

ROMANAS BYTAUTAS. WRITINGS

Summary

This book continues series of researches entitled “The History of Lithuanian Philosophy. Monuments and Researches” and performed by the Department of the History of Lithuanian Philosophy at the Lithuanian Culture Research Institute since 1990. It publishes the entire remaining written legacy of the Lithuanian philosopher Romanas Bytautas (1886–1915). It is not abundant: it is a large scale thesis work defended at Moscow University – “Critique of Wundt’s teaching on the concept of soul substance” (1912, translated from Russian) and several articles and studies on issues of language, philosophy, nationality, cultural issues, published in the Catholic “Draugija”, “Lietuvos žinios” and the liberal schooling magazine “Aušrinė”. R. Bytautas, with his philosophical program, was basically preparing to follow the path that Vydūnas had already followed and to which S. Šalkauskis, A. Maceina and other famous representatives of Lithuanian cultural philosophy later came.

In the articles “A thing or two from the philosophy of the Lithuanian language”, “The affairs of the Lithuanian written language” (both 1908), “How to pronounce and write foreign words?” (1912) common problems of language formation are studied, it is proposed to apply spelling of the Lithuanian language, phonetics, to add Lithuanian endings to foreign words. R. Bytautas invited to study more deeply the formation of Lithuanian words, the composition of sentences, to study the issues of the Lithuanian language. He was not satisfied with the external study of the Lithuanian language – grammar, but insisted on studying the language from the inside – philosophically, taking into account the meaning of words and sentences. He was especially concerned about the semantic side of the Lithuanian language, since its study helps to clarify the meanings of words, the content of their concepts, and without knowing the exact meaning of words, there can be no accurate scientific thinking. Based on the thesis that thinking is inextricably linked with language, R. Bytautas demanded the purity, regularity and accuracy of language. In the article “Around our art exhibition” (1908), based on some paintings by M. K. Čiurlionis, R. Bytautas discusses the aesthetic effectiveness of

symbolic art. The most important features of symbolic art are considered to be metaphoricality and associativeness: the artistic idea is revealed in details, comparisons. In the beauty of those comparisons, one must look for the aesthetic value of symbolic works. The details here have not a direct, but a figurative meaning and the more impressive the associations they cause, the more effective they are. The author considers the most valuable of those paintings of M. K. Čiurlionis, in which this principle is most consistently realized. In the article "Really?" (1911), R. Bytautas tried to combine idealism and materialism, complementing them with each other. He saw manifestations of such a reconciliation in dualistic and pantheistic philosophical concepts, on which he himself relied in many cases. The philosophical positions of R. Bytautas are close to psychophysical parallelism: the primary elements of the world are both material and spiritual. Each object in the world, even the most primitive, has not only its own physical structure, but also its own sphere of consciousness. Arguing about the immanent spirituality of the original elements of the universe and the world as a whole (which can also be treated as intelligence), R. Bytautas tries to move from dualism based on psychophysical parallelism to pantheism, in which, in his opinion, idealism can fully reconcile with materialism. The Lithuanian thinker is not entirely original here – he only agrees with the German neokantianist F. Paulsen, who seemed to think that pantheism should have logically emerged from the postulated principles of materialism itself. In the opinion of R. Bytautas, it is necessary to supplement the regularity recognized by materialism with Aristotelian teleologism – each phenomenon is conditioned not only by causality, but also by the expediency inherent in the development of the world. The very formation of the world and its further development is not an accidental, but a purposeful event in which the potency of the cosmic intelligence of being is actualized.

In his largest and most important work – his thesis – R. Bytautas argues that psychology studies the empirical facts of internal life. R. Bytautas criticized W. Wundt's theory of relevance, which denies the existence of a substantial soul, and with it the changing, but remaining in itself, the human consciousness. Rejecting the substantiality of the soul, W. Wundt

looked for principles that could clarify the laws of human mental activity. Declaring that consciousness is a continuous process in which others follow some processes, W. Wundt pointed out three principles by which the dynamics of mental phenomena can be interpreted: the heterogony of goals, creative synthesis and contrast. R. Bytautas especially criticized the principle of creative synthesis, in which, in his belief, there was a materialistic understanding of the phenomena of consciousness. According to W. Wundt, external stimuli cause only simple, elementary mental processes (sensations), from which more complex mental formations are formed. The latter differ qualitatively from the elements that make up them. This transformation of mental processes in consciousness was interpreted by W. Wundt as a creative synthesis. The creative nature of the synthesis taking place in the psyche scared R. Bytautas, since W. Wundt basically takes the objective approach of realism, which considers only the object as primary. But to the question of what is the mechanism of formation of qualitatively different formations, what and how condition them Wundt's theory could not give any convincing answers. R. Bytautas' attempt to explain the complex processes of consciousness by the creative development of the spirit, the abilities that lie in the substance, did not overcome the predicaments of W. Wundt's theory, but, in comparison with it, is a step backwards. R. Bytautas also interpreted the subjects of ethics on the basis of his own understanding of the essence of spiritual being and the introspectionist concept of cognition. According to the reasoning of the thinker, to judge about the spiritual essence of being, knowledge of it can be obtained only from its obvious manifestations, most of all from human spirituality, the source of which is the substantial soul. From morality too, as an obvious empirical reality, which clearly testifies to the purposeful arrangement of social life, one can judge the expediency of the course of being itself. Morality is understood as one of the highest manifestations of the spirituality of the pantheistically treated world.

In the context of R. Bytautas' philosophical views, the ethical meaning is possessed by the problem of the relationship between man and nation, which is an important part of the essence of the nation, the problem of national consciousness, which is studied in the study "Nation and national

consciousness" (1912). In search of the roots of the essence of nationality, a person who actively relates to the world, seeks the fullness of self-expression, the meaningful unfolding of individuality, is chosen as the starting point. That active creativity of the personality, its efforts to develop the individual powers of the spirit are described by the philosopher as individualism. It should be noted that this term used by R. Bytautas does not have a negative meaning, which would mean closed egocentrism. R. Bytautas considers the individualism treated in terms of self-expression of an active personality as the most important factor determining the activity of national consciousness. The spiritual creation of the personality, which can manifest itself in various forms, is considered the main feature of humanity, the real indicator of the essence of man. It is that, which is the basis of the unification of the nation, the most important premise for its existence. The fruits of such creation – mythology, art, folk creation, etc. – form the common spiritual treasure trove of the nation, which, through its inheritance and creative development, develops national cultural traditions. Under their influence, individual members of the nation develop a peculiar national psychology, which also determines the national worldview, i.e. a specific relationship with the world. When creating new or adopting cultural values of other nations, the law of national aperception works and those values are turned into the context of the national culture, and here they acquire the treatment inherent in that culture. R. Bytautas criticized the globalization theses of the time, that by getting closer and closer economically and connecting to states, nations would eventually disappear. According to the belief of the young thinker, as the culture of mankind develops and deepens, not only its integration is needed, but also the greatest possible differentiation, manifested in the growth of individual national cultures. Only the free development of national culture can create conditions for the spiritual development of man. Nationality is a kind of manifestation of individualism (only not in the sense of nationalist insularity) in international relations.