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## BOOK REVIEW

### **Nijaz Ibrulj (auth.). Porfirijevo nasljeđe u Bosni (Porphyry's Legacy in Bosnia). Sarajevo: Academia Analitica, 2023, p.450.**

**Samir Arnautovic <sup>1</sup>**

The book *Porphyry's Legacy in Bosnia* represents a significant contribution not only to the development of philosophical thought in our country, but also to the reception of Porphyry's influence on philosophy in general. This text in a ambiguous context has a significance that can be articulated through three points of serious influence on the understanding and reception of Porphyry's thought: 1. Ibrulj succinctly presents the logical bases and assumptions of Porphyry's thought, from which one can clearly see its significance for the development of logic as a presupposition of philosophy in the meaning of strict science, 2. Porphyry's legacy in Bosnia uniquely points to the influence of philosophical thought on the development and contextualization of Bosnia in the sense of modern tendencies, even if in all of this it remained on the margins of those influences that testify to Bosnia's belonging to Europe and the spirit of Europeanism, and 3. with his study, Ibrulj testifies to the European level of philosophical thought that our philosophical community has reached in our time.

Only one of these features of Ibrulj's text would be sufficient for *Porphyry's Legacy in Bosnia* to be considered a relevant and internationally significant contribution to the reception of Porphyry's thought. Bearing in mind all aspects of the book, its complete understanding and consideration of the significance it has, requires thematization that should not stop at just one dimension that is part of the content. From there,

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even seemingly formal questions and statements about the book contain implications that confirm the thought foundation on which the text is based.

The fact that, as a book, this book is 450 pages long, in itself indicates that it is not just a review covering one aspect of Porphyry's work. The content of the book is mentally consistent and as a whole is placed in a very solid context of interpretation that points not only to the content of Porphyry's thought, but also to the aspects that it has today, or can have in contemporary thinking and understanding of philosophy in the context of reality. Starting from the formal definitions of philosophy given in logic as one of the fundamental philosophical disciplines, Ibrulj, in addition to emphasizing the fundamental content of philosophy, whose oblivion is openly pointed out by Heidegger, and which is the basis of modern thinking, the theme of Kant's philosophy, also points to the original meanings that break in the ontological discourse of metaphysics.

At the very beginning of the book, Ibrulj defines not only the meaning and task of logic, but also the original path by which philosophy, proceeding from the formal questions of logic, goes in the direction of the ontological emergence of metaphysics. "Logic deals with the laws and rules of deducing conclusions from statements that can be either true or false: what is important for logic is the formal truth and formal consistency or validity of the following of some statements (conclusions) from other statements (assumptions), whether factually true or factually false. Logic shows and explains that if a statement (assumption) is taken (postulated) as true, then other statements follow from it or can be derived or are implicitly contained in it, which cannot be false if logical rules are correctly applied in deduction. This formal-logical truth is based on the formal validity of the deduction of conclusions from any kind of statements that have some assumed truth value and which assert or deny something. " <sup>2</sup> From these fundamental methodological points of departure, philosophy raises the question of being-in-the-whole as a fundamental question of ontology that arises from the original metaphysical question of Nothing. Ibrulj does not take this starting point as a formal one, but gives indications that in its formality it is a part of the essential metaphysical content, which in the context of transcendental logic and the foundation of transcendental philosophy will be the place that Kant insists on, founding modern philosophical thought.

It is a context in which philosophical thought will always be a circumscribed scientific thought, a thought in time that is not subject to the given, limited parameters of one context, one time or one place. Ibrulj shows that "whatever content enters the philosophical environment as an idea, however closed and characterized by authentic traditionalism, becomes an extensive conceptual content whose vocabulary is de-algorithmized and semantically reconstructed in interaction with other forms of conceptual content, and this movement through vocabularies an epoch necessarily culminates in a cognitive structure that can be entered and interacted with either in

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<sup>2</sup> Ibrulj, Ibid., str. 16.

the first century or in the tenth century or, as we do today, in the twenty-first."

<sup>3</sup>Anything that appears in the perspective of thought is determined in its philosophical meaning only by that thought. From there, there is not only one perspective of understanding, one perspective of seeing, and especially there is no and unacceptable only perspective of thinking and one truth that derives from it.

The dialectical movement of streams of thought and knowledge confirms this view in different educational systems-schools, that is, different understandings not only of certain phenomena or questions, but also of knowledge itself. Ibrulj systematically shows that different educational systems had their basis in the very understanding of knowledge, not in external needs or practical requirements. On the contrary, the contingent understanding of the history of thought shows that practical requirements are articulated from the understanding of knowledge and the relationship to knowledge. Different philosophical orientations and searches for knowledge about being-in-the-whole are not just random occurrences or wanderings in the darkness of ignorance. They are the result of the possibilities that thought reached in time, which had its assumption in the relationships in which, as Nietzsche says, "a philosopher is not a random comet", but one of the pillars of a world in which metaphysical questions are more important than practical solutions.

Perspectivism of thought, which, as Ibrulj shows, has always followed philosophy, got its objective references in different understandings not only of phenomena or certain questions, but also of fundamental concepts of philosophy. Logos, as one of the fundamental terms, with which philosophy in its fundamental meaning begins, has its meaning transformed precisely in the perspectivist nature of philosophical thinking. Through historical-philosophical insights, Ibrulj shows that the transformed logos is not a matter of some "external demand", an expression of fashion with which one wants to cloak philosophical thought, but of the very essence of thought as a negation that, in search of itself, opens up new meanings and new perspectives of seeing. The transformed logos is therefore nothing new, but the time in which it is created is different from the one in which it had the meaning that was transformed. Ibrulj shows that the essence has not changed, but time, as a framework for understanding the essence, has changed and is set in other meanings and other thought relationships and articulations. "Plotinus entered into the transformation of the concept of logos cooperating with the Stoic interpretation and favoring the early Christian interpretation of that term. Thus, the term logos passed from Heraclitus' mental principle of harmonizing and harmonizing the entire reality that manifests itself in nature through absolute opposites which are in constant conflict, then with Philo of Alexandria who replaced Plato's concept of the Demiurge with the concept of God's mind (to the divine mind as the principle of creation or production of forms in matter which is eternal and finally to the personal God in the person of Jesus Christ as the principle) who is the Logos or the word of God, then with the Stoics of re-creation, and the salvation of man through the miracle of the resurrection of his body.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.,42

A strong philosophical contribution was made to this by the teachings of Plato and the Neoplatonic philosophers about the return and transmigration of souls after death, while Christianity brought into this teaching the resurrection of the body."<sup>4</sup> clear understanding of his opinion, but also provide a systematized insight into the development of certain philosophical ideas and meanings. Inevitable repetitions of certain meanings are shown not only as a necessity in referring to facts and general knowledge, but also as a very good example of contextualizing facts in which they acquire new significance, even new meanings.

In this way, Ibrulj confirms not only his referentiality, but also the seriousness of his thinking in which he articulates his work as ambiguously valuable and valid for the overall reception of Porphyry's and ancient thought as a starting point for understanding philosophy in the sense of basic science. Thought is built on literature and in its mature stage literature becomes its authentic content, independent of bibliographic facts and external requirements. With sovereign insights into the history of philosophy and the genealogy of philosophical ideas, Ibrulj offers a great example of the spiritual integration of the author's text into the tradition he follows.

In this context, one of the good illustrations is his interpretation of the reason why Porphyry was a "hard" critic of Christianity. "One of the (many) reasons for Porphyry's negative attitude towards Christianity lies in the Neoplatonist doctrine that the body does not return and is not enshrined after death, but the soul, that is, in Plato's and Plotinus' doctrine of the body as a prison for the soul from which the soul must be freed or from which the soul must cleanse by abstaining from everything sensual. Stoic philosophy, Pythagoreanism, and Neoplatonism have in common the discrimination of the physical and the elevation of the mental and spiritual, and the preference for intellectual and intellectual insight into essences over belief." <sup>5</sup>Ibrulj's interpretation of Porphyry's work shows that philosophical and, in general, intellectual insights are not only a matter of personal understanding, but , first of all, the heritage that represents the basis of the author's understanding of theoretical issues, but also the totality of his relationship with reality.

Porphyry's legacy in Bosnia represents a kind of demonstration and an authentic image of the relationship of philosophy to tradition and the substantial belonging of thought to its heritage. There are not many examples of this kind of interpretive depiction of the essence of the path of philosophy and the contingency of philosophical thinking in the region to which we spatially belong. In addition, Ibrulj's text is certainly at the top of what can be singled out in this sense and is proof that thought and philosophical effort cannot be hindered by external factors and an anti-intellectual environment and influences, which certainly represents a difficulty, but Ibrulj's text shows that it is not it can also be an insurmountable barrier to thinking

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., str. .112

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., str. 112.

that is seriously based on extensive insights into the literature and developed by an active relationship with the phenomena of the life world.

Ibrulj clearly emphasizes this in his interpretation of Porphyry's harmonization of metaphysical ideas with life activity. Philosophy is not only an optional theoretical science that excludes the living world, but on the contrary, it is to a significant extent not only supported, but also directed and obliged to the living world. The author clearly shows this on the example of Porphyry, contributing to the understanding of the necessary character of vitality in philosophy.

Extensive information about Porphyry's work, as well as the listing of the most significant moments of reception, makes Ibrulj's study extremely important from the perspective of historical and factual facts. For the first time in the region, a work is appearing that thematizes Porphyry's thought in its entirety, illuminating not only its main aspects, but also its significance for later philosophy. Looking at it as a whole, the manner in which Porphyry's work and opinion was considered, testifies not only to the author's referentiality, but also to the fact that in Bosnia and Herzegovina there was a spiritual and scientific basis for the creation of such an important text.

Of particular importance is Ibrulj's review of Porphyry's text *Isagoga*, which contains very significant comments on Aristotle's work, i.e. his logical writings. Ibrulj, by translating this important work into his mother tongue and introducing Porphyry to the linguistic space of the Yugoslav territories, confirmed his competence not only for studying Porphyry's work, but also for serious consideration and interpretation of ancient philosophy. "Porphyry's commentary on Aristotle's *Categories* became very quickly a paradigm of that type of text and served many who also wrote commentaries." <sup>6</sup> The difficulty of translating and understanding the work itself, which specifically characterizes classical texts written in languages that are no longer in use, without any doubt requires a great knowledge and spiritual ability of the author. Ibrulj undoubtedly confirmed this with his comments.

In the social aspect, his comments on Porphyry's work are a unique proof of the European identity of society and the academic community from which Ibrulj originates. His considerations of Porphyry's Platonism and Aristotelianism, as well as the interpretation of other features of the thought and work of this ancient philosopher, are an indication first of all of the European level of the author's thinking and competences, but also of the European identity of his starting points, which are marked by social and academic assumptions of development.

At the same time, the author is aware not only of the difficulties of an interpretative character, but also of the dangers inherent in any serious interpretive effort, which in the case of Porphyry is further reinforced by the fact that it is a text created 1700 years ago. "With this translation, and especially with my direct approach, I wanted to

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., str. 163.

actually touch the object, the thought and the word, trying to show how they are held together in our native language, in our logical and mental structure and in our ontology, in which a place may still need to be found for some objects thoughts and expressions."<sup>7</sup> This is the significance of Ibrulj's work, it is not limited only by the fact of creation and existence, but is aimed at expanding the horizons of understanding not only of one ancient philosopher, but of philosophy in our tradition in general.

In this sense, the chapter of Bosnia Porphyriana represents the starting point of the study. In this chapter, Ibrulj gives an overview of the study of logic in Bosnia and Herzegovina and indicates the influence of logical research and the study of logic on the formation of the tradition of thinking and understanding of reality in our country. The author gives a systematic overview of educational organizations, directions of educational development and the place of logic in the educational system of Bosnia and Herzegovina in different historical periods. The thread that connects seemingly unrelated periods and points to the genealogical structure of education in our country is Porphyry's text Introduction.

Based on this paradigmatic link in the educational system of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ibrulj establishes the phrase Bosnia Porphyriana, which basically does not mean and refers not only to the influence of Porphyry on the genealogy of the educational tradition in our country, but also to the belonging of that tradition to European spirituality and European identity. Basically, better and stronger than all social and political theorizing, in the second part of his study, Ibrulj lays out the foundations of the European identity of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the basis of the Bosnian tradition in European spirituality.

The author then does not simply reduce our tradition to the suffering of Western influences, but very systematically points to its complexity and determination by intertwining the influences of the West and the East. "It is not possible to talk about the development of logic in Bosnia and Herzegovina without reflecting on the cultural, political and social conditions at different stages of its development. The Kingdom of Bosnia, the Ottoman Empire, the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) and the Dayton Bosnia and Herzegovina are, in fact, historical, cultural, political and ideological sequences that collide and confront each other in this area, whose interests and political geography are still intertwined today, and which cannot be rationalized into a single cause-and-effect or descriptive continuum according to a single principle. "<sup>8</sup> The position presented here from the Introduction to the chapter of Bosnia Porphyriana Ibrulj follows to the end of the text, genealogically showing the continuum of educational tradition and identity of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., str. 181.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., str. 193.



Very interesting information, so far unknown or insufficiently known about the study of logic in Islamic religious schools, is identified by Ibrulj as a place where Bosnia and Herzegovina remains within the European identity even during the Ottoman period. The author especially emphasizes the influence of Catholic religious schools, which significantly contributed to the study of logic in Islamic education systems. Thus, despite the completely religious basis of the school system, the segment of secularism in the educational system of Bosnia and Herzegovina has been preserved. In a certain way, one can sense that it was the study of logic that left room for the later secular approach to education, which was accepted and realized in different ways.

As an example, Ibrulj singles out Hasan Kafija Pruscak, who, as can be seen from the systematic citation of his texts, represented a kind of attempt at scientific influence in the contemporary interpretation of religious and metaphysical issues. Regardless of that, the author shows that the study of logic in educational systems was important for leaving the possibility of developing an opinion that would not be bound by given parameters and truths that were determined even before asking the questions through which they should be based. The presentation given by Ibrulj undoubtedly represents not only a significant reference for understanding the history of education in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also the identity of our country and the development of spirituality in European frameworks in general.

In this direction, Ibrulj points in a very interesting and credible way to the transition from religious to secular education, which occurred during the period of Austro-Hungarian rule and the subsequent establishment of the socialist education system in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In this transition from exclusively religious to secular education, Bosnia and Herzegovina fully acquired a specific European identity in which various influences are refracted, which give it special opportunities, but, as its history shows, also hide dangers. Ultimately, events are determined through education.

Within this discussion, Ibrulj Porfirio's work precisely defines Isagoga as a place where all different influences and aspects of education come together and create a whole on which a single identity is established. "Due to the fact that Porphyry's work ISAGOGA served as an active common educational content in educational institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in this paper we give a special chapter to that phenomenon." <sup>9</sup>basics of Bosnian identity.

In the Conclusion of his study, which represents a systematic and thought-based condensed text of the entire research, Ibrulj ends with words that are very significant for the time in which Bosnia and Herzegovina lives. "Bosnia Porphyriana is not a heretical metaphor for Bosnia and Herzegovina, although today it is the greatest heresy to claim that a civil, multinational and multicultural society is possible. Nor is it a unitaristic metaphor that centers one nation and one identity as fundamental

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., str. 223.

through a privileged national monologue or through a privileged counterfactual historiography. This is a call to be, regardless of confessional and ethnic affiliation, at the same time in the same territory an interactive (constitutive) participant of a civilization that favors freedom as a goal and as a means, rationality, ethics of responsibility, tolerance, radical interpretation of identity and transnational socialization. Bosnia Porphyriana is a cultural metaphor for the land of open sources that should be kept open for all people of the world, whether they belong to Christian, Islamic, Jewish, Buddhist, atheist or any other "language" of today. Not a single one of them is foreign or foreign here, and not a single one is such that they cannot be understood and interpreted. In spite of everything, or precisely because of everything, in this text a prominent place is given to that part of the heritage and that part of modernity in Bosnia and Herzegovina within which logic was and is part of the philosophical educational content, and Porphyry's work ISAGOGA is taught in schools, today in universities, of all ethnic and confessional communities. Therefore, I believe that it was justified to introduce the phrase Bosnia Porphyrian into the index of terms that characterize this country."<sup>10</sup> It may not be usual to end a review with a quote, but it is precisely in this, longer quote that the origin of Ibrulj's research is contained. He clearly presents the only perspective not only of society, but also of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a country.

The importance of this presentation of the origins of today's situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina lies in the fact that Ibrulj's words are grounded in scientific discourse. In the sea of lamentations about the state, Ibrulj is the first to present the only scientifically established perspective of the survival of the state, which rests on opinion, knowledge and education as a fundamental human activity.

The book ends with Ibrulj's translation of Porphyry's Introduction from the ancient Greek language, with comments containing a practically complete interpretation of Porphyry's thought. This translation with comments alone would be enough for Ibrulj's work to be considered valuable and significant for publication. Considering the entirety of the text, the translation comes as a round-up of the argumentation of Ibrulj's thought and an indicator of the relevance of the development of philosophical thought in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The introduction of Porphyry into the linguistic space of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which Ibrulj has already done decisively and competently, is enough in itself to evaluate the highest level of competence and relevance of a work.

The book Porphyry's Legacy in Bosnia is an intellectually and scientifically based text that represents more than one internationally relevant interpretation of Porphyry's work. It is a book that, through the interpretation of Porphyry's legacy, presents not only the history of the development of education and thought in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also represents a significant and so far unique contribution to the understanding of Bosnian identity. The multi-layered work provides an insight into

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., str. 272



Porphyry's thought, its influence on the formation of European identity and philosophical thought as its fundamental features, in which the European identity of Bosnia and Herzegovina is also exposed through the history of education in Bosnia and Herzegovina. There is no doubt that Porphyry's legacy in Bosnia is a book that illuminates not only Porphyry, but also our closest reality in a unique way.