

Wojciech SŁOMSKI, *Szkice o filozofii polskiej XX wieku* [Drafts on Polish Philosophy of the 20th century], Warszawa 2002, MIX, 266 p.

After a brief look at *Drafts on Polish philosophy of the twentieth century* you could get the impression that this is a work dedicated to the most recent works of Polish philosophy. However after a moment of consideration, it seems hard to believe that a contemporary philosopher would write a history of twentieth century philosophy which could be considered neither as his history nor his philosophy. The distinction between history and philosophy in this case is not accidental since Wojciech Słomski does not try to present a completely closed view of philosophical thought in the last century but aims at expressing that which he himself considers most valuable in contemporary Polish philosophy. It turns out that despite first impressions, we are not dealing with a systematic lecture, maintaining a cold and impartial approach to the subject but with a text written by an independent philosopher who cannot write differently about philosophy than Wojciech Słomski has done. For this reason too, the philosophy in *Drafts* is a living philosophy, made up of the most current propositions considered by W. Słomski as more important than the task of executing clear distinctions and pigeonholing of presented views into categories created by philosophers.

The undertaking or rather the maintenance of the opinions of an active philosopher leads to the problem of a selection of material – a choice which on the one hand would not be too arbitrary while on the other did not impose the necessity on the author of writing about directions which he does not consider worthy of analysis. Since after all the title of the book is *Drafts on Polish philosophy of the twentieth century*, which undoubtedly suggests that the work is dedicated to such representative views and directions for twentieth century philosophy, so as not to expose the author to accusations of deceiving the reader with a confusing title. It is not only about his own understanding of philosophy here, thanks to which W. Słomski would be able to include in his work the views of certain philosophers while recognise others as not very, or even hardly philosophical and pass by them with a meaningful silence. In the discussed publication we fortunately do not have to deal with a process equally simple as nonchalant, but with one relying on making judgements about that which has the right to be named as philosophy and who and what in the eyes of the all-seeing author does not deserve this honourable name. *Drafts* is not a tool serving to fight „false” philosophy as W. Słomski does not undertake the views of a sleuth-hound of disloyal views. We can describe his view as being positive (which of course has nothing to do with positivism): instead of showing which views are valuable and through revealing their worth proving that other views are not valuable, the author simply reserves himself the right to writing about that, and only that, which – as a philosopher actively seeking the truth – inspires him in his search and that which during his search can act as signposts.

A certain feature is connected with this which becomes a distinguishing feature of philosophical texts in the kind with which we are dealing here: a philosopher presenting his own vision of the development of philosophical views in the space of a certain period of time has the privilege – and the responsibility – of talking about the object of his text in his own philosophical language. We must not however identify this language with the literary style of writing – it is a way of leading a discourse within the limits of conceptions you have yourself created in the aim of describing and explaining reality. In W. Słomski's book, his own language used for speaking about philosophy appears not only in the above mentioned choice of trends considered important from a cognitive, although individual point of view (in contrast to the value which historians of philosophy, not being independent philosophers, force to show and prove). In any case a natural feedback is happening here: a lack of language results from a lack of interest in specified directions, while a lack of interests finds expression in a lack of language (or precisely speaking in a lack of a need for its construction). Thus it is necessary to explain a certain fragmentation of the author's views also within the frame of views which are dealt with in the book. It is a fact that W. Słomski talks about twentieth century philosophy with a language treated like a philosophical tool, while not a passive description, forces us to think about the aim of this book which as I have mentioned at first glance seems to be a book dedicated to a history of the most recent philosophy. Ignoring the fact that the existence itself of a history of the philosophy of the last few decades is problematic (since history is talking about the past, the past is the past when its links with the present have become sufficiently severed for it to be considered from a distance), a fundamental question about the aim of the book remains, which I have premeditatively described above with an incomplete and selective name.

It is appropriate to state first of all that this book is not a history of anything and for sure it is not a history of Polish philosophy of the twentieth century. It is a book about philosophy, however this philosophy is treated as a living creation, inspiring and so as a „philosophy of now” (the term – „contemporary philosophy” would not be in place here with regards to the fact that we can speak of the history of contemporary philosophy thinking of the same section of history which interests W. Słomski). It is also not a mistake that the book is called *Drafts on Polish philosophy of the twentieth century* and not as should be noted on the basis of a brief look at the list of contents, *A History of Polish philosophy of the twentieth century*. If the aim of the author was to write a work summing up the most important „events” in Polish philosophy, the way in which it was carried out would show unambiguously that the book did not fulfill its aim and instead of speaking of that which really happened in philosophy it contains only that which the author likes most in this philosophy.

What is then, the final aim of *Drafts*, the aim which the author really put down and which really got fulfilled? In order to answer such a question, it is necessary once again to return to what has been said above and to remember that W. Słomski is not an accidental creator of a book about philosophy but a philosopher himself. W. Słomski is therefore in an obvious way involved in the arguments and debates currently going on in philosophy. As a philosopher he is defined by these debates to such an extent (regardless of how absurd this

statement may seem) that he cannot exist outside of the boundaries of his involvement in these debates (some talk of philosophical discourse, however bearing in mind the overuse of that idea it seems more useful to stay with more traditional modes of expression).

A fundamental matter in the assessment of values of W. Słomski's book turns out to be a saying, like involvement in real philosophical discussions, without which a philosopher cannot be a philosopher, displayed in the text. Now it should be noted first of all that among authors of works dedicated to assessing the output of twentieth century philosophy, from one or the other point of view there are very few who treat this task exclusively or even mainly as a task of historical reconstruction. But above all, it is obvious that for this kind of reconstruction it is still too early because this philosophy is still living (not only because its representatives are still somewhat young). However among texts dedicated to works of philosophy in the last, several decades there is no lack of those whose authors try at all costs for a maximum impartiality, by this stressing that despite the most honest intentions, an ideal impartiality, completely perfect is not yet possible but will for sure be possible in the future. In other words, a cold analysis of chosen philosophical texts should be cold by intention, however taking the surroundings into account (a lack of historical distance) it cannot be cold and must be a little warmed by the subjectivism of the author.

This kind of approach however does not seem to be deserving of approval: as a result we receive these texts in an unpleasant manner. Not being able to decide whether to be impassionately objective or to allow oneself from time to time an allegedly unavoidable partiality, creators of various compendiums, introductions etc. end up in a situation worth understanding, and relying on the necessity of moving in two different directions at the same time. In the end they are neither objective nor subjective, nor independent, nor reconstructors and the readers are left with nothing else than to resignedly bore themselves in the passive reception of that which has been served up to them. Things are completely different in the case of *Drafts* of the author W. Słomski. Paradoxically this work is not subjective, objective and does not fall into the dilemma which we have just been discussing. It is situated completely outside of these difficulties because it does not pretend to be any kind of compendium of any kind of knowledge. However it does pretend to the name of an autonomous philosophical statement, whose task is giving answers to the question of what the most recent Polish philosophy was and is like. In this way W. Słomski places the reader at once in the circle of philosophical discussion, about which, depending on one's convictions, we can say anything we like, except for one: that this is not an authentic discussion. It is necessary to treat the book in this way, and all criticisms of the author about a lack of objectivism, courage in getting into polemics, preference of certain views at the cost of others no less important or many others become immediately unjustified.