



THE ORIGIN

Dmitry Arsentiev



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The Origin

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Young journalist Nick is interested in high-speed automobile trips, good music and wise books. Quite good hobbies, one can say, and that's right! However, a curious person is always beckoned with the innermost secrets of nature. Where has the life on this planet come from? What is the origin of civilization? Like most contemporaries, Nick believes only in scientific arguments. He is far from religion and skeptical of biblical traditions. So it was until the journalist has been instructed to interview "Aristotle of the Present", an old philosopher Mr. Zelinsky. He supports the scientific postulates, but suggests an astonishingly bold theory of human origin at the same time. He claims that descendants of two human species – "human people" and "animal people" – live on the Earth today. The philosopher is sure that evolution of life proceeds in two parallel ways. To convince Nick of his rightness, Mr. Zelinsky suggests the young man to read the Old Testament. The scientist believes that the sacred text proves his unusual idea... Do you also want to know the exciting secret? Read "The Origin" – a fascinating philosophical story by Dmitry Arsentiev!

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It has been more than half a year since I left a good job in a large financial company and became a freelance journalist of a glossy magazine well-known in our city and even outside it. I did not feel any incredible literary gift suddenly emerging inside me. Rather, my eyes got open. Ten years of life spent in the office communicating with the same people day by day, from morning till night, eating almost the same food, and thinking about the same things; you know, it dulls the whole set of feelings and narrows the worldview, as well as the communication circle. You start to get slowly covered with a shell that reliably protects you from outer intrusions – new emotions, contacts, desires, and ambitious plans. You become a part of a closed, reliable and very comfortable system.

Still, the Universe took pity on me and decided to give me another self-realization chance. Somehow, this chance brought me to journalism. Apparently, having abandoned the system, I began to explore the surrounding world so eagerly that the flow of new emotions could not stay inside me, so I needed for sharing them with other people. I found no better way to do this than writing opuses for the periodical. Hundreds of service notes, letters, texts for presentations and projects written personally and edited for the staff positively affected my ability to arrange words.

I write articles for the magazine called «The pulse of life». I think, the name was the first thing to attract me. Finally, my desire to work for this edition became definite when I got acquainted with Edvart, its owner and Editor-in-chief. Edvart was of Estonian origin marked with the European civilization, and due to this, I have to note, the magazine's style and quality of published materials was positively different from its peers.

I was surprised a lot when I found out that Edvart considered my work as quite tolerable. Apparently, I managed to get rid of my corporate shell and confidently went forward to a new life leaving a trace of scales behind me.

Our magazine had a genteel focus and mainly covered themes interesting to the readers' audience, which I described for myself as «successful modern intellectuals». The same three words can describe three categories of information, which we treated it (the audience) with. «Success» was about business and politics, but not too boring. «Modernity» was about the latest trends in fashion and automotive industry, cultural events – coming and already passed ones, so it was about everything described with taste and tolerance. And if you are an «intellectual», you would certainly read about breakthrough technologies, nano and larger ones, literary bestsellers and film masterpieces getting another «Palm branch», or «Lion», or «Bear». Still, it was not abstruse, without pathos and too high style.

As a journalist, I am almost omnivorous; I do not restrict myself with any category and particular specializations, of course, too. I am one of those children who answer the question «Who do you want to become when you grow up?» either with a significant silence, or giving a new answer every time. As they say, I was inconstant. I am interested in everything, but not for a long time. I read somewhere that this type of people is called «scanners». They «scan» the entire surrounding world, but really focus on very few things, and only they know why. In my opinion, it is an ideal approach for a «glossy» journalist. Always ready and open-minded.

Two weeks ago, Edvart called me.

«Good morning, Nick (For reference, Nick is my school nickname received around the sixth grade and accompanying me to the very graduation, but later forgotten. When starting to write for the magazine, I decided to use it as a pseudonym). I'd like you to write a material for our May issue. Recently, I attended a philosophical book presentation by a popular «enlightened» author. During the exalted discussion of his opus, I almost blessed it with my snoring. After the official part, during a buffet table, I met some people not indifferent to philosophy, listened to their conversations and realized that our potential audience was keenly interested in theology issues from the creation of the world to inter-confessional discord. Hello, are you listening to me?» bewildered indignation could be heard in Edvart's intonation.

«Yes, yes, Edvart! I listen attentively,» I said with enthusiasm suppressing the yawn.

«Fine!» he said with relief, «By lucky chance, this scholar whom I just told you about lives in our city. I think, our readers should be told about his existence, you are to take a short interview and possibly «overview» the entire philosophical field adjacent to it. I'll leave the book by this Aristotle of our time with girls in the editorial office. Come to there and get it.»

«Edvart, as far as I remember the leitmotif of the intellectual section in the May issue should be painting. Will the material on philosophical literature fit it?»

«Well, sprinkle the text with Leonardo's canvases. Shall I teach you? But don't miss the taste,» Edvart did not stop regularly reminding the entire magazine's team about the mandatory presence of «taste».

«I got it! I'll sprinkle it with the taste.» «But what the taste will be like, I will choose myself,» I thought maliciously.

After a little more wandering around the alleged article, I said goodbye to the chief. He was going to visit his historic homeland for a couple of weeks and told us to finalize the next issue of the magazine.

I cannot say that I was inspired by the task very much. I had to master the «enlightened» one's tedious book and similar contemporaries' pseudo-scientific researches as well.

Later, standing in the shower, I thought that the task was not so bleak in general. The remains of negativity were erased by breakfast and strong coffee. OK, I will touch the genius by taking the interview. Studying at the university, we stoically survived dozens of hours for philosophy-like lectures.

So, I rushed to the office. I should note the verb «rush» here, which is not accidental. Saying that I like to drive means saying nothing. During many years of work in a large company, the car was not just a means of transportation for me even in the bleakest days, but rather a psychoanalyst. Starting the engine and enabling the transmission, I removed the shackles of being and everything negative. I did not drive, I flew. I try to follow all the traffic laws, I keep to the marking, signs and green traffic lights. But speed, the speed is my weakness. Becoming more experienced, I began to feel the car with my skin. Just after 15-20 minutes of driving any car, I already understand its dimensions, weight, traction and abilities in general. Or I think I understand, but I've had no misfires yet. Of course, I am not a professional driver and certainly not a racer, but I can confidently say that I am capable of something at the wheel.

On that day, the editorial office was not too much crowded. Apparently, I was not the only person getting Edvart's assignment before he left. The pen workers went «to the people». It was even better. Being a freelancer, I do not visit the office too often. Therefore, every time I come to see Edvart turns into hour-long conversations with the edition staff terribly missing me as it turns out. Of course, they lie.

After flirting a little with editorial ladies, I armed myself with the book left by Edvart for me and left the dusty office. The weather was good, and I decided not to hurry with diving into the philosophical whirlpool. After galloping from place to place throughout the day, I finally got home by night. Well, it was time «to do lessons». The book lay on the table. I was also not too far away, but

I passed by it every time. I did everything not to start reading. Just like «cat and hedgehog». House owners brought the hedgehog, and the cat walked around it not daring to shift its theoretical interest to the practical plane and study the new neighbor empirically. The book and I were like unipolar magnets pulling everything around, but repelling each other. Still, I had no choice, that was enough mocking. So, I started.

I went to bed being spiritually exhausted. It has been a long time since I voluntarily absorbed so voluminous philosophical ideas. The next day, I began reading in the morning and finished it by night. That was all, my brain was like mixer whipped. I decided to spend the next day in the «radio silence» mode. No reading and communication, only audio-visual perception of the surrounding world. By night, the theory learnt from the book settled inside me, and I breathed again. The next day was spent for bustling and trying to organize an interview with the «enlightened» one, and ultimately I succeeded. Well, one day later I was to meet him personally. I do not like boring work, so I decided not to speak this sage's language (as I imagined it) and prepare ambiguous questions for the interview. So to say, to shake the colossus.

The X-Hour came, and I was going to interview the «enlightened» one. Being full of those ambiguous questions, I made my way through traffic jams. Well, even if the opponent turns out to be excessively boring, I would write the article anyway, I can change it towards any plane. I can leave a couple of citations for clearing my conscience together with three sentences about the book, and then I'll «review» the philosophical landscape of our time. Besides, I promised Edvart to sprinkle the article with paintings. So, I'll get out. By the way, about getting out, it is time to get out of another traffic jam, or I can be late. It will be somewhat awkward to «shake the colossus» with a guilty face.

As it was to be, the enlightened one lived in the historic center of the city, in one of the memorial houses marked with marble boards informing everyone passing by about the house visited some time ago by some great person. Why do I associate these boards with tombstones? It looks like a grave branch. Terrible.

I went up to the third floor and pressed the doorbell button.

The door was opened by a slender elderly man wearing a classic gray suit made of fine wool. His hair was neatly laid back.

«Mr. Zelinsky?» I asked timidly.

«At your disposal,» he answered in a firm voice.

«Hello, I'm Nick, about the interview,» I said getting more confident.

«Oh, yes, I'm glad to welcome you! Come in, please,» he said cheerfully and stepped into the corridor letting me in. And I did it. I took off my outer clothing and followed the old man into the room.

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