. Let us look at these notions in detail.

Active verbal thinking is typical of Murdoch's narrators. They are usually eloquent and loquacious and use their language to influence other people. All these features also characterize Hilary Burde – "a word child". His profound linguistic skills have secured him a job and prevented him from becoming a criminal. Words are the only sphere where he feels confident. He knows that he is a talented polyglot, and this idea flatters his "touchy pride". Words are his "salvation", his "hiding-place" and grammar-books are his "books of prayers". To some extent, words acquire some metaphysical power for Hilary: "*He [his teacher Mr. Osmond] inculcated in me a respect for accuracy, a respect, to put it more nobly, for truth*" (ibid., p. 22) – right words become true words.

Hilary frequently resorts to foreign and unusual words, or coins his own ones to communicate his ideas more precisely: "*I reflected on the absolute **doneness** of what was done*" (ibid., p. 201); "*We watched the diving ducks diving and the swans **swanning***" (ibid., p. 178); **accidentalness** (ibid., p. 391); **Londonish** (ibid., p. 68); **London-pink** (ibid., p. 293), etc. Hilary also makes up different variants of names, which shows his bright linguistic imagination: *Thomasina – Tommy, Tomkins, Thomas; Biscuit – Biscuitling, Biscuitine, Biscuitula, Biscottina, Biscottinetta*.

Apart from characterizing Hilary as a linguist, the choice of lexemes reveals some of the author's intentions. Therefore, the words "wolfish" and "to wolf" contribute to the animalistic image of Hilary, describing his fury, on the one hand, and his solitude, on the other hand. The author uses the verb "to mother" instead of "to take care of" or "love" because it is essentially important to stress Hilary's need of a mother.

There are numerous words and expressions pertaining to the sphere of religion. Some of them appear when the characters speculate on the problems of faith, e.g., *God, Virgin Mary, the Christ Child, saint, the Messiah*. Others are mere exclamations that Hilary

Burde uses (we find 14 variants of these), such as *Oh, God!, Christ, Christ! For God's sake! Thank God! Thank Heaven! For Christ's sake! Jesus! Oh Christ in heaven! Sweet Christ help me!* Despite the colloquial character of the expressions and Hilary's claim of disappointment with Christianity, the constant mentioning of divine names suggests that religion is present not only in his consciousness, but also in his subconsciousness. These displays of his psyche are very important. The author shows us that what Hilary says does not necessarily fit with what he feels. Besides, it may also suggest that one day Hilary will be able to accept religious beliefs as true.

Another group of words, which Hilary seems to be keen on, is connected with the military sphere: *combative, operation, campaign, retreat, the interval was annihilated, war memorial, commands, enemy, parley, intervene, war, warfare kit, combat, struggle, trophies, battle, battlefield*, etc. The cognitive metaphor, which is evidently construed here, is LIFE is WAR (see Table 3).

Table 3. Examples of mapping between the domains LIFE and WAR

Source: WAR	Target: LIFE
the consequences of war are wounds afflicted on the battlefield, or even death	1) mistakes in life cause psychological wounds: " <i>For a moment light can fall upon an obscene and awful wound</i> " (I. Murdoch "A word child", p. 221); 2) the end of romantic relations can result in psychological wounds, if not death: " <i>I may be yours. You're certainly not mine, thank God! Look, Tommy, let me go. Let's have a clean slice not a bloody massacre</i> " (ibid., p. 39)
the cause of war is invasion that disrupts the habitual way of living	one's life can be destroyed by someone's actions (intrusion): " <i>Gunnar's life had been ripped apart, and I had done it, entering from outside as a cruel ruthless invader</i> " (ibid., p.38)
combatants need some shelter while being attacked	if someone feels at risk he/she looks for safety: " <i>You're always hiding</i> " (ibid., p. 51)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - attacks as well as defensive actions are carefully planned and organized; - inability to advance results in periods of rest and recouping one's strength; - meeting an adversary involves a violent confrontation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - communication with an opponent is carefully thought out; - absence of heated arguments brings relief; - facing an opponent may involve a violent conflict: "<i>That at least, amidst all the dread, presented itself as a humane and consoling operation. I did not try myself with ideas of</i>

	<p>seeing her again. But I did so much want, and felt I somehow deserved, the relief of writing to her and explaining myself to her before I decided what my plan of campaign should be in regard to Gunnar. There was a kind of strange holy safety, as if I were in 'retreat', in the existence of the interval, the interval between my receipt of Lady Kitty's instructions and the unpredictable battle scene between me and Gunnar" (ibid., p. 152)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - heroic fighting requires self-sacrifice; - war is followed by peace 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - good actions often mean renunciation of one's own happiness for the sake of other people; - the final choice of the life path brings turmoil to an end: "<i>She clung to me till the last moment <...> I play-acted heroically. The last thing I could do for her was to send her to her fate with some peace of mind "</i> (ibid., p. 380)

Hilary is always at war: with himself, with his past, with Gunnar Jopling, with the universe. Nonetheless, he is personally unaware of this. Through Arthur Fisch's words "*It's better to forgive than to hate*" (I. Murdoch "A word child", p. 152), Murdoch states that the combative and wrathful Hilary will not reach a higher spiritual level until he becomes humble and forgiving.

The notion of "the Word" as a biblical allusion refers us to St. John when Hilary quotes him: "*In the beginning was the Word*", and we can continue "and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (The Holy Bible 2002). Now the question is whether we may consider the title of the book once again and replace "a word child" with "one of the children of God"?

The Bible appears to be the most prolific source of allusions, reminiscences and other forms of intertextuality. Most of them are well known and recognizable, e.g.: *prodigal son* (ibid., Luke 15:11-32), *the Tower of Babel* (ibid., Genesis 11:1-9), *a new heaven and a new earth* (ibid, Revelation 21:1). Sometimes the characters of the novel quote them directly "*In the beginning was the Word*" (ibid., John 1:1) or paraphrase them in their own words: "*Forgiving equals being forgiven*" – "*Forgive and you shall be forgiven*" (ibid., Luke 6:37). We see that Christian doctrines and atheistic views are

intricately interlaced in Hilary's mind. His ideas lack unity. Still these reflections about religion become the driving force behind Hilary's evolution.

Some of the reminiscences are rather tricky. When Peter came to Jesus and asked, "*Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother who sins against me? Up to seven times*". Jesus answered, "*I tell you not seven times, but seventy times seven*" (ibid., Mathew 18:21-22). The numbers appear in the conversation between Hilary and Kitty. He asks: "*How long would you let me make love to you if you didn't become so [pregnant]? Seven times? Seventy times seven?*" At first, his words may seem a blasphemy to us. However, they show Hilary's indignation, not his perversion. He has already discovered that forgiveness is the secret of the universe; it is his only "escape route" from the "darkness" of his life. So we may suggest that what Hilary really intends to ask is "*How many more times do you want me to betray Gunnar? How many times will he have to forgive me?*" Therefore, Hilary's deliberate use of Biblical reminiscences is a marker of his spiritual growth.

Many researchers suppose that despite the sophisticated formulation of Murdoch's philosophical views their core remains quite traditional – they are all based on Christian beliefs. We consider as proof of this idea the fact that three characters of the novel (Hilary, Crystal, and Gunnar) quote a line from St. Paul's message, which Murdoch herself mentioned in some of her philosophical works: "*Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just ... think on these things*" (The Holy Bible 2002: Phil 4:8). Nevertheless, faithful to her philosophical views Murdoch leads her character further than the conventional Christian revelation – to the third spiritual level.

2.3.4 *The Good*

If we continue looking for references to St. John in "A word child", we shall soon come to the words: "God is light; in him there is no darkness at all" (The Holy Bible 2002). Love, happiness, everything positive is presented as light in the book: "*For a moment*

light can fall upon an obscene and awful wound" (I. Murdoch "A word child", p. 221); *"There was, however, one glint of light and I was blessed to have it amid these fruitless burdens"* (ibid., p. 150); *"Your good wishes are as prayers in the light of which I can almost pray myself"* (ibid., p. 220); *"I think it is a memory of a state of being loved, a sense of some lost brightness, an era of light before the darkness started"* (ibid., p. 56). The image of "light" is always present in Hilary's thoughts as a symbol of happiness, truth, and good.

Despite their philosophical beliefs, many characters in the book are united by the notion of Good that rules the world. Here are some quotes:

- *"You realize you are everything, then you love everything and you are good automatically"* – the Buddhist Christopher (ibid., p. 47);
- *"This in itself will do a tiny bit of good in the world"* – the cynic Clifford Larr (ibid., p. 143);
- *"There's truth and trying to stay there, I mean to stay in its sort of light and trying to do a good thing"* – the atheist Arthur Fisch (ibid., p. 290);
- *"Oh, be good!"* – the Christian Crystal (ibid., p.19);
- *"Looking up words in the dictionary was for me an image of goodness"; "Your good wishes are as prayers in the light"* – the moral wreck Hilary Burde (ibid., p. 222).

The author eventually leads us to an appreciation of Good as the highest value, so the word is persistently used by all the characters. Murdoch even invents words, which contain the stem "good", e.g., *goodness* (ibid., p. 381) instead of kindness; *the goodest little mouse* (ibid., p. 339) instead of the best; *goods* (ibid., p.335) in the meaning of different kinds of "good". This stresses the importance of the notion of Good, which is at the core of the author's model of moral maturing.

Murdoch shows that her understanding of God differs from the Christian idea of this divine power. She leads the readers to the idea expressed in her philosophical works:

"Good represents the reality of which God is the dream" (Murdoch 1992: 496). Here we need to make a brief digression on philosophy to make our point clear.

Murdoch's philosophical, ethical, and aesthetic views, which evolved from existentialism from Plato to Christianity and non-traditional religions, make up a robust background of her literary works. Her philosophical works "The sovereignty of Good" and "Metaphysics as a guide to moral" may serve as a point of departure into the multiple layers of thought in the novelist's works. Murdoch persistently seeks to discover in what way our fallacies, biases, and instincts make us unaware of truth and moral goodness (Jerončić 2013: 110-111). We are generally trapped in misconceptions and illusion about our true condition, and one's search for Good may be a case of self-deception of "fat, relentless ego" (Murdoch 1970: 51). Morality, consequently, is a conscious effort to see rightly: "I can only choose within the world I can see, in the moral sense of *see* which implies that clear vision is a result of moral imagination and moral effort" (ibid., p. 37). Murdoch repeatedly calls for "morally disciplined attention" stressing, though, that it surpasses the basic logic of cognition in pursuit of "the cloudy and shifting domain of the concepts which men live by" (Murdoch 1992: 122).

Murdoch tries to replace the personal Christian God with the notion of the impersonal Good stating that the Good illuminates the moral world as the sun illuminates the natural world (Jacobs 1995). In Plato's words, the Good is, "the end of all endeavour, the object on which every heart is set, whose existence it defines, though it finds it difficult to grasp just what it is" (Murdoch 1970). Murdoch believes that Buddhism can teach Christianity to create a non-supernatural religion, that is, without the notion of a personal God or personal immortality in the familiar sense.

In "A word child", for instance, the Buddhist Christopher criticizes Christianity for its notion of a personal God but, strangely enough, gets the name that means "Christ bearer". Traces of the author's religious ideas can be found in the utterances of other characters of the book – Gunnar: "*I suppose in the end all things must be forgiven*"

(I. Murdoch "A word child", p. 327), and Crystal: "*If we're gone wrong we've misused our religion*" (ibid., p. 338).

Jacobs also argues that nostalgia for the Christian faith is palpable throughout Murdoch's philosophical and literary works (1995):

The narratives of Christ's redemptive acts touch Murdoch because they reveal a God who, in the Apostle Paul's formulation, came to save us while we were yet sinners, before we had loved him. The Platonic Good can be, like the Jewish and Christian God, lovable; "however, God sees us and seeks us, Good does not".

Redemption, in Murdochian sense, is aspiration for gradual spiritual growth away from selfishness. Even though she cannot find the way to accept the personal God, Murdoch concludes her book "Metaphysics as a guide to morals" (1992) with these words from Psalm 139:

Whither shall I go from the spirit, whither shall I fly from the presence? If I ascend into the heaven thou art there, if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.

In the novel "A word child", the main character can be saved from self-destruction only through his moral effort and discovery of the Good. It is clear that understanding of good and being good is the highest level of spiritual growth, which the main character should strive for.

We can identify two driving forces behind the spiritual growth outlined in the novel. They are **love** and **forgiveness**. In his early childhood, Hilary considered himself unlovable, and that idea was the major source of his pain and anger. Later he understood that love had always been "*an ignis fatuus (a fatal sparkle)*" (I. Murdoch "A word child", p. 213) for him. When he speaks of words as his salvation, he conjugates the verb to love – *amo, amas, amat*. His love for Kitty is his "*song of praise to the world*" (ibid., p. 339). In the long run, he comes to the conclusion that "*being in love has its own certifying universality, it informs and glorifies the world with an*

*energy which, like a drug, becomes a necessity of consciousness" (ibid., p. 335). Eventually, he discovers the second, equally important, secret of the universe – forgiveness: "I could forgive. I could be forgiven. I could forgive. Perhaps that was the whole of it after all. Perhaps being forgiven was just forgiving only no one had ever told me. There was nothing else needful. Just to forgive. **Forgiving equals being forgiven**, the secret of the universe, do not whatever you do forget it. The past was folded up and in the twinkling of an eye everything had been changed and made beautiful and good" (ibid., p. 298).*

Forgiveness gives Hilary hope that someday he will find reconciliation with himself and the rest of the world, and that idea changes his perception of everything from evil to good and full of meaning. To see how love and forgiveness serve for the good in the novel, we need to speak about the truth and lies that surround Hilary.

2.4 Good, absurd, and true lies in "A word child"

Schneiderman (1997) gives an important insight into Murdoch's literary works stating that "her novels often are intended to illustrate the difficulties involved in arriving at a "true" reading of what transpires in human relationships, and how, in the absence of *truth* her self-deceived protagonists are debarred from the pursuit of *virtue*". The main character of the novel "A word child" also has to make several discoveries concerning truth, lies, and self-deception.

Yermakova (Ермакова 2010: 176) makes an interesting observation about psychological fiction, which tends to address prototypical scenarios. On the one hand, it prompts readers' interpretation of the text; on the other hand, if the prototypical scenario is diverted, it multiplies the conceptual layers of the text. We believe this is the case with the novel "A word child", which explicitly actualises the LIAR concept and completely reinterprets it.

First, let us point out that the core of LIAR concept comprises the following prototypic features of the person who tells lies: 1) intentional distortion of the true meaning of expression; 2) latent intentions, insincerity of their expression; 3) double mental space; 4) knowledge of conventional forms of expressing lies; 5) self-identification as a liar; 6) secret character of all the features mentioned above (Терещенко 2013: 147). It is important to note that these objective features are accompanied by profound negative evaluation and a vast range of unfavourable associations (ibid., p. 172).

So is Hilary Burde a bald-faced, incorrigible liar? Definitely, not. Hilary is called a liar numerous times in the novel, but there is nothing conventional about it. At the beginning of the story, Hilary is a very straightforward person, sometimes too forthright for a polite person. This trait secures him respect and friendly treatment among eccentrics and intellectuals, but no warm feelings from mediocre office workers. Toward the end of the story, lies and revelations of truth grow exponentially making Hilary realize the consequences of both.

Let us consider several lies that Hilary tells. He conceals the most dramatic events of his past from most of his colleagues and some of his friends; even when his former friendship with Gunner is brought up in a conversation, he avoids any details. This is not a prototypical lie, but the so-called "lie of omission" that saves his and Gunner's reputation.

When his girlfriend, Tommy, accuses him of falling in love with a married woman, Hilary denies it without being completely sure whether he is telling lies or not. The fact of the matter is that Tommy thinks this married woman is Lora Impiatt, though in reality it is Kitty Jopling. The situation becomes even more absurd when nobody believes Hilary who swears that he is not in love with Lora Impiatt (which is completely true), and many people trust his blatant lies about moving to Australia, which he told in a half-jocular way to avoid any further inquiries about his future. Tommy also calls Hilary a liar when he truthfully admits that he is interested in her only sexually. After

some speculation, he cannot but agree with Tommy that his previous truthful words were in fact incorrect (he really appreciates her wit).

Thus, Hilary is different from a typical liar because of the way his lies are expressed and because of the absence of intentions to deliberately mislead the others. Before we speak about one more peculiarity of Hilary's lies (who benefits from them), we would like to outline the consequences of some of his "truths".

First of all, he admits to Gunner that Anne wanted to stay with her family, thus, relieving him of the painful suspicion that Anne may have been killed in an effort to escape from him. Having done this good, Hilary has to conceal the fact that he has fallen in love with his second wife from Gunner.

Most of his revelations, however, cause pain. Out of spite, Hilary tells Clifford about Crystal's sexual encounter with Gunner, but after that Clifford (who is a latent homosexual, but loves Crystal in his own special way) commits suicide. He also impulsively tells Kitty that Anne was pregnant when she was killed in the accident, which prompts Kitty to think up some unreasonable plans. His fierce denial of an affair between Lora and him almost reveals her real adultery with Christopher. His perpetual state of breaking up with Tommy made her embittered and prompted her jealous letter to Gunner that *"had brought about the encounter which killed Kitty, and married Crystal and brought double-intensified eternal damnation into my life and Gunnar's"* (I. Murdoch "A word child", p. 391).

Eventually, Hilary discovers that truth can be deadly. Crystal's truth about her love for Gunner shatters him, but it is he who reveals the truth to Clifford and unwittingly provokes his suicide. At the end of the book, we find Hilary sitting in St Stephen's Church *"crying for Clifford as I had not cried for Kitty, and just then his death seemed even more awful than hers"*; he also weeps for Kitty, for Gunnar, for Anne, and *"in some quieter way"* for himself (ibid., p. 380).

What happens next shows the complete transformation of Hilary's personality. Through real grieving for the people whom he loved, Hilary realises his self-deception, the absolute futility of his previous sufferings and self-imposed punishment, which has victimised his sister Crystal, his lover Tommy and other people as well. So this time he tells a lot of lies, "white lies", which will benefit others, not him (we define him as a beneficial type of a liar in the fictional discourse, see more about this type in (Терещенко 2013)).

Love turns out to be more important than truth, lies may serve the Good: "*This time I had pretended and pretended... I feigned pleasure at the marriage... The last thing I could do for her [Crystal] was to send her to her fate with some peace of mind*" (I. Murdoch "A word child", p. 388). Hilary does not let Crystal know that he has just survived a terrible blow and needs her dearly; he finally lets her go. Nor does Hilary reveal to Tommy that her letter had fatal consequences for several lives: "*She must never know. Another lifelong secret*" (ibid., p. 391). What is even more important is that he feels strangely relieved that the tragedy was purely accidental and not unleashed by anyone whom he has suspected. He does not find the idea of forgiveness impossible.

What about the end of the novel? Murdoch is praised as one of the very few contemporary novelists who go on troubling one's thoughts when the last page is done. The interpretations of the ending are as varied as the readers' viewpoints. The protagonist raises this question himself: "*I wondered about the future. Was another cycle of misery, intensified, more dense, beginning for me?... Then I had raged at the accidental but had not let it in any way save me from my insistence upon being the author of everything. Now I saw my authorship more modestly and could perhaps move in time towards forgiving myself, forgiving them all*" (ibid., p. 381).

In our interpretation, he undoubtedly sees the possibility of breaking the spell of his second cycle through redemption, love, and forgiveness. The bells of the nearby church

are chiming declaring the birth of the Christ Child, and Hilary is walking along the street with Tommy, joking in response to her promise to get him marry her.

3. Conclusion

Catastrophism is a characteristic of Murdoch's novels, and at first sight the plot of the book "A word child" seems to be immensely tragic and obscure. It imposes a sense of fatality about Hilary's life on us. Yet, we argue that the novel is a valuable piece of intellectual prose, which involves readers in a thought-provoking linguistic, artistic, and intellectual dialogue with the author in the quest for philosophical insights.

We aimed to illustrate how our comprehension of the author's philosophical, ethical, and aesthetic ideas develops due to our construing of meaningfulness of semantic, semiotic, and narrative planes of the novel. The effect of accumulative homology allowed us to see some of the features of these planes as foregrounded – circularity of the narrative and cyclicity of the protagonist's life. Our scheme of the narrative circle (Inner circle – A word child) presents a complicated process of our subjective perception of the author's, the narrator's, and the reader's communication, which presents an unusual collision to the readers: the fictional entity seems to be contemplating and finally accepting its creator's idea of naming the story. Further on, we use situational models and scripts as mental representations of a set of cycles, which we also detect in the narrative structure of the novel. They connect different events and situations within themselves and correlate with each other. The semiotic and conceptual analyses reveal a clash of possible interpretation of circularity of the protagonist's life as a symbol of fatality that haunts Hilary Burde or as a symbol of revival and a vital chance of moral development. The plausibility of the second interpretation is sustained by the results of our further conceptual, semantic, and semiotic analyses.

Conceptual integration is deployed to demonstrate our interpretation of some of the main textual images. To the latter we refer the underground man, Peter Pan, the Christ

Child, Word, light, and Good. They constitute the symbolic and evaluative planes of the textual concepts GROWTH and SPIRITUALITY, which make a complex contribution to the SPIRITUAL GROWTH concept – the textual "megaconcept". By combining the evaluative features of the concepts GROWTH and SPIRITUALITY (high (+) vs. low (-)), we describe Hilary's gradual moral development as a three-stage process, which involves transformation from immature spirituality to the religious idea of redemption, and philosophical acclaim of love and forgiveness as the cornerstones of the universal Good.

Finally, the results of conceptual and literary analyses show that due to his moral transformations, Hilary becomes a "white" liar, having discovered in the end that truth can be deadly and lies can serve the Good.

Further research of the topic may include analysis of the role of tell-tale names in the novel, Shakespearian and other important reminiscences, other cases of intertextuality, as well as the author-narrator opposition present in the text.

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Résumé

This article offers a facet of cognitive perspective to the literary analysis of the novel "A word child" by Iris Murdoch. It illustrates how the peculiarities of compositional, semantic and semiotic features of the text promote our construing of circularity of the narrative and draw our attention to cyclicity of the protagonist's life. Our scheme of the narrative circle (Inner circle – A word child) presents a complicated process of our subjective perception of the author's, the narrator's and the reader's communication. Further on we use situational models and scripts as mental representations of a set of cycles, which we detect in the narrative structure of the novel. They connect different events and situations within themselves and correlate with each other. The semiotic and conceptual analyses reveal a clash of possible interpretation of circularity of the

protagonist's life as a symbol of fatality that haunts Hilary Burde or as a symbol of revival and a vital chance of moral development. Conceptual integration is deployed to demonstrate our interpretation of some of the main textual images. To the latter we refer the underground man, Peter Pan, the Christ Child, Word, light, and Good. They constitute the symbolic and evaluative planes of the textual concepts GROWTH and SPIRITUALITY, which make a complex contribution to the SPIRITUAL GROWTH concept – the textual "megaconcept". By combining the evaluative features of the concepts GROWTH and SPIRITUALITY (high (+) vs. low (-)), we describe Hilary's gradual moral development as a three-stage process, which involves transformation from immature spirituality to the religious idea of redemption, and philosophical acclaim of love and forgiveness as the cornerstones of the universal Good. Contrary to existing pessimistic interpretations of the novel, we show that the story of Hilary Burde is an artfully conceived and deeply inspiring piece of intellectual prose that prompts a philosophical dialog between Iris Murdoch and her readers.

Keywords: circularity, cognitive construing, cycle, intertextuality, mental representations, textual concept.

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