
IN MEMORIAM

Anton Žvan

(1929–2015)

Anton Žvan was active as a Teacher of Philosophy at the Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, from the second half of the 1950's until the year 1989, during a time of ideological pressures, which affected him both professionally as well as personally.

Anton Žvan offered resistance to these pressures in a unique manner, namely with a singular Socratic attitude, with which he knew how to show in the times that were not favorable for philosophy what does it mean to really render reverence to philosophy without being constricted with specific orientations or world-view prejudices, and without the detrimental usurpation of academic positions. In the endeavor to unfold the systematic aspects of the development of philosophy he surpassed the constraints of the comparative method, whilst successfully avoiding, on the other hand, the pitfalls of historicism. According to Žvan's conviction the systematics of philosophy is a consequence of the central tendency of philosophic thinking to place itself upon its border, and from that standpoint to critically contemplate its own presuppositions. This criticism distinguishes philosophy from other sciences, and instates it as specific knowledge in its own right.

The mentioned aspects of such an approach towards philosophy are present also in the doctoral dissertation of Anton Žvan from the year 1978, which is dedicated to the transition from Kant's to Husserl's transcendental position in philosophy. In it is expressed an extraordinary sense for the shifts of meaning and the constitutive aspects within the philosophical thinking, which Žvan also transferred onto the students of philosophy in his lectures and seminars.

Anton Žvan was well aware that the one who is being introduced to the study of philosophy needs to participate in this process. The elaboration of a philosophical thought possesses the practical dimension of an initiation into philosophy. Philosophical comprehension is of an anticipatory value, namely it not only rejects or enhances previous knowledge, but it actually opens it up with regards to the conditions of possibility of cognition. Here one cannot fancifully imagine or freely invent anything, it is possible only to think and to think through what is dictated by the thought itself. Philosophy is not only a treasury of expert knowledge being arbitrarily historically enumerated, but it is guided by its own tendency of the understanding and the mindful comprehension of Being.

(Excerpt from the nomination for the award for his pedagogical work in the field of philosophy at the Faculty of Arts in the year 2003.)