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FOLLOWING GREAT PHILOSOPHERS

Periods are changing and we are changing together with them. It was only yesterday that man seemed to be able to live without love, faith and hope and nowadays he is born without love, he lives without faith and dies without hope. Friedrich Nietzsche's sinister prophecy unfortunately turns out to be true throughout the whole 20th century. Nowadays everything is indicating that our faith in this prophecy to be already fulfilled is based on extremely fragile and faint fundamentals. The beginning of the third millennium seems to bring us traits of the sinister philosophy. Things that for ages has been a rule (gr. *archē* – *avrch*), a virtue (gr. *aretē* – *avrpetη*), an aim (gr. *telos* – *τελος*) and a limit (gr. *peras* – *περας*), is something far „released” and ambiguous at present. F. Nietzsche's declaration about „God's death” can't be considered only in terms of atheism as such because, as Martin Heidegger explained, it means rejecting all the virtues that the West believed in. An omen of all these disturbing phenomena are:

- negating the ontological difference between good and evil;
- rejecting the objective difference between truth and falsity;
- calling into question a rule and an aim;
- negating the ontological constitution and the structure of everything.

A tragedy like this takes place before our very eyes: authorities are declining, scientism, ideologism and practicicism are becoming our life's rules; the philosophy of consumption and emancipation is run into at every step; in the name of pluralism and toleration there are vanishing significant ontological differences and human becomes the measure of everything. The contemporary avantgarde flows roughly, bringing to our mind and activities only apparent virtues and questioning the sense of our living. This „metaphysical shiver” is being evoked in many of us.

That is why we are so pleased with all those books which – here and now – are trying to look through human's mind and see things that made up its identity. We need to know what our culture's and civilisation's core was. Once a contemporary man is afraid of loneliness and existensional emptiness, the Authors' aim is to accompany a Dear Reader on his way of asking significant questions and giving crucial answers. When an old gossipmonger, Diogenes Laertios humorously described Famous philosophers' lives and views, he was really generous with details from their lives. For instance, he mocked at Aristotle because he pronounced some syllables incorrectly and attached to much of importance to exquisite cloths and his beard tending. What is more, he didn't forget to laugh at Aristotle's legs which were too thin and his tiny eyes. As far as another philosopher is concerned, Tales was mocked at because of his complete life ignorance. He used to walk with his head raised while observing stars and he managed to notice a dried up well only when he landed in its bottom. In spite of this word game, Diogenes Laertios claimed that regardless of philosophers' personal vices they were real humans and Greece was a humankind's cradle and forge. Only the one who philosophizes is a real man; the one who asks and searches in the name of wisdom because they want to understand...

The term philosophy was used for the first time by Pitagoras in Sikion, in the Polopenez Peninsula in the 6th century B.C. While talking to a tyrant Leon he stated that only God is wise. No man, even a ruler can treat himself as an omniscient and infallible creature. Pitagoras was said to consider himself merely as a philosopher which meant he was only searching for wisdom. From the etymological point of view, the term philosophy derives from Greek words *philein* – *φιλειν* (to love, to aim at) and *sofia* – *σοφια* (wisdom, knowledge, cognition) and it means *philosophy* – *φιλοσοφια* (loving wisdom). A philosopher (*philosophos* – *φιλοσοφος*) is someone who searches for knowledge and aims at wisdom.

Throughout human mind's history philosophy was understood in various ways. For Platon, for instance, it was knowledge about reality (world of ideas), whereas Aristotle understood it as the science of final rules and reasons for our being. For Epicurus philosophy was the wisdom of life whereas for St Thomas from Aquino it was the servant of theology. For Kant it was a theory of cognition but for F. Bacon and K. Marks philosophy was knowledge used in practice. Nevertheless, according to what Platon and Aristotle say the source of philosophy is our astonishment. The moment one is astonished they become aware of their ignorance. Be that as it may, following great philosophers is not easy though it is always an amazing adventure. We must not forget that not only does philosophical creation

reflect a particular philosopher's views and needs but most of all the spirit of the times. While studying the history of philosophy it often happens that we are far more interested in philosophers' vices than in their views as such. This book is to draw our Dear Students' and Readers' attention to some philosophical system that derives from the theory of being, cognition and values. The theory of being tells us a few words about our reality and answers the following question: what is being? (realism, idealism), the theory of cognition indicates the way to find out what being is (senses, mind, intuition). And finally the theory of values shows all moral opinions and constructing the ethical system by particular philosophers.

In Polish literature there can be found lots of studies on the history of philosophical thinking² but if we take into consideration a hermeneutic postulate *Sitz im Leben* (cultural context) about ideological implication, according to what the Authors think, the history of philosophical thinking should be reinterpreted. It should be done by aiming to cross the limits of our human, horizontal (earthly) existence. Platon in his *Laws* postulated: „God is supposed to be a measure of everything more than, as it is said, a man is”. And this is how the constant searching for our metaphysical sense and discovering its values is going on. And although a strictly Christian message dictates these metaphysical values of ours, it also becomes our philosophical and cultural mission of the 21st century as we talk about Europe that is being united (the homeland of homelands). It was already Aristotle who in the 5th century B.C. wrote in his famous *Nicomachean Ethics*: „One should not follow these people who advise humans to go about human business and mortal creatures to go about mortal one. Instead of this one should take care of immortality and do their best to live in agreement with what is the best inside of them”.

The following message has become for the Authors an enormous obligation towards Ancient Masters. Coming back to transcendence, to the rule, reason and aim of everything is a comeback to considering God, not human itself, as the measure of everything. And this is the proper context for analysing philosophers' way of thinking which is presented here. Here is a cure for a contemporary man's disease; man who put himself in God's place as „the greatest measure” and not only did he destroy his authentic „measure” but he announced his own death, as well. The contemporary postmodernist philosophy repeats after a prophet, Michele Foucault (*Le mots et les choses*): „The last man is simultaneously older and younger than God's death. And he is responsible for his own end. However, starting from the very moment when he talks, thinks and exists inside God's death, his crime itself is doomed to death. New Gods, the same ones, are already puffing out the future Ocean; man will disappear. Nietzsche, more or better than God's death foretells his murderer's death”.

The Authors who are *Following great philosophers* cite here Schelling's thesis: „There is no point in asking how human can come to God, but the main issue is why and how he could go away from God?”. This is God, not man who is „the greatest measure of everything”. Getting back the man's metaphysical value, the rule of his being, discovering the message of ancient wisdom one more time and coming back to truth about transcendence – this is the philosophical direction given to a contemporary human: to be born in love, to live in faith and to die in hope.