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Asceticism and man. Philosophical anthropology study of Henryk Elzenberg – summary

Key-words: Henryk Elzenberg, asceticism, axiology, humanity, philosophy of man, value, perfectionism, self-overcoming, philosophy of culture, *paideia*.

The main goal of this dissertation is to reconstruct the philosophical anthropology of Henryk Elzenberg, with particular emphasis on his concept of asceticism. In other words, the main task of this dissertation is systematic and overall reconstruction of Elzenberg's philosophy on man viewed through the concept of asceticism, which plays a fundamental role in the philosophy of author of *Trouble with existence* (not only in his philosophical anthropology). Moreover, the aim of this work is to justify the thesis that asceticism has a culture-creative function, and culture has a paideutes character, because people realise their humanity in culture and through culture. This dissertation makes use of the reconstructive method, descriptive method, problem analysis, conceptual analysis, language analysis and the phenomenological method. Henryk Elzenberg's handwritten manuscripts, stored within Archives of the Polish Academy of Sciences, are a significant part of research materials (general signature: III-181).

Reconstruction of Elzenberg's philosophy of man begins with recapitulation of formal axiology of the author of *Values and man*. It is an integral part of thesis since, first of all, Elzenberg's philosophy is axiocentric and a man, culture and asceticism are considered by the Polish philosopher mainly in the axiological context. Secondly, according to philosopher, there is no culture without cultural self-knowledge, and formal axiology is the basis of cultural self-knowledge.

The next chapter is dedicated to the pessimistic character of Elzenberg's thoughts. The pessimism of the author of *Trouble with existence* was multidimensional, and anthropological pessimism plays a key role within it. The essence of Elzenberg's anthropological pessimism is a negative evaluation of the human nature. A man does not aspire to realise perfect values and is unilaterally interested in realising utilitarian values. In this unilateral interest, a man's as such innate aut centrism and biocentrism are clearly expressed. Man in general develops his biological sphere of nature more than the spiritual one. The end of the chapter is dedicated to the question of overcoming pessimism.

The subsequent chapter is devoted to the importance of asceticism in overcoming pessimism and the essence of asceticism. Asceticism is a purposeful and systematic practice

of overcoming universal human inclinations. Through this practice, it is possible to change „the direction of the will” and turn toward perfect values. Thence, asceticism plays a fundamental role in perfectionist ethics.

The next chapter is an in-depth study of Elzenberg's concept of asceticism. The chapter begins with phenomenology of asceticism, focused on differentiation structural elements of asceticism (such as its object, subject, purpose, form *etc.*). Subsequent considerations are a reconstruction of Elzeberg's concept of asceticism, while individual threads of reconstruction are focused on previously elicited structural elements of asceticism. The end of the chapter consists of inquiries into anthropological conditions of possibility of asceticism.

The next chapter is a reflection on the cultural philosophy of Henryk Elzenberg. His philosophy of culture and philosophy of man philosophy are fundamentally linked and interdependent. The chapter begins with a recapitulation of Elzenberg's concept of freedom, in which the fundamental role of asceticism is highlighted. Asceticism gives freedom to evaluation, and evaluation is linked to cultural self-knowledge, without which no culture can exist. Basis from which all cultures arise is systematic practice of overcoming universal human inclinations. Asceticism plays a key function in creating culture. The culture itself has a paideutic character, since within the culture and through the culture a man realizes his humanity, which have a normative character. According to author of *Values and man*, without asceticism, neither culture can exist, nor one cannot attain humanity.

The following dissertation is closed with an end, which consists of a summary, indication of perspectives for further research and a comprehensive attempt to interpret Elzenberg's thought, alongside a characteristics of his position within the history of Polish philosophy. Pursuant to this interpretation, a man is a being condemned to everlasting incompleteness and imperfection, but a man's greatness consists in courageous pursuit for perfection. Elzenberg's thought, who was a „lone island” on the map of Polish philosophy, is an important and a momentous element of the history of Polish philosophy.

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