

27th July 1669. It is followed by letters of fifteen other people, including an interesting letter written by Athanasius Kircher, dated 1678.

The remaining letters contained herein were gathered in various archives and libraries in Poland and abroad. All in all, the volume embraces 163 letters, over half of which have never been published before.

This publication presents Kočański's correspondence in chronological order because its topics frequently overlap and because it can thus demonstrate the development of Kočański's interests and research projects. So as to facilitate the reader's acquaintance with the letters, each of them is supplemented with a short summary in Polish.

Red.

L' esperienza tragica come iniziazione: Lev Šestov [*Tragic experience as initiation: Lev Shestov*] is the title of the doctoral thesis written by Aleksander Posacki SJ under the supervision (*promotor*) of Professor Eduard Huber SJ at the Philosophy Faculty of the Gregorian University in Rome. It was published in Cracow by Ignatianum in 2004 (209 pages).

The aim of Aleksander Posacki's study is to reveal the internal dynamic of Lev Shestov's thought. Starting from the assumption that Shestov's way of thinking is „subjective” and „existential”, the author strives to „think” along with Shestov, to understand him from the inside, as it were, rather than the outside, and to enter into the internal rhythm of Shestov's thoughts and experiences. In order to carry out this hermeneutic enterprise, he also refers to Shestov's correspondence, particularly to that which betrays a polemical approach to other philosophers, such as N. Bierdiayev or M. Buber. Thus Posacki's study is original from the very outset, for, as the author declares in his introduction, no such combination is to be found in the literature in many languages that is listed in the very full bibliography. In the most recent edition of his study (2004), the author has extended this bibliography still further and brought it up to date, accommodating work written in a variety of languages since the time that he defended his thesis (1995). One may also note the fact that a study written and published in Italian has a certain degree of international significance.

In the context of an interpretation intended as outlined above, it is essential that the terminology be taken from source. For this reason Posacki draws on all Shestov's works in their original language (Russian), though he sometimes makes use of Italian translations as an acceptable secondary source, from the standpoint of knowledge acquired from the original texts. The author also has recourse to foreign accounts of Shestov's thought, mainly in Italian, French, English and Russian, and this is clearly evident in the text of his study. By these means we are made acquainted with the degree and character of the reception of Shestov's thought in different countries and cultures, which gives the study additional cognitive value.

In interpretations by different authors, a variety of viewpoints on Shestov's thought is evident. Many of them fail to understand him, imprisoning him in

certain standard frames. Thus the misunderstanding that he met with in life is repeated. Posacki draws urgent attention to this important feature of Shestov's reception, for the Russian thinker has always constituted a challenge to „rationalist” philosophy. He is a sign of opposition, a representative of the prophets, to whom he frequently alludes. There is no doubt that he is isolated; but Shestov is a philosopher of experience, broadly understood, and as such cannot easily be enclosed in some derivative classification. This would be out of keeping with the Russian philosopher's thought.

Hence also one of the author's intentions is to rescue the thinker who is the subject of his analysis from the one-sided classification schemes that have been imposed on him, particularly by those who do not know his work – and they include outstanding scholars such as H. de Lubac. For example, Shestov in the common understanding is taken to be a representative of Russian religious existentialism, alongside N. Bierdiayev, but he eludes such classification. This is not to say that his work does not possess features of existentialist thought; he was, after all, an interpreter of Kierkegaard and a critic of Jaspers. However, Shestov is better described as a tragic, and at the same time religious, thinker in an extraordinary blend of both these qualities.

Indeed, this diagnosis corresponds to the chronology of Shestov's oeuvre – from Shakespearean and Nietzschean influences in the early work to Luther and Kierkegaard in the later. It is the essence of this blend, this dynamic relationship between the tragic and religious dimensions, that Posacki reveals, introducing the concept of the experience of initiation in order to describe it. As the author asserts, tragic experience in Shestov is a form of initiation, having not only an existential, but also a religious character.

One of the most important, novel and inventive aspects of Posacki's work is the fact that in constructing his hypothesis he makes use of M. Eliade's definition, which sees the essence of the initiation experience in the experience of radical existential transformation. Understood in this way, tragic experience in Shestov (conceived of mainly as extreme suffering or „tragedy”) is the equivalent of „initiation death”. A similar approach universalises, in the methodological sense, the experience of Shestov; for it reveals the links between the discoveries of ethnology and philosophy (as indeed did Eliade himself, and later J. Derrida). At the same time, however, it goes beyond them in the context of the methodology of „experience” (the subject of the study), which is outside both the rationalism usual in philosophy and the empiricism common to ethnology and studies of religion. Initiation should be understood here in a dual perspective: in the „humanist” sense as transformation towards humanity, and in a radically „religious” sense as birth to faith.

Posacki's study is completely independent. It is entirely focused on the very depths of Shestov's discoveries and makes no repetition of other scholars' thoughts. Its aim is to listen with full attention and to understand what Shestov really has to say. The author declares categorically that the labels of fideism and irrationalism are completely inapplicable to this Russian thinker. They are superficial and external and make no attempt to „understand” Shestov's experience,

whose only wish is to „speak for itself”. Clearly, only an „understanding hermeneutic” can be in place here, for only such an approach avoids destroying Shestov’s thought.

There is no doubt that this study should be translated for publication in Polish and it is to be hoped that the author will wish to undertake this task. The existing studies of Shestov in Polish are, if the author is to be believed, insufficient, apart perhaps from one work, *Studium myśli Lwa Szestowa* [A Study of Lev Shestov’s Thought] (PAN Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Warsaw 1991), which Posacki quotes frequently and with respect. This is the doctoral thesis of C. Wodziński, today a recognised professor of philosophy. Since Posacki’s study was published, however, several other books and articles concerning Shestov have appeared. In Polish, A. Sawicki’s doctoral thesis, *Absurd, rozum, egzystencjalizm w filozofii Lwa Szestowa*, [The absurd, reason and existentialism in the philosophy of Lev Shestov] („Nomos”, Kraków 2000) deserves attention. New encyclopaedia entries on the subject of Shestov, especially in Russian, have also appeared, and these are cited by the author in the bibliography. In recent years, several of Shestov’s important works, including *Beginnings and endings* and *Kierkegaard and existential philosophy*, have been translated into Polish. We may hope, then, that with the help of Posacki’s study, this Russian thinker will find more readers.

Stanisław GŁAZ

Henryk Machoń, *Religiöse Erfahrung zwischen Emotion und Kognition: William James’ Karl Girgensohns, Rudolf Ottos und Carl Gustav Jungs Psychologie des religiösen Erlebens* (München: Herbert Utz Verlag, 2005), ss. 222. Seria: Münchner Beiträge zur Psychologie.

Pojęcie „doświadczenia religijnego” (*religiöse Erfahrung*) jest bardzo ogólne, co widać chociażby przy porównaniu przeżycia religijnego i estetycznego. Nie do odosobnionych należą opinie, że np. sztuka lepiej wyraża doświadczenie religijne aniżeli takie czy inne praktyki kościelne. Czy w takim razie wystawy lub wernisaże mogą, oprócz doświadczenia estetycznego, dostarczyć także doświadczenia religijnego? W jakim stosunku pozostają te dwa rodzaje doświadczenia? Jak mają się do siebie doświadczenia religijne przeżywane w teatrze, na koncercie, w hali wystawowej czy w operze, do doświadczeń religijnych znanych z tradycyjnych kultur religijnych? Gółym okiem widać, że o ile w ostatnich latach zwłaszcza w społeczeństwach Europy zachodniej wzrasta zainteresowanie tym, co nazywany przeżyciem estetycznym, o tyle zdaje się spadać zainteresowanie tym, co tradycyjnie było uznawane za przeżycie religijne. A już instytucjonalnie ujęty model tego, co religijne wydaje się przemawiać tylko do znacznej mniejszości.

Autor omawianej pracy nie zajmuje się tego rodzaju zagadnieniami i od samego początku wyraźnie zaznacza, że jego opracowanie należy do prac z psychologii religii. Według niego ta ostatnia koncentruje się na badaniu subiektywnej strony religijnego myślenia, przeżywania i zachowywania. Podkreśla on, iż poje-

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