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**THE ONTOLOGY OF “I” IN EDVARD STAKHURA’S PROSE**

*The article discusses the ontology of “I” in Edvard Stakhura’s prose on the example of the stories titled “Się” (“Self”). The filling of the essence of human being in the Polish writer is closely related to a person-nobody who, according to Stakhura, is identified with a new person who does not need anything and knows everything. We can consider him as a kind of Absolute. Stakhura uses various techniques (meetings with other characters, philosophical reasoning, the need of a friend, etc.) in order to present a complete image of a person-nobody.*

**Key words:** *ontology, person-nobody, kind of Absolute, life-writing, man-nobody.*

There are books, the reading of which can become a difficult creative, or rather a co-creative process. During contact with verbal material of literary works our thoughts work so intensely that sometimes we are surprised at the successful finding of names for those processes that take place in our inner world, not to mention a deeper immersion-study-discovery of oneself through the prism of sensations, opinions, reflections born by literary text. The author, with whom I mentally intensively collaborated while reading his works, was the Polish prose writer, poet and translator Edvard Stakhura (1937-1979).

The work of this wonderful writer merges so organically with his biography that it seems that there are no gaps between his life and everything he wrote. Gifted with many talents, Stakhura entered the literature of the last century with his original vision of the world and feeling of himself in it. It is characteristic that the process of knowing himself, working on himself - gr. *Aksesis* - proceeded with the prose writer continuously, helping him to discover new facets of his own “I”. G. Bereza suggested the term *life-writing*, which would characterize the symbiosis of the life and work of the author “*Fabula rasa*”. A. Falkovich [6, 85–105] and G. Bukovska [2, 115–116.]. do not agree with this approach, claiming that the book Stakhura is different from the *real one*.

Famous Polish researchers of Edvard Stakhura's work, among whom should be called M. Bukhovsky [3], J. Peshchahovich [9], D. Pakhotsky [7] and others, have repeatedly noted that the prose writer *wrote how he lived*, although such a definition should not be reduced to the erroneous conclusion that everything, written by Stakhura, is autobiographical. More precisely, the writer's task of the author "Siekieriezada" was to capture what eluded the sight of ordinary people (*people-are*) [15] or seemed insignificant, insignificant. No wonder the creative goal of Stakhura, according to M. Byaloshevsky, was to describe everything with which he came in contact, in order to detain, perpetuate, pass it on as a testament to future descendants [7]. E. Pachovska believes that Stakhura «*wanted to be a writer on the edge. On the edge in the broad sense of this word: life and literature, everyday life and holidays, horror and delight with human stories*» [8]. The poet's friend K. Rutkowski aptly notes that Stakhura «*belonged to those writers who try to go beyond the boundaries of writing, who strive to be themselves, who want to show that there is something more than literature*» [8]. It can be added that such writers go beyond the accepted canons of literature, but also beyond the word itself, especially the written word, looking for what is hidden outside the word. Perhaps that is why in Stakhura's work we meet interesting linguistic and genre experiments, always original and unexpected, opening new facets of human essence.

Reasoning over ontology of "I" in Edvard Stakhura's prose we will consider on the collection of stories "Się" ("Self"), published in 1977. The originality of the book lies in the formation and modification of the protagonist through an internal monologue, manifested in the dialogization of his own knowledge, observations and experience; on an action that often has the character of helping people on his way; on memoirs related to travels in Poland and to other countries: on a philosophical explanation of the events taking place with him.

Of undoubted interest is the title of the collection. The verb inflection *się*, which is written separately in the Polish language and carries the semantic load of the verb to which it belongs, redirects the action to the performer himself, thereby, as it loses its independence and significance. Put in the title of the collection, it acquires importance, because step by step it traces the transformation of the inner world of the protagonist or, as the author himself said, *changes in his experience in life*. In addition, the writer comes to the conclusion that the road (road in the meaning of life), along which a person walks, leads to the loss of himself, to death, which gives birth to a new life, a new person. It was this thought, the thought of transforming a *person-is* into a *person-nobody* became the leading one in the works of Stakhura. The man-nobody born by the author of "Fabula rasa" is described as follows:

- *Kim jest człowiek-nikt?*

- *Człowiek-nikt nie jest kimś. Ja jest kimś. Ja jest zmuszony być kimś. Tyś jest swoim Ja. Ty jesteś kimś. Tyś jest zmuszony być kimś. <...>*

- *Ale człowiek-nikt to człowiek-który-rozumie, człowiek-który-jest-stanem-twórczym, człowiek-czyn, człowiek-trzy, człowiek-tu, człowiek-teraz, człowiek-fakt, człow-*

*iek-kwiat, człowiek-ptak, człowiek-słońce, człowiek-in-flagranti, człowiek-radość, człowiek-zadość, człowiek-który-nie-potrzebuje-nic.*

The repetition of the word *man* with various applications, indicating the versatility of his essence, emphasizes what is important for the author, while creating a complete image of a *new* person for whom it is necessary to be now, here, to be a bird, the sun, joy, to act and create. The most essential traits of the character of the main character are asceticism and self-sufficiency – *a person-nobody is one who does not need anything*. Illustrating word-action, Stakhura seeks to influence the reader, helping him to overcome the barrier of indifference and nothing-doing.

According to D. Pakhotski, here we are not talking about artistic literature, but rather about literature that is effective, efficient, active [7, 62]. T. Burek very correctly noticed that in this literature we can feel «*the ardent fanaticism of moral knowledge, a hurricane hunger for truth, which burns in words almost everything that is superfluous in them, throws out psychology, intrigue, pettiness from literature, <...> so that at the end of the process reduction to be able to renew and retain several unshakable values*» [4, 124].

The continuation of this thought, that is the formation of a person-nobody, the many-sidedness of his “I”, we find in the book “Się”:

«*Ja to jad. Ja to wąż. Ja to rak. <...>. Umarł rak. Umarł rak na raka. Ja umarło. Położyło sobie kres. Koniec biografii. Koniec bibliografii. Koniec biobibliografii. <...>. Nie ma ja. Się jest. Się jest stanem. <...>. Ja umarło na ja. Nie ma ja. Się jest. Się jest się. Się jest duch. Się jest nikt*» [12, 131].

As we can see, the short sentences are a vivid kaleidoscope of the transformation of the “I”: poison, snake, cancer. Tautological word games (*cancer died for cancer*) harmoniously turn into a word game with the root *-graphy* (*end of biography, end of bibliography, end of biobibliography*), which the author creates by adding the prefix *bi-* or *bio-*, which in this case has the meaning of duality, plurality, endlessness. Announcing the end of the existence of his own “I” (*no I*), Stakhura immediately resorts to the antithesis of *I am* with the inflection *się*, which marks the state of duration of being. And again, the author's transition to negation (*I died on I, there is no I*), which is transformed with lightning speed into an affirmative statement - *I am*, belted on both sides by inflection *się*, which indicates the continuity of existence, a kind of continuum of being. Introducing the word *spirit* (*I am spirit*), the writer, as it were, refines his being into an ethereal state, i.e. I am everywhere and always. The last sentence *I am nobody* further expands the boundaries of the ontology of “I”: if I am nobody, then I am invisible or seen by those who look at the world with similar eyes; I am omnipresent, I do not need anything. Man-nobody becomes a kind of Absolute of self-sufficiency, marked with mutually exclusive characteristics.

Each of the thirteen stories is full of “się” inflection. This creates the impression that everything happens by itself, without human intervention. The researchers called this technique the “się trap”. According to Stakhura, modern people who do not know how or do not want to live their own lives in a worthy way fall into it.

Many critics believed that the main character of stories Michal Kontny is the author himself, that is, an equal sign was put between the artistic world presented in the works and the life of the writer. Note: this interpretation of Stakhura's works brought him immense popularity among rebellious and rebellious young people at the end of the last century. Without a doubt, the main character is a romantic rebel, escaping from the world, looking for his place on earth, wanting to save everyone, seeking to exterminate evil and ultimately turning into a man-nobody. In the light of the above, it would be appropriate to emphasize that deliberately often used inflection “się” becomes the first step towards mysticism, is the grammatical effect of getting rid from own “self”.

Michal Kontny, a wanderer poet, tramp, travels to new places, walks his own roads, observing everything that happens on earth and in heaven. The ontology of the *hero's self* (“I”) is presented in the work in different aspects, contexts and intersecting lines. In a *horizontally elongated plan*, a repetitive impersonal *wandering* can serve as a confirmation of what has been said («*Się szło. Się szło jedną z licznych dziesiętlicznych setlicznych tysiąclicznych entlicznych piętlicznych dróg Planety ... Się szło*»), which shows slowly wandering from one place to another, wandering on the paths of the planet-life. Their number is represented by the author's neologisms in the form of variants of words with the root *-licznymi* in the meaning of a huge number: from one, ten, hundreds, thousands to entlichny winding road. In a *vertical circular plan*, we have a different picture. Michal directs his gaze to the sky, to the sun, to God and begins to turn his head at an increasing rate: «*niebo, widok nad widoki, że tylko przechylić głowę do tyłu i kręcić głową, kręcić w kółko, coraz prędzej, giej do zawyrot, aż do przewrotu głowy, aż do rewolucji głowy*» [14, 6]. The dynamism of circulation evokes associations with the creation of the world in the character's imagination: «*może tak właśnie Bóg wszechświat stworzył, kręcąc głową coraz prędzej i prędzej*» [14, 6]. The hero feels the penetration into the eternal mystery of the Holy Book with his mind, body and living participation in this not fully explained process.

Michal Kontny shows great interest in everything he comes into contact with or with whom on his way. Meeting with the boy Michal Maevsky explicates unexpected facets of the protagonist's character. Answering the child's questions, the author resorts to the atypical social status of his character – *nobody's*, i.e. not a stranger who should be feared, namely *nobody's*, free from everything and everyone, which in the boy's understanding is happiness, because in this case he does not need to ask his parents for permission, he can do what he wants, etc.

*Żebyś był niczyj, to co innego. Wtedy może i bym cię zabrał, bo mi się podobasz <...>.*

*-Proszę pana!*

*-Tak, mały.*

*-A pan jest niczyj?*

*-Ja?*

-No pan. Jest pan niczyj?

-Ja... tak [14, 8].

The ontology of "I" in Stakhura's stories is not devoid of philosophical coloring. It is true that H. Zavorskaya's remark that the writer «*identified philosophizing not only with thinking, but also with life, tested it not intellectually or in theory, but by himself and in practice. With such a character of consciousness and a maximum feeling of life, this led to the loss of oneself, because between fantasy and reality appeared not only an external, but also a psychic gap-abyss, not filled with any intellectual or sensitive distance*» [17, 15].

What has been said echoes the teaching of M. Heidegger (his work "Being and Time", 1927), which raises the question of the meaning of being and analyzes the ontology of the human "I", or being, Dasein: «*Only the clarification of the essence of human existence reveals the essence of being itself*» [11, 106]. Heidegger called the structure of human existence in its fullness *care*, which is the unity of three components: *being-in-the-world, running ahead and being-with-the-inner world-being*. It is Heidegger's *care* that finds its practical application in the behavior of Michal Kontna, which is revealed in almost every story in the collection: responsibility for a child (the story "Wedding"), a desire to help Adam Gutovsky return the joy of life to his wife ("El condor pasa"), and others. *Inner word-being* in Stakhura's understanding is most likely a process of going out of the framework of one's "I" in order to penetrate the ontology of another or someone else's "I", thus checking oneself for humanity with the most critical interpretation of one's own person. «*Każdy krok: lekki czy ciężki, czy coraz cięższy – jest niepowtarzalny. Jest jednorazowy. Przy ruchu naprzód nie ma powtórzeń. Nie ma cofanki. I wtedy się dopiero widzi, co to wszystko jest. Czym to wszystko pachnie i czym to wszystko śmierdzi*» [14, 71.].

According to Heidegger's thought, the technical language of philosophy is not able to express what he wanted from the very beginning. The need to create your own language gave birth to a whole range of metaphorical terms reflecting on the poetic power of the word. Playing with the word, creating unexpected grammatical constructions woven into the verbal material of stories, reflects the Stakhurian content of the human "I" in the best possible way. The word for the author "Się" is so important that he puts it in the first place in the hierarchy of human anatomy: «*przodem idą słowa, ale tuż- tuż za nimi idą nogi oraz głowa*» [14, 98]. However, the author clarifies that the words themselves never go (always in symbiosis with the head and legs), because without them they become empty. As D. Pakhotski writes, Stakhura «*was always deeply convinced of the extensive creative possibilities of the written word. His prose is proof of an attempt to overcome the limitations of language; is a test of how much one can afford to test the elasticity of the tongue*» [7, 137]. The author himself sincerely believed that «*someone would someday open him, open his kind heart, his one language, not two. Someone will appreciate him all and understand how simple he is*» [13].

Stakhura does not create *abstruse* words, the verbal material of his prose is the inner ontology of a person, a state of duration, unlimited possibilities, feelings, emotions, thoughts, real-ephemeral existence in being. At first glance, story "Iście" may seem like a text without meaning: twenty-two sentences represent a verbal inversion - variants of the same impersonal sentence (*Się szło powolutku skrajem drogi straszliwie i cudownie samotnym*). The absence of a dot at the end of a sentence creates a one-piece graphic picture that is replete with similar verbal signs. Only by reading the meaning between the lines, we measure the depth of spiritual recognition (*Walked/wandering slowly along the edge of the road terribly and wonderfully lonely*), expressed by a contradictory pair of terribly-miraculous, which perfectly reflects the unspoken pain and at the same time the miracle of the state of loneliness.

The desire to find a twin-friend is also part of the ontology of "I". In the story of "Naprzód, niebiescy" Michał Kontna's inner monologue is sounded, filled with an endless stream of questions addressed to an invisible friend, fictional, but desired, felt from a distance. «*Czy on jest do mnie podobny? Jakie ma imię? Jakie ma włosy? Co teraz robi?*» [14, 68], «*Czy chciałby psa? Czy pies by uszczęśliwił niezmiernie?* <...> *Czy bardzo tęskni?*» [14, 68]. Everything that interests the protagonist concerns the existential-emotional sphere of the fictional friend's life. No replies were received, which makes it possible to judge whether the questions were being redirected to oneself. The boy («*Jesteś tam, chłopczyku?*»), entered into the text, reveals the secret of the character – he asks himself, but himself in childhood, when everything was cloudless and colorful ...

It should be said that on the part of the critics, Stakhura was faced with a complete misunderstanding of the language in which his works were written. The reason, according to the author "Się", lies in the fact that the critics *got bogged down in words*. G. Bereza adds that the reason for the negative interpretation of Stakhura's work is their lack of imagination [1]. If we turn to the statement of M. Eliade: «*To have imagination means to see the world in its fullness*» [5, 69], – then we will find the key to understanding the language of the prose writer-poet, vulnerable, with a fine organization of the soul, with a special vision and feeling of the world around.

In one of his last letters, dated July 24, 1979 (almost a month before his suicide), Stakhura wrote: «*I am learning to try what I see, hear, touch, what I eat, what I am writing now. The man-nobody, of course, did not need help and knew that he would no longer need it. He believed that a new eternal life had begun for him – he was born again with the death of the man-self. Unfortunately, it only seemed so. The authority of a man-nobody was undermined because of his condemnation that people-I do not know anything, but that they seem to know only seems to them (Socrates). Only man-nobody knows everything*» [14, 128].

Stakhura did not want or could not plunge into time, into its destroying element and succumb to its sample. As a stubborn essentialist, he never parted with himself, was true to his imaginations and ideals, wandered around the country and around the world, met different people and was imbued with their fates. In his work, both poetic

and prosaic, Stakhura stated the values of the simple, i.e. real emotions, joy of life and closeness to nature. For the author of “Jeden dzień”, each person is an amplitude stretching from minimum to maximum, from a petal to the Sun. It said that «*wieczność jest tu i teraz... <...> i w każdym tu i teraz*» [14, 128]. In eternity there is no three-stage time - the present and the future dissolve in the past: «*obydwa te czasy są JUŻ czasem przeszłym, a żadnego z tych trzech nigdy nie ma w wiecznym teraz*» [14, 129]. Often peering into the day and night skies in search of the unknown, eternal, boundless, Stakhura wondered about the essence of human existence, expanding the boundaries of his own “I”, outlined and filled with word-action: «*pracowałem w słowie*» [15].

The verbal material of Stakhura's prose is a tireless confession, in which he is completely naked, unarmed, often exposed to misunderstanding and condemnation. The moral system of values and the code of honor of the writer shine through in his works, notes, diary, having a more existential-impressionistic shade than an essential instructive. The ontological content of “I” in Stakhura's prose is very multifaceted and especially: simple sentences with numerous repetitions are mixed here, contextual melancholy, deep inner love for life, joy from everything that life gives, the aesthetics of the landscape of everyday life, longing for love and faith in love, with what all this is full of youth and sincere delight. Despite the fact that the ontology of “I” is often marked with a negative particle (*nobody, nobody's*), paradoxically it does not cause negative perception. Positive reception is born thanks to the sounding of internal monologues, the humanitarian nature of actions, philosophical reasoning and the birth of oneself as a *person-nobody*. Stakhura's prose, or *life-writing* is based on blurring the boundaries between life and literature. These two spheres are closely intertwined and have grown into each other. This is the essence of the rich and touching heritage of the Polish writer.

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### **ОНТОЛОГІЯ «Я» В ПРОЗІ ЕДВАРДА СТАХУРА**

*У статті розглядається онтологія «Я» в прозі Едварда Стахура на прикладі збірки оповідань «Się» («Ся»). Наповнення сутності людини у польського письменника тісно пов'язане з людиною-ніхто, який, на думку Стахури, ототожнюється з новою людиною, яка ні в чому не має потреби та все знає. Ми можемо розглядати його як свого роду Абсолют. Стахура використовує різні творчі прийоми (зустрічі з іншими персонажами, філософські міркування, потреба у набутті друга та ін.), щоб представити цілісний образ людини-ніхто.*

**Ключові слова:** онтологія, людина-ніхто, Абсолют, життя-писання.

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### **ОНТОЛОГИЯ «Я» В ПРОЗЕ ЭДВАРДА СТАХУРЫ**

*В статье рассматривается онтология «Я» в прозе Эдварда Стахуры на примере сборника рассказов «Się» («Ся»). Наполнение сущности человека у польского писателя тесно связано с человеком-никто, который, по мнению Стахуры, отождествляется с новым человеком, который ни в чем не нуждается и*



*все знает. Мы можем рассматривать его как своего рода Абсолют. Стахура использует различные творческие приемы (встречи с другими персонажами, философские рассуждения, потребность в друге и т. д.), чтобы представить целостный образ человека-никто.*

**Ключевые слова:** *онтология, человек-никто, Абсолют, жизне-писание.*

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