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TO BE MEANS TO GROW

(Review of the book by Maryna Rudnyts'ka «To Live Means as if to Be... Philosophical Essay». – Lviv: Kal'varia, 2011. – 400 pp.)

Maryna Rudnyts'ka's book «To Live Means as if to Be... Philosophical Essay», unfortunately, has not attracted attention of philosophical academic community. I also did not know about it earlier. But during the meeting with the Russian philosopher A. Akhutin in Lviv I heard from him that the author of this book tries to philosophize appealing to the opportunities of the Ukrainian language; that in this book there are few references to ideas of other thinkers.

Having heard about this book, I decided to buy and read it. And I do not regret this. Why? Because it is one of the first books in Ukraine in which the author brings up the issue of being and its philosophical understanding.

Who of the Candidates and Doctors of Philosophy can ask themselves: why do I devote myself to philosophy and what is being? It seems that after M. Heidegger the issue concerning being and the purpose of philosophy has disappeared from the agenda of academic life. All these questions are embarrassing for scholars who work at departments of philosophy. Maryna Rudnyts'ka asks these very questions and answers them in her book. The book is not juggling the philosophical concepts; it is not a monograph written “just for doctoral thesis”. We also could suspect that in this book the author only gives rein to her imagination deviating from logical argumentation. But this is not true. On the one hand, the author provides enough reasoning and justification of her statements. On the other hand, the book is an example of live philosophizing, live thinking which tries to find the way to Being.

The author proves that thinking always returns to its origin. We would like to agree with author's statement that “philosophy is not an aggregate of different opinions about unrelated things. In all times philosophy has been engaged in the same thing: revealing the structure of being as the one which unites everything that exists

in integrity» (p. 10). Thinking never “goes ahead”, hence there is no “progress” in it. But this does not mean that philosophical thinking moves in a circle and is bottled up in itself. No, thinking is like a sphere, and sphere is a perfect geometrical figure which embraces everything. Therefore, Parmenides thought that being is a sphere which is identical to thinking, i.e. the thinking resembles a sphere. The beginning of thinking is its return to being (thinking circumscribes a circle on a sphere, because each point is a beginning and an end simultaneously). The beginning of thinking is the same as its returning to being. The result of thinking as its turning back to being circumscribes a sphere which has circles on it. The being is perfect. It is not objectified. Being is the cause of thinking and not *vice versa*.

Maryna Rudnits'ka makes disappointing diagnosis for contemporary philosophy and comes to gloomy conclusion that «exhaustive abstraction from the essential, some artificial simplification of problems dominate in contemporary philosophy... So, it proves to be unable to solve specific issues. And this is obvious because any philosophical problem is only an empty abstraction if it deviates from the initial philosophical question» (p. 13).

Philosophy becomes «dark» during «liquid times» (Z. Bauman). Today there are such “liquid times” which do not have anything stable, eternal, perfect, etc. Philosophy has some meaning only when there is sensitivity to the constant, eternal and perfect, i. e. to being. Since there is no being, but only liquidity and inconstancy, in a worse case, philosophy becomes useless, and in a better case, it crushes itself, transfuses from concept to concept, merges with literature, theatre or cinema in order to become popular and available for everyone. Ludwig Wittgenstein was right saying that philosophy is a kind of language games.

Philosophy is «dark» because it can direct person's thinking to «dark questions», such as: what is truth? what is being? what is an inception? what is a Man? and so on. “These questions have no answers,” says “a dark man” during “liquid times”. Philosophy is a product of an epoch: like the epoch, like philosophy. But how can it be otherwise since we live not only within the period of liquidity, but also in the epoch of «a weak thought» (Gianni Vattimo)? How can a weak thought

comprehend perfect and eternal being? «Weak thought» is a thought which has no power to ask the fundamental question about being and only slides on the motley surface of the reality. There are no fundamental questions for «a weak thought», but only the pluralism of superficial thoughts, «easy thoughts», which do not make us go to the heart of matters. «Weak thought» juggles the concepts as it likes. It understands philosophy as a play on concepts which makes them senseless.

Maryna Rudnyts'ka's book is about the forgotten task of philosophy and reasons for its current agony. At the same time this book answers a very important question: what has led contemporary philosophy to the state of agony? The answer is clear: contemporary philosophy is not fulfilling its purpose – to reflect on being. Obviously, we can begin to comprehend being not “from above”, as it is called,. It can be done “from below” starting from our everyday life.

The book of essays by Maryna Rudnyts'ka can be recommended for those who desire to meet true philosophy, which is the highest creation of human mind, since the philosophy of being gives the greatest joy to those who finally begin to understand being. And this understanding makes them happy.