

K. NARBUTT AND THE BEGINNING OF ENLIGHTENMENT IN THE GRAND DUCHY OF LITHUANIA

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This article focuses on the process of formation of Enlightenment's thought in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The main ideas of Kazimierz Narbutt are analyzed. He was one of those persons who inspired changes of educational courses and influenced the development of philosophy in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

Keywords: *Enlightenment, Narbutt, problem of reason, logic, cognition.*

The study of Enlightenment's thinking requires a definition of those tendencies in philosophy that formed at that age. But this task becomes almost impossible because the Enlightenment's philosophy had no homogenous range of problems, except maybe one – a problem of reason. Besides, every discussion and study of Enlightenment begins exactly by approaching to the notion of reason and with critique of its interpretations by enlighteners.

The Enlightenment caused the great surge of interest in science which began its fast development: every day something new was discovered or changed. All this invoked the desire to discuss, criticize or eulogize. That's why another feature that can describe the Age of Enlightenment is a regular postulation of necessity of changes. At that time Western Europe lived with the feeling of alterations in all spheres: social, political, economic, cultural and religious.

Besides, these changes were received differently in different countries. The most radical attitudes emerged in France where the Enlightenment's ideas played a great role in the further revolutionary events. In England and Scotland the Enlightenment developed with less tension. German Enlightenment met considerable resistance from academic circles, but significant changes took place there as well and they were inspired by Christian Wolff.

What regards countries of modern Eastern Europe it may be said about such thing as "enlightened monarchy". Although such characterization is usually applied to the Russian Empire, we can use this notion with some reservations with respect to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Introduction of the new knowledge not only was the result of interests and acquaintance of university lecturers with western achievements in philosophy and political thought,

but it was also considered as a necessity by the authority of the State. Actually the Enlightenment in the Russian Empire and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was introduced by monarchs. It was a common occurrence in these states to have a consultation with famous philosophers. They were considered as a source of new reason, as a possible way of overcoming backwardness of those states. Probably, negative apprehension of the state of Western intellectuals strengthened its development in their Eastern neighbours.

The Enlightenment in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth can be relatively divided into three periods: early, deliberate and classical. To detect the beginning of early period of the Enlightenment is quite difficult, because of penetration of “*philosophia resentiorum*” in the beginning of the XVIII century, but in the capacity of a boundary we can take the publication of Kazimierz Narbutt’s treatise *Logic or the learning about reflection and reasoning* in 1769. Such counting has exceptional relevance in the case of consideration of the Enlightenment within the bounds of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, but not the whole Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, because the Polish tradition attributes the beginning of the Enlightenment to the 30s of the XVIII century.

Deliberate Enlightenment can also be relatively defined by reforms of The Commission for National Education, when philosophy disappeared from university curriculum and was substituted by the courses of law. Classical or late period was connected with the return of philosophy and the emergence of the Kantian problematic. Late period was

also closely interwoven with the Romantic criticism and came to an end with the closing of the Vilnius University.

It was not the ideas of Voltaire and Rousseau (concerned with social and political problems) that had influenced the changes in university courses, but ideas of Descartes, Leibniz, Wolff and the new discoveries in natural sciences which provided a possibility to reform scholastic philosophy. This goal was achieved at the early stage of the Enlightenment and was most deeply developed by Kazimierz Narbutt. Narbutt also participated in activities of The Commission for National Education and in The Society for Elementary Textbooks.

Before starting the analysis of Narbutt’s ideas some words must be said about those ideas which were served as the basis of his enlightened project – about the philosophy of Christian Wolff (1679–1754).

In the introduction to his *Logic* Narbutt considers the history of philosophy and at the same time he assesses the merits which were brought by different philosophers: “Most philosophy was enriched by those, who made new inventions with the help of experiments and different remarks. <...> Obviously, as soon as philosophy gained its freedom, the science was at once enriched and is being enriched every day”. “Freedom is based on the fact that man must not follow somebody else’s opinions but he must choose the truth only with the help of the right mind. <...> Philosophy reached the highest stage in our century when Christian Wolff – the excellent commentator of Leibniz’s views, the broad-minded and quick-minded man – told not only all parts of philosophy but also enriched them and

explained so perfectly and excellently that it must give him the name of the great philosopher and mathematician". Narbutt also writes that the society needs prolegomenous science which removes ignorance and clears the way for other sciences. Such a science must be Wolff's version of logic.

The rules of cognition are of the most interest in the work of Narbutt because exactly they form the basis of his book. Firstly Narbutt defines what the truth is: "Truth, which will be discussed here, is a correspondence between an idea or a proposition and a thing itself which is reported through an expression or a notion" (Narbutt 1769: II.45). Falsehood is a discrepancy of idea or proposition to present a thing. If one wants to always have true notions Narbutt proposes to adhere to definite rules of finding of truth which he calls "criticism". At the same time Narbutt introduces a notion of "pure reason", but he doesn't give any definition to it and these notions were not further developed.

Narbutt takes a definition of philosophy by Wolff and defines it as a science about God and all material things. When we refer to the definition of parts of philosophy by Narbutt we see that it corresponds with the division of metaphysics given by Wolff in his "Rational philosophy": "The creations we know are as follows: God, human souls and other spirits, and at last material things. When we turn our attention to ourselves we get the experience from outward senses that there are things besides us and they arouse our sensations, that something exists in us what knows itself and what is called a soul; other things are bodies which really have their separate parts, shapes, differences in

size, arouse our sensations. When we look attentively at their inherent properties and bases we find without difficulties that they have got their essence (*existentia*) and have strength not from themselves; then we immediately understand that there must exist a kind of entity which has no beginning and is omnipotent, which created all present entities; this entity is God who created souls and bodies. Thereby three parts of philosophy go after this knowledge, one of them is the science about God and is called natural theology. The next one is about human soul and is called psychology, the last one is about bodies or material things and is called physics" (Narbutt 1769: §1.3).

According to Narbutt, Logic is a science which studies cognition and attainment of truth and provides necessary rules for it. Logic is divided into inherent and artificial. Inherent logic becomes apparent in the ability of people to see some natural order of things and even to find mistakes in the views of other people, but at the same time a man does not recognize the rules he uses. That's why at the same time logic is a use of reason without clear knowledge of the laws which it follows. Everyone has her own intellectual abilities, and that's why some are able to reason easier than others. But apart from this inherent logic there is logic acquired by frequent practice, and it means that there is a possibility of improvement of reason. Artificial logic is the knowledge of laws of right thinking and judgment about things. The goal of logic is to get the rules which are necessary for attainment of truth and for avoidance of mistakes.

Narbutt divides the consideration of logic into two parts. The first part is devoted to the

treatment of forms of cognition or faculties of human soul which he calls imagination by intellect (sensory imagination) and the subsequent representation of the thing in the mind (notion), opinion and conclusion. The latter part is rather different by its content, it oversteps the limits of logic proper and overlaps with psychology, pedagogy and epistemology. In this part Narbutt follows Wolff. M. Uvarov notes that “educational supplies on philosophy, issued by Chr. Wolff, differed from medieval scholastic textbooks by form and content. In the monograph devoted to the description of the basic foundation of sciences Chr. Wolff usually reached maximal versatility and logical accuracy of material” (Уваров 1998: 181). His textbooks contained the foundations of logic and theory of argumentation, linguistics, epistemology and theological questions. Narbutt adopted a part of Wolff’s material for his own textbook.

In general, interpretation of reason as a historic phenomenon is characteristic of Narbutt. Reason can be improved and perfected by the use of reason itself, which is capable of setting goals and consciously avoiding mistakes. This self-perfection is the ground of development of philosophy and knowledge. For Narbutt reason acts as an instrument, the reliability and the necessity of which is based on the absolute truthfulness of God and the idea that reason was not created by accident but for constant cognition and discovery of the mysteries of nature. At the same time reason has not got to the learning of God because the latter is a competence of faith, but through enrichment of knowledge should lead to social improvement.

The appendix “About freedom of philosophy” is the most interesting part of *Logic*. In spite of his orientation towards Enlightenment philosophy Narbutt remained the representative of the church and in his own understanding of freedom of philosophy he was also prone to defend Christian worldview. Narbutt’s conception of the freedom of philosophy can be evaluated in two ways. On the one hand, his main goal as a teacher was to develop such a type of person who can use her own reason not only for explanation of own position to other people but also to do good to the whole society. The second goal of Narbutt was to defend modern philosophy from the attacks of scholasticists. Freedom of philosophy, as Narbutt argues, is based on the right usage of common sense. Reason has to select only those things which are not contrary to it. The veritable religion doesn’t have things contrary to reason itself. Another problem appears when reason tries to examine questions that exceed its abilities. These questions are mysteries and cannot be comprehended by the human mind. But the usage of freedom of philosophy with regard to religion can also be useful for its defence. At the same time it’s obvious for Narbutt that a philosopher can discover all mistakes which exist in other confessions with the help of freedom of philosophy or pure reason and after that this philosopher can convert adherents of a different faith to Christianity. According to Narbutt, the main indication of the veritable religion is the presence of mysteries in it and the absence of contradictions. Philosopher has to search not for mistakes in the questions of faith, but seeks those things which dis-

tinguish mystery from ordinary thing for the sake of detection of mystery and after that philosopher has to stop searching and accept it as gospel.

Narbutt also postulates the necessity to separate the views of the Church Fathers and Catholic doctrine from those ideas which belong to philosophy itself. In the doctrine one must take into consideration only those ideas which concern the problems of morality and salvation. True philosophy reserves to itself consideration of natural things. Thereby Narbutt distinguishes truth of religion and truth of philosophy. And logic is a way of finding the truth.

The source of our knowledge according to by Narbutt is experience which he understands as outward and inward experience. In Narbutt's opinion all our ideas originate in this source. But he doesn't speak about correlation of these two sorts of experience anywhere. In spite of this we can conclude from his reasoning that the outward experience and ideas of perceptual properties are a priority and only then the inward experience and ideas of spiritual activity. Firstly, Narbutt singles out four methods of cognition. But later in his work *Selected reasoning from philosophy...* he leaves only two methods: experience and conclusion. He considers these methods to be the only exact and faultless.

Narbutt follows Descartes in the question about the method of disposing the man from mistaken ideas. But while the principle of radical apprehension of Descartes has a universal character, Narbutt doesn't make such step. He says that reasoning and apprehension are the necessary components of

cognition. At the same time apprehension has to be measurable. Measurable apprehension is not a naked scepticism from which Narbutt hastens to dissociate. Measurable apprehension is nothing but timely suspension of own decision or frank acceptance of own lack of knowledge, as in the case of divine mysteries.

Rules are necessary not only to find the truth, but for correct transferring of truth to another person. Separate part of book of Narbutt is devoted to consideration of how mistakes emerge in the case of interpretation of some facts. One can generally say that Narbutt applies peculiar principles of hermeneutics in his book: we have to begin from simple things in seeking for something and then go to more complex and unknown ones, we must try to get a clear notion of the thing, nothing can be left incomprehensible. Examined thing must be divided into several parts and each part must be carefully analyzed.

To sum up all what was said about Narbutt we can conclude that his activity for the times of the Enlightenment in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was really innovative and necessary. *Logic* had a structure of verified and accurate work on selecting and arranging of material even despite its compilatory character. *Logic* can also be considered as an original revision of certain tendencies of novel European philosophy which was adapted to the needs of intellectual fields of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Moreover, *Logic* was an example of the most consistent effort to realize ideas of the Enlightenment. At the same time Narbutt was the first philosopher in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania who got

down to writing not just a treatise devoted to problems which were interesting for the author, but a full-fledged textbook which had to hand down necessary knowledge to

students. The textbook of logic was a social order and perhaps it was evaluated according to different criteria than any ordinary author's book.

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K. NARBUTAS IR APŠVIETOS PRADŽIA LIETUVOS DIDŽIOJOJE KUNIGAIŠTYSTĖJE

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S a n t r a u k a

Straipsnyje tyrinėjamas Apšvietos mąstymo formavimasis Lietuvos Didžiojoje Kunigaikštystėje, analizuojamos pagrindinės Kazimiero Narbuto idėjos. Narbutas buvo vienas iš tų, kurie inspiravo edukacinių

kursų pokyčius ir darė įtaką filosofijos raidai Lietuvos Didžiojoje Kunigaikštystėje.

Pagrindiniai žodžiai: Apšvieta, Narbutas, proto problema, logika, pažinimas.

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