

## AT THE BOUNDARIES OF TWO WORLDS

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Lithuanian nation has undergone a long struggle with environment in order to maintain its cultural freedom. Influences from both East and West threatened to extinguish this national expression, but in spite of wars, foreign invasions, and occupations, Lithuania evolved its own rich national culture.

However, philosophy achieved little in Lithuania during the centuries preceding the twentieth. The reason for this is due in part to the late awakening of nationalism. We have to remember that the first Lithuanian book was published in 1547. When Lithuanians were ready to express themselves in their mother tongue, the Lithuanian press was forbidden to do so by Tsarist Russian occupants in 1863.

Lithuanian philosophy really started only in the free independent Lithuanian state in the twentieth century. With the organization of Lithuanian university at Kaunas (2.16.1922), there was established the faculty of Philosophy-Theology. Philosophy and theology were linked in this Lithuanian University partly because of the cultural tradition of Catholicism and partly because of practical considerations, since priests and students preparing for priesthood, Catholic and Protestant alike, were expected to take certain philosophy courses. Although the faculty combined the two disciplines mentioned, they nevertheless functioned independently with regard to their educational activities and aims. It is interesting to note that this practical union of philosophy and theology is reflected in the grand philosophical synthesis of Stasys Šalkauskis. Also it was at the Kaunas University that the three great Lithuanian philosophers created their philosophies. These three philosophers are: Adomas Jakštas-Dambrauskas, Pranas Kuraitis, Stasys Šalkauskis. The fourth notable Lithuanian philosopher, Vydūnas, lived in Tilsit, a town in East Prussia just outside the State of Lithuania.

Adomas Jakštas-Dambrauskas, a prelate in the Catholic Church, was a very versatile figure. His versatility hindered the full development of his talents. He was very much interested in esthetics, mathematics, theology, and politics. His legacy in philosophy is not impressive in size or scope, but he left quite a few brilliant articles and essays on philosophical subjects. For example, he developed his own notation in symbolic logic; he even wrote a treatise on logic. His contribution to Lithuanian philosophy consists of the shaping and development of philosophical analysis. His philosophy is, in fact, a penetrating philosophical analysis of a great number of subjects.

Pranas Kuraitis, also a prelate in the Catholic Church, represented Thomism in Lithuania. He was not in the line of Thomistic existentialists, who came later in France and then rejuvenated Thomism throughout the world, but was a solitary individualistic philosopher wrestling with unsolved metaphysical issues of the conflict between medieval and modern philosophy. He believed that the cause of this conflict was in the ontological commitment. In solving metaphysical problems, the ontological becomes of crucial importance. A vicious circle may be established as one may not get away from ontological commitment. Hence, there would not be any possibility for metaphysics. Pranas Kuraitis solved this problem by introducing the principle of parity. All ontological commitments should be regarded on a par. Truth and falsehood in metaphysics should be decided on the basis of consistency and scope of attack. His contribution to Lithuanian philosophy is the first great attempt at philosophical synthesis, a synthesis which stressed intellectualism.

The greatest Lithuanian philosopher is Stasys Šalkauskis. If Jakštas-Dambrauskas was concerned only with philosophical analysis, if Pranas Kuraitis already arrived at philosophical synthesis in the Thomistic tradition, then Stasys Šalkauskis created his own philosophical synthesis, which may be properly called the philosophy of human person. He thought that

the nature of philosophy is synthesis. The need for synthesis is not to extend man's scientific knowledge about the world, but to develop a human person. The synthesis, however, was not to be limited to culture alone but was to include nature and religion as well. The aim of philosophy is educational; philosophy must be the objective wisdom of personal self. Enlightened personalism must supervene blind subjectivism of the self.

Enlightened personalism is philosophical synthesis. Man can live properly only when he knows himself. His self knowledge should be dynamic; it should lead to greater spiritual development. Man as an individual can develop only spiritually. The content of the spiritual evolution is the synthesis of culture. Šalkauskis should be regarded not as a philosopher who dealt with the formal aspects of philosophy, but with the material aspects of philosophy. To extend the limits of philosophy is virtually the only means of creating philosophy, as the systems of all great philosophers teach us. The possibility or apology (as today is frequently the case) for a system of philosophy is the greatness of its insight. Hence, the philosophy of Šalkauskis should be judged by its inner criterion. It is impossible to outline Šalkauskis' philosophy in a short general article. Here I shall give only a brief summary of his theses.

1. Culture is man's spiritual development.
2. Individual man can arrive at culture only through the synthesis of its elements.
3. The synthesis is always progressive, dynamic.
4. The synthesis is philosophical.
5. The synthesis is necessary for society.

To illustrate Šalkauskis' philosophy I shall take his synthesis of the Lithuanian problem and his notion of the living spirit. Lithuania has been for long the field where East and West met. Historically Lithuania was always a physical and spiritual victim of these aggressive forces. Instead of being the battlefield Lithuania should become the bridge between East and West. Lithuanian culture should reflect the best in the other two cultures. Šalkauskis outlined the program for the integration of these two cultures in his first outstanding philosophical work, written in French, "At the Boundaries of Two Worlds". The predominant qualities of the two cultures to be integrated are Eastern reflectiveness and Western dynamism. The notion of the living spirit is the answer to spiritual evolution of man. When man has achieved synthesis, he should direct all his energy and wisdom to the perfection of society.

Something may be said about the colorful life of Stasys Šalkauskis. He was the son of a Lithuanian doctor, a law student in Moscow, a lawyer in Turkestan, a philosophy student in Switzerland, a professor of philosophy in Lithuania, and finally the rector of the Lithuanian University. He had tremendous influence on later Lithuanian philosophers, such as Antanas Maceina and Juozas Girnius. Together with Wladimir Szyrkarski (Šilkarskis) he helped to introduce the great Russian philosopher Soloviev to the Western world.

The fourth important Lithuanian philosopher is Vydūnas. His philosophy is ethical. He outlined also his philosophy concerning the Lithuanian problem. The suffering Lithuanian nation must be ethical. Man's true evolution is the ethical one. The suffering individual, as well as a nation, can make the best of an unhappy lot by being ethical in life. Vydūnas has also done brilliant research in the philosophy of language and philosophy of nature.

The characteristic spirit of Lithuanian philosophy is to be found in the emphasis on the improvement of man and society. Today when the improvement of man and society is just a question of the improvement of the masses, the emphasis on the improvement of the individual man through himself breathes through life with a new force. However, the world is not acquainted with the dynamism of Lithuanian philosophy. The Lithuanian nation has to struggle against adverse conditions, and even if Lithuanian philosophy could not have the chance to reach the collective consciousness of our Western culture, still it will remain one of the most precious treasures of the Lithuanian nation.