

BOOK REVIEWS AND NOTICES

Tadeusz Gadacz, *Historia filozofii XX wieku. Nurty* [The History of 20th Century Philosophy. Currents], Tom 1, Znak, Kraków 2009, 606 pp.

How complex it is to prepare a reliable study of the history of XX century philosophy can only be known by those who are professionally engaged in philosophy. Nevertheless, the prospect of the emergence of such a case study is very exciting. This task seems even more daring when its implementation is undertaken by one person. Only a „madman”, as some will try to convince us, would undertake this intellectual „taming of 8 thousand meter high summits” on their own. Meanwhile in the Polish „philosophical yard” a person has appeared who, alone, has decided on the implementation of a task that many, without thinking, would condemn to failure. This person is Professor Tadeusz Gadacz.

Professor Tadeusz Gadacz is Polish, as he defines himself, a historian of philosophy, a student of Father Prof. Jozef Tischner. Currently, he is working at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Polish Academy of Sciences and as the Head of the Department of Philosophy at Collegium Civitas. He has been a scholar in research centers in Belgium, the United States, Israel, Austria. He has been awarded, amongst other things, prizes from the Minister of Culture, the National Library and the „New Books” as the author of the scientific, 10-volume encyclopedia „Religion”. He has also been awarded, the Warsaw Mayor’s Prize for best tutor. He is also the author of many Polish and foreign publications. His research interests include the history of twentieth century philosophy, the philosophy of God and religion, metaphysics and philosophical anthropology and education.

Professor Gadacz’s *History of XX Century Philosophy* arose in response to the demands he faced as a lecturer. Currently available studies, although they may be thought of as very useful, cannot be considered to be complete. We are bound to agree with the author, who, in analyzing the reasons for this states of affairs, points to the three most important: the wide range of issues for philosophical reflection, the broadening of the scope of national philosophy, and finally the interdisciplinarity characteristic of the twentieth century. As we know in the twentieth century, there were about 200 philosophers, whose views are still of interest. It is not without significance that there was greater access to education, easier exchange of information and more presence of philosophy in the media. Moreover, in contrast to the nineteenth century, it was not only French and German philosophy which set the directions for research. Philosophy in the end has remained in relationship

with a number of other sciences. These causes, make the synthesis of XX century philosophy an extremely difficult task, requiring enormous analytical work.

In writing *History of XX century Philosophy* the author adopted the principle that he would include as part of the XX Century not only those who were creating in the twentieth century, but also philosophers who were born, studied and published already in the nineteenth century, but who also created in the next century, in which the currents and trends, with which they are identified, contributed to the main branches of modern philosophical development. The author makes an exception with Nietzsche, whose ideas, he claims, made a significant mark on the philosophy of the twentieth century. The *History of XX Century Philosophy* is going to see the light of day in two parts. The first part, which is initiated by the volume being reviewed, is intended as an analysis of the mainstreams and directions of twentieth century philosophy. The second part will present an analysis of philosophical impacts on the other areas of philosophy.

The first volume, opening the first part of the *History of XX Century Philosophy*, is divided into three chapters, in which, respectively, we find issues related to trends such as: philosophy of life, pragmatism and the philosophy of spirit. At the beginning of each chapter we are brought into the historical and problematic issues associated with individual trends. Then the author proceeds to present the most representative of the philosophical mainstreams. For the philosophy of life we are presented with: Friedrich Nietzsche, Wilhelm Dilthey, Henri Bergson, Oswald Spengler, José Ortega y Gasset and Georg Simmel. For pragmatism: Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, John Dewey, Georg Herbert Mead. For the philosophy of spirit: Émile Boutroux, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Jean Nabert, Louis Lavelle, Eéné La Senne and Vladimir Jankélévitch.

The presentation of each philosopher has been divided into four parts. After the opening quotes from various thinkers, which relate to the views of the philosopher being described, there follows a section in which we have the opportunity to learn the biography of the philosopher in question as well as the characteristics of his life's work. This part is titled *Sources and Works*. The author considers biography as significant, however, he has a balanced opinion on this point. In this section, we find out, briefly, about career paths, major works and also get information such as: that Nietzsche was raised in an environment of religious women; about those specific skills of Henri Bergson that impacted on his female audience; about John Dewey's naive crush on the Soviet Union or about the funeral of Teilhard de Chardin, which was attended by only three people.

The biographical part is followed by *Inspirations and contexts*. In this part the author undertakes the reconstruction of the sources of a specific philosopher's thoughts. On the basis of source works, correspondence and seminar materials the history of the philosopher's reading is presented, along with their inspirations and the traditions with which they sympathized and those from which they strongly cut themselves off. In addition, there is a presentation of the various trends which the philosopher in question had in common with other thinkers, including those of

which they were not always aware. This part, as the author indicates, is intended for researchers and advanced students and represents only the beginning of research that should be continued. It shows just how various threads and philosophical ideas from ancient to modern are present in twentieth century philosophy.

The textual method, used by the author leads amongst other things to: a demonstration of the priority of Peirce over Buber with his dialogical I-Thou-It (p. 236), as well as certain astonishing statements concerning the current, false, association of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin with the Christian Personalists, an association the author argues against, by revealing Chardin's relationship with the French philosophy of spirit, (p. 411, 413). The author also shows that Lavelle was the precursor to Heidegger on issues such as the proposal to re-address the problem of existence in philosophy or the use of the notion of „the experience of being”. (p. 469). One result of the method used is an indication of the precedence of Lavelle in relation to Sartre with respect to formulations such as „existence precedes essence” or in the formula of objectification through the look, which became, for Sartre, fundamental to his concept of shame (p. 472).

In *Inspirations and contexts* we find more of this surprising information. Without a doubt, these bits of information will become the subject of lively discussion in the philosophical community. This part is especially recommended to those who are interested in the history of certain ideas, or how certain ideas were interpreted and re-interpreted.

The next part titled *Views* presents the views of philosophers on the diverse issues addressed by them. In this section the author tries to give the most important possible interpretations. We have the opportunity to become familiar with quotes derived from the philosophers analyzed.

The last part titled *Continuations*, shows the impact of one particular thinker on other thinkers. Here our attention will be turned to the mysterious relationship between Dilthey and Husserl (p. 134), to the influence of Nabert and Lavelle on Lévinas (p. 444), to the similarity between Le Senne and Tischner on issues of freedom and good, as well as the primacy of Goodness in relation to existence (p. 516) or Senne's claim that metaphysics is ethics, made much earlier than Lévinas' claim to this effect (p. 516). However, as the author admits himself, the impacts shown in this part, are not full examined due to fact that the further parts are still in development.

At the end we find a subject bibliography, appropriate to each chapter. In addition the volume is accompanied by a CD containing the bibliography, covering nearly 120 pages. At the back of it we find an index of names and a material index. Moreover, cross links located on the margins help one to find specific information.

As the author stresses, the aim of the monograph is to draw an intellectual map of the twentieth century, as well as to attempt to answer a question about the condition of philosophy and culture. We have in our hands the first volume of this massive assignment, which undoubtedly is a synthesis of XX century philosophi-

cal reflection. This book is free from excessive jargon, which makes the reading easy and enjoyable, and thus in an accessible way allows us to understand what are, very often, complex issues. One of the most characteristic features of this book is that it educates the reader concerning the truth of the always returning, eternal questions and problems which have over hundreds of years been the subject of philosophical reflection.

In deciding to use the method of textual genesis Prof. Tadeusz Gadacz is trying to prove the thesis that XX century philosophy did not constitute a radical break from traditional philosophical thought. Although the XX century merges a lot of interesting new ways of thinking and methods, their development would not be possible, without some continuity with classical thought. The author of the monograph draws meaning from the contextual, cultural complexity of various philosophers, showing their originality and genuine attempts to answer particular problems. Moreover using this method he focuses on finding a way out of the trap, in which philosophy found itself post 1989.

Without a doubt, the monograph will raise and is raising some uncertainties and controversy. Perhaps the attempt to work it out was made too early. Probably some of the views of the philosophers presented will be revised and abandoned. We can have lengthy disputes whether: in fact Nietzsche has had as huge an impact on XX century philosophy, as the author suggests; whether Jankélévitch is a more original philosopher than Sartre; or whether Teilhard de Chardin can be regarded as representative of the philosophy of spirit. There remains the question of what criteria are to be decisive? The objectivity of this work could be undermined, or allegations made regarding the selection of readings that constituted the views of individual thinkers. Questions can also be asked about the reliability of their work, in the context of emerging incorrect citations. With this level of analysis it is hard to avoid mistakes, more so when we are dealing with the first edition of the book. Moreover, as always happens, great events revitalize discussions, raise doubts, but also hope. This monograph, without a doubt, is a significant event in the publishing market.

As for deciding whether we are dealing with a great work, we can probably find out once we receive the whole monograph. What we can state is that, the curtain has finally been drawn on the long awaited contents of a work considered to be impossible, even if we take into account only the physical effort necessary to study the legacy of XX century philosophical reflection. It can be recommended not only to those who are professionally engaged in philosophy, but to everyone who would like to take part in an exciting journey through the philosophical legacy of the XX century. I am looking forward to the next of the more than ten planned volumes, which is going to appear in September 2009.

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