

## REVIEW OF THE BOOK *A RIFT IN THE EVERYDAY: A DIALOGUE THAT LASTED FOR 300 CUPS OF COFFEE AND THREE CARTONS OF CIGARETTES* BY A. SERGEEV AND B. SOKOLOV

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A. Sergeev, B. Sokolov. *Razryv povsednevnosti: dialog dlinoyu v trista chashek kofe i tri bloka sigaret* [A Rift in the Everyday: a Dialogue that Lasted for 300 Cups of Coffee and Three Cartons of Cigarettes]. 2015. Sankt-Peterburg: izdatel'stvo Aleteya.

A. Sergeev and B. Sokolov's book *A Rift in the Everyday: a Dialogue that Lasted for 300 Cups of Coffee and Three Cartons of Cigarettes* is in many ways an unusual phenomenon. In the reviewer's opinion, its unusual character is best revealed in two of its principal aspects.

Firstly, the very form of co-authorship is worth mentioning. There can be no question that co-authoring a major text is, as such, no longer something rare in the field of the humanities and social sciences. In fact, this is one of the reasons why the philosophical text can no longer be regarded as a result of a particular thinker's individual enterprise. Typically, however, the co-authors of a philosophical work aim at producing a unified text, a kind of "monolith" the writing of which is to a certain extent divided between its authors. More often than not, it is simply a matter of dividing the text between them on a trivial thematic basis, while maintaining a certain unity of its conceptual plan. A less common form of co-authorship can be described as a kind of intellectual struggle. A good case in point is P. Feyerabend's famous book *Against Method* which, in his own words,

was initially meant to be the first part of a polemic "duology", the second part of which was to have been written by I. Lakatos. In this respect, the readers of A. Sergeev and B. Sokolov's book will find themselves face to face with an even more complex "product" resulting from a synthesis of three "modules": the initial text by one author, the other author's intellectual reaction to it, and, to some extent, the answers to the comments made. The mutual reactions become apparent in the commentaries, in the acts of intellectual struggle and, finally, in the way one of the authors takes up and clarifies the thoughts of the other.

The result is a highly peculiar "archeo-modern" product. On the one hand, the book exemplifies a thoroughly modern phenomenon, that of a **hypertext**, which has taken the form of a philosophical monograph; on the other hand, it can be seen as a **philosophical conversation** written down as a text. This dialogical character is something that refers us not to the modern, or post-modern, period, but rather to the tradition of ancient thought. But, unlike most of Plato's dialogues, where one can identify something

like a “chorus” (a weak position) and a “soloist” (a strong, or leading, position), this conversation is characterized by the equality of the symbolic and mental statuses involved. As a result, the form of this book is capable of capturing the reader’s interest and, at the same time, requires intensive intellectual work (especially when reading the first part).

Secondly, the specific character of the book is connected with the peculiarities of the authors’ theoretical position. The monograph is written from an existential-anthropological perspective, and largely focuses on the problems of finding and acquiring “selfhood”, “oneself” and what is “one’s own”. The very practice of philosophizing is seen by the authors as a way to this acquisition which is, at the same time, salvation. One might object to this by saying that the idea of what may be broadly described as “therapeutic” philosophy is not a new one in modern philosophical discourse (it would be enough to mention E. Fromm, M. Foucault, P. Hadot, K. Jaspers and some others). A strict, though superficial, critic might also claim that, methodologically, the nature of this salvation is determined by M. Heidegger’s idea (quite familiar to 20<sup>th</sup>-century philosophers) that it is possible for philosophy to appropriate the everyday. In fact, it is something that the book’s intriguing title itself “alludes” to, suggesting that, for the authors, philosophical writing and dialogue are exactly a way out of the field of what is inauthentic and not our “own”. However, the specific possibilities of “trans-coding” and segmenting the initial texts render the problems raised significantly more profound. This exit – break out – breakthrough – into the field of “one’s own”, too, comes into the focus of the analysis (in terms of the book’s content, its principal part is devoted to the theme of “one’s own”). In this context, it becomes apparent that matters are not all that simple when it comes to the “existentials” which are normally seen as “lifts” one may take on the way to oneself, such as the horizon of risk, the profundity of language, mood, reflection, the symbol of death, mental states, ecstasity and eccentricity. On the other hand, it turns out that everything is not clear

with the opposite mode of existence, either, with that of “falling” (das Verfallen) into, and staying in, the everyday (in its contemporary version). Another fundamental theoretical peculiarity of the book is that its authors are entirely free of monism which is typical of so much philosophical writing. This latter tendency may be illustrated by the critical remarks made, and the sharp divisions drawn by such revered figures of 20<sup>th</sup>-century philosophy as M. Heidegger and M. Mamardashvili who found them a legitimate way of reasserting their methodological positions. On the contrary, in the existential-anthropological analytic of the philosophical hypertext found in *A Rift ...*, none of the three “**major forms of Being**” (as the authors describe them) is given a special place, a “royal seat”. These three forms are **consciousness, language and life**. All the three phenomena are considered as equally important foundations of being human. At the same time, the authors pay equal attention to a fourth component – **culture**.

Another important point is worth mentioning which cannot be missed by anyone who has even the smallest experience of writing their own texts. The authors must have had to bring a certain courage to their enterprise in that they made their texts (or parts of them) available to each other for “dissecting”, “breaking” and “trans-coding”. Most writers would be familiar with a feeling which is the exact opposite of this – a feeling that their work is their inalienable property that must be jealously guarded (it would be enough to mention in this context Cyrano de Bergerac’s notorious refusal to change even a single comma in his poem). It is to be hoped that this book will enable its readers to experience a rift in their everyday, too. The experience of thinking contained in its text, with its modes of conversation and symbolic trans-coding, may generate both criticism and commentary, and, most importantly, co-thinking. There is every reason to expect that this book will make a contribution to the overall hypertext of the philosophical tradition, or, in other words, that it will serve as a remark in the global philosophical conversation.