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## NORWID'S PLACE IN CULTURE

Norwid provides answers to the current crisis of postmodernity, although he cannot be reduced to one theory, one “narrative,” one synthesis. Norwid is a *constellation*; you can follow its stars, their evolution and revolutions, their Milky Way, and you can create its maps. But it is impossible to grasp it with one glance and say, I understand it, I know it, since he requires readers to constantly cooperate in finding meaning and makes them co-authors in the “constant discussion” conducted by society, by civilisations of different ages, and by people.

Although he is, next to Plato, one of the initiators of the Polish Constitution, referring to truth, justice, good, and beauty,<sup>1</sup> which are “*God's profiles*” in *Promethidion*. The defence of the basic Law has divided Poles during the current “cultural war” between those referring to the Enlightenment cult of Law and the threefold of authorities and supporters of the romantic national messianism with the cult of suffering. What is striking about *Promethidion* is its ethical universalism and openness to all people and cultures.

But it is not the split in public opinion that causes difficulties with preparing a monograph, as Halkiewicz-Sojak writes.<sup>2</sup> Rather, it is due to the difficulties of synthesis related to the polyphony of interpreting various, often contradictory, studies, each approaching his art and constant influence on contemporary poetry in its own way; ultimately, due to the distinctness of his place in culture, which eludes classifications.

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<sup>1</sup> From the Preamble of 1997.

<sup>2</sup> G. HALKIEWICZ-SOJAK, “Monografia Norwida – książka postulowana, ale czy możliwa?,” in: G. HALKIEWICZ-SOJAK, *Nawiązane ogniwo. Studia o poezji Cypriana Norwida i jej kontekstach*, Toruń 2010, pp. 15-24.

Schematically, his life and work can be divided into three parts corresponding to his masterpieces: after the Warsaw period and his stay in Italy, where he met Krasiński and Mickiewicz in Rome during the Spring of Nations, and when the dialogical philosophical poem *Promethidion* was created, published in Paris in 1851, and recognised in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (half a century later) as a masterpiece with the source of the philosophy of work later developed by Józef Tischner and John Paul II. Through the theme of work and art, it is internally related to the poem “Fortepian Szopena” [*Chopin’s Grand Piano*] (1865), which is also important for understanding the poet’s ideas.

The second period in Paris, where he lived from 1849, befriended Chopin, soon before the latter’s death, and was ready to join the Resurrectionist Order but was ultimately not accepted. He left for America in 1852. From there returned to London and again to Paris in 1854. At that time, he wrote the original poem *Quidam* about the end of the Roman Empire (published as late as 1862). In 1857, *Czarne kwiaty* [*Black Flowers*] and *Białe kwiaty* [*White Flowers*] were written; according to experts, they represented a new type of „Polish essay.”<sup>3</sup> In his view, a new, “white” poetics avoiding any effects were intended to create a Polish school of literature. Its subject was “the pathos of everyday life.”

In 1860, he presented at a conference on Juliusz Słowacki’s poetry, which is an important stage of his philosophy of culture. This is where the third period of his work began which was devoted to poetry and theatre. In 1862, he published the first volume of poetry, thanks to which he would be “discovered” in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Between 1865-1866, he worked on a second volume, *Vade-mecum*, which would be published nearly a hundred years later and is today considered a poetic masterpiece and was innovative for the epoch. Later, it would become a reference for twentieth-century poetry.

In that third period, Norwid also created three different types of plays: “mystery plays” (*Wanda i Krakus* [*Wanda and Krakus*]), after the American experience, “white tragedy” (*Pierścień Wielkiej Damy* [*The Noble Lady’s Ring*], *Aktor* [*The Actor*] and *Za Kulisami* [*Backstage*]), and historical drama (*Kleopatra i Cezar* [*Cleopatra and Caesar*]). They were never performed in the author’s lifetime, but that poetic theatre would later have an important impact on Polish theatre, and in some respects heralded the grotesque style of Polish absurd theatre (Gombrowicz, Różewicz, etc.). Also, during that period he wrote a new philosophical poem *Rzecz o wolności słowa* [*On the Freedom of Speech*] of 1869. There, Norwid’s anthropological approach entered a new dimension, partly controversial (such

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Polski esej literacki. Antologia*, introduction and editing by J. Tomkowski, Wrocław 2017.

as negating Darwin's works), but rich in symbols, such as the opposition of the volcano metaphor which romantics delighted, and the slow, quiet work which has produced languages and cultures. He opposed the revolutionary messianism of the romantics with their slogan "Poland as the Christ of Nations" with his own path of ethical transformation of man through work, art, and *through culture*. Norwid concerned himself with the issue of *praxis*, as did Marx and Proudhon, but he never accepted the revolutionary struggle as a way of liberating people, focusing instead on work, maturation, and ethical transformation by developing one's humanity. Today it is associated with Christian humanism and personalism *avant la lettre*.

It is difficult to grasp the richness of sociological and political matters, literary and religious issues, the foundations of philosophy and wisdom, and the dialectics of civilisation related to this topic in only a few points. It is only possible to outline them.

His poetics privileges the *parable*, refers to paradoxes, irony, neologisms, and archaisms, creating a model of a white poem close to poetic prose, which allows him to play on various levels of meaning. It announces linguistic poetry that exposes the routine of the *cliché*, stereotypical expressions, using polysemy and brings together seemingly distant words (as in the poem "Rozebrana" [Disrobed]). He worked on the graphic appearance of words, emphasised expressions, and intonations. That explains the theory of "secondary orality," work on "graphic scores;" not to mention his theory of silence and implied meanings. Today, he is compared to Baudelaire and Mallarmé, to Hopkins, and to Whitman; he is recognised as one of the greatest poets of his time by Gide and Bergson, Miłosz and Różewicz, John Paul II and Brodsky, and by Holan, etc.

His attention is focused on man in a dualistic perspective, forcing them to look for a synthesis of matter and spirit, in a perspective of ethical universalism overcoming the separation between culture and religion and around the central symbol of the cross, which is at the same time the path and the means, a symbol not so much of martyrdom, but of creative effort enabling the recovery of the humanity of creation. In studies, researchers speak of the dialectics of flower and stone: the flower itself, the form, cannot reach its destination; the stone gives it direction, i.e. meaning. The stone enables the construction of a new cultural edifice and a path leading to a resurrection, which is historical and eschatological and crowned with a *dome* of the spirits of cultures and civilisations. The *dome*, or *cupola*, is an image of a "*monolog-nieustannie-się-parabolizujący*" [*constantly-parabolising-monologue*] (*Milczenie* [*Silence*], PWSz VI, 236) of culture as a parable of the world.

“GENTLE EYE OF HEAVEN BLUE”

Norwid is fascinated with contrasts. On the surface, he is gentle, like the “eye of heaven blue” from the famous poem “W Weronie” [In Verona] (PWsz II, 22). Yet, next to the tears washing away the “gruzy nieprzyjaznych grodów” [ruins of the hostile forts], there appear “kamienie” [stones] falling from the sky (cosmic meteorites). For him, the cosmos is an image of an ancient order, but also of catastrophes. Only the “łagodne oko błękitu” [gentle eye of heaven blue] can “planet zwaśnioną / Zeswoić z Tęczą Twórcy rozjaśnioną, [...] / Niż serca ludzi – wpierw nim ludzie zamrą?!” [make the feud planet / Unite with the bright Rainbow of the Creator, [...] / Than with human hearts – before people cease to be?!] (“Tęcza” [Rainbow], PWsz I, 311) one can only look at the sky and the order of the cosmos:

[...] nie ma bynajmniej sieroctwa!  
 Ja zaś jakoś niechcący ku niebu spojrziałem,  
 A niebo było gwiazdziste;  
 W gwiazdach więc tajemnicę tych słów wyczytałem,  
 Bo one tam wyraźne były, oczywiste;  
 Potem, gdy dusza swego skosztowała chleba,  
 Nie mogłem się już więcej oderwać od nieba,  
 Które mnie wciąż ciągnęło silnym, wonnym tchnieniem.

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I wtedy to ja, wzięwszy mój łaawy różaniec,  
 Zmówiłem na nim pacierz–potężnym milczeniem.  
 (“Sieroty” [Orphans], PWsz I, 7-8)

[...] no orphanhood by any means!  
 And I somehow happened to look heavenward,  
 And the sky was starry;  
 So in the stars I read the secret of those words,  
 Because they were clear there, and obvious;  
 Then, when my soul tasted its bread,  
 I could no more tear myself away from heaven,  
 Which continued to draw me with its strong, fragrant breath.

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And then I, taking my tearful rosary,  
 Prayed on it– withmighty silence.

Thus, already in the first lines, there appear motifs of a catastrophe, a gesture of looking up to the sky, silence and metaphysical trust, as well as a “fragrant breath.”

The latter motif explains the “white” aesthetics of Norwid’s poems in reference to the passage of the Lord from the First Book of Kings:

The Lord said, “Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.” Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Then a voice said to him, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”<sup>4</sup>

The voice of the Lord is “a gentle breeze” despite all the catastrophes. Norwid tried to follow that image. For example, in the poem *Rzecz o wolności słowa* [*On the Freedom of Speech*], where he extrapolates his polemics with Polish Romanticism and the main metaphor of the volcano as Mickiewicz preached in *Dziady*:

[...] Nasz naród jak lawa,  
Z wierzchu zimna i twarda, sucha i plugawa,  
Lecz wewnętrznego ognia sto lat nie wyziębi;  
Plwajmy na tę skorupę i zstąpmy do głębi.<sup>5</sup>

Our nation’s like a living volcano:  
The top is hard and cold, worthless and dried,  
But boiling, fiery lava seethes inside.  
One hundred years of cold won’t cool its breath:  
Spit on the crust – come, we’ll plunge to the depths.<sup>6</sup>

In *Rzecz o wolności słowa* [*On the Freedom of Speech*], Norwid contrasts the strength of the volcano with the work of generations:

Wszelako – acz jest piękne wulkanu natchnienie [...]  
Myślę... że i ten cichy co rok widok łąnu  
Majestatycznym bywa nie mniej od wulkanu! [...]  
Ciemnota – która mimo niezgrabne praktyki,  
Stworzyła Arcydziała – stworzyła *Języki!*

<sup>4</sup> 1 Kings 19:11-13, *New King James Version*.

<sup>5</sup> A. MICKIEWICZ, *Dziady*, part. III, sc. VII, in: A. MICKIEWICZ, *Dziela*, III, Wydanie Rocznicowe, Warszawa 1995, p. 209. Further quotations from Mickiewicz are taken from the same edition (further as WR), with the Roman numeral for the volume, and Arabic numeral for the page.

<sup>6</sup> English translation by CH.S. KRASZEWSKI, in: A. MICKIEWICZ, *Forefathers’ Eve*, London 2016, p. 257.

Tych się nie tworzy sennym natchnienia polotem,  
Zboże po burzy wstawa, lecz nie siane grzmotem,  
I raczej praca długa a wierna literze  
Całokształty takowe urabia i strzeże.

(*Rzecz o wolności słowa [On the Freedom of Speech]*, DW IV, 262-263)

However – although a volcano gives beautiful inspiration [...]  
I think... that the quiet view of a cornfield every year  
May be no less majestic than a volcano! [...]

Ignorance – which, despite clumsy practices,  
Has created Masterpieces – has created *Languages!*  
These are not created with the sleepy flow of inspiration,  
Wheat rises after the storm, but not if sown with thunder,  
And it is rather work, long and faithful to the letter,  
Which moulds and guards such entireties.

Those verses formed the basis for the philosophy of work developed by Brzozowski, Tischner and John Paul II, and the “Solidarity” movement which shook the world like a geopolitical earthquake. Then, that “gentle eye of heaven blue” turned out to be the “eye of the storm” with global consequences: The self-limiting revolutions of 1989 in Central and Eastern Europe with consequences spanning the world, the collapse of the USSR, and the end of a bipolar world... There was a shift in the cultural paradigm, although its consequences are now being dissipated in Poland through internal political games.

There seems to be a pattern of two-hundred-year cycles in history. After the French Revolution of 1789, the paradigm of revolution as a form necessary to change the political system and the historical cycle reigned in the world for two hundred years. The October Revolution and subsequent ones, such as the Chinese and Cuban ones, referred to it as the model of a coup, and always a bloody one. Polish “Solidarity” led to a bloodless, “self-limiting” revolution, and to the fall of communism over time, two hundred years after the French Revolution, in 1989. For some time it constituted a new pattern of systemic changes through agreements, compromise, the overriding ideal of human rights, and a new paradigm of the bloodless revolution. It is unknown how long it shall survive and how fertile it may be, but the collapse of dictatorships and totalitarian regimes in the times of John Paul II and recent events in Belarus indicate that the pattern is still active. To some extent, its spiritual father is Cyprian Norwid, whose bicentenary we are celebrating in 2021.

In his book about the Polish messianism of John Paul II, Paweł Rojek rightly states:

So it seems that just as insurrection Poland was the country of Mickiewicz, interwar Poland – of Słowacki, the Poland of Solidarity was to become the country of Norwid. In that perspective, the pontificate of John Paul II, the philosophical works of Tischner and the great Solidarity movement can be considered a great posthumous triumph of a poet who died in oblivion.<sup>7</sup>

His poetry and thought seem constantly alive in many ways.

Z rzeczy świata tego zostaną tylko dwie,  
Dwie tylko: *poezja i dobroć*... i więcej nic...  
(“Do Bronisława Z.” [„To Bronisław Z.”], PWSz II, 238)

Of the things of this world only two will remain,  
Two only: *poetry and goodness* ... and nothing else...<sup>8</sup>

The present world seems to be steered by science, technology, and economics, which was already announced by Norwid when he referred to the “przemysłowy, handlowy” [industrial, commercial] age (*Aktor* [II] [*The Actor* [II]], DW V, 368).<sup>9</sup> However, anthropologists and philosophers present more nuanced views. Great metaphors create entire civilisations (Wheelwright<sup>10</sup>). Can you imagine Western civilisation without the biblical metaphor of God the Father which makes all people brothers (despite fratricide), the earth becomes a shared home or temple with two lanterns, the sun and the moon, and a carpet of grass?... In other religions, God may sometimes be the creator, but also a tyrant, and not a Father. Paul Ricoeur’s works on metaphor show that the reference of the metaphor is the way of life-in-the-world, and therefore action.<sup>11</sup> The poet’s gaze creates the human world and shows how to live in it. Poetry teaches the “good life,” and the language of religion is always poetic.<sup>12</sup> In history, the “gentle eye of heaven blue” can become the “eye of the

<sup>7</sup> P. ROJEK, *Liturgia dziejów. Jan Paweł II i polski mesjanizm*, Kraków 2016, p. 220.

<sup>8</sup> English translation by Adam Czerniawski, in: C. NORWID, *Selected Poems*, London 2004, p. 92.

<sup>9</sup> Zofia Stefanowska gave a similar title to her essay on Norwid: “Pisarz wieku kupieckiego i przemysłowego,” in: Z. STEFANOWSKA, *Strona romantyków. Studia o Norwidzie*, Lublin 1993, pp. 5-54.

<sup>10</sup> Ph. WHEELWRIGHT, *Metaphore and Reality*, Indiana 1962, 1968.

<sup>11</sup> P. RICOEUR, *La métaphore vive*, Paris 1975.

<sup>12</sup> P. RICOEUR, *Du texte à l’action, Essais d’herméneutique II*, Paris 1986.

storm,” changing the world for good and for bad. Nevertheless, the presence of poetry introduces a look “from above,” transcendence, as well as an interpersonal, relational, and horizontal transcendence.

In the Slavic congress in Ljubljana, I was amazed to discover a large inscription in English on a newly constructed building, “Gagarin said: the sky is dark, the earth is blue.” Heaven is among men, as in the present translations of the Gospels, which no longer translate that “the kingdom of God is within you,” but “the kingdom of God is in your midst” (Lk 17:21).<sup>13</sup>

### ROMANTICISM OF THE INDUSTRIAL ERA

Apart from the exegetical considerations, let us recall the dispute about the romantic or post-romantic character of Norwid’s writings. The subject of his writings, especially after his return from America, concerned the “kupiecka i przemysłowa” [mercantile and industrial] civilisation, i.e. post-romantic or even positivist one, close to Biedermeier (J. Maciejewski<sup>14</sup>), but the reflections of Zofia Stefanowska rightly bring up the questions which he posed to his epoch:

The subject of Norwid’s criticism is such romanticism which consists of messianism and the postulate of martyrology (rape of Providence), national exclusivity and omission of general human problems, disregarding the individual and denying the continuity of a nation in captivity, detachment from reality and the present time, one-sided spiritualism and contempt for the body, for shape, for matter. [...]. Linking artistic creativity with work and at the same time restoring the creative character of work is to overcome the romantic opposition between the creator and the recipient [...]. Art is to perform multiple mediation functions: between earthly existence and the Divine vocation of the man [...]. The practical activity postulated in *Promethidion* makes sense within the framework of eschatologically understood history and is in fact a program of restoring work to its expiatory functions. Thus, the intentionally anti-romantic postulate of a return to reality is included in the typically romantic concept of human end goals.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Greek *entoshumôn*, Lat. Vulgate *intra vos*, but contemporary versions (counting already from 17<sup>th</sup> century) want to show the Kingdom not as an only internal one, but experienced in a community. Nevertheless the Gdańsk Bible which Norwid often used has: “For God’s Kingdom is within you.” The first quote given here is from *King James Version* (also *New King James Version*), the second from the *New International Version*.

<sup>14</sup> J. MACIEJEWSKI, *Cyprian Norwid*, Warszawa 1992.

<sup>15</sup> Z. STEFANOWSKA, “Norwidowski romantyzm,” in: Z. STEFANOWSKA, *Strona romantyków*, pp. 64-65, 67-68.



Norwid posed romantic questions and sought new, better answers to them. Those answers, however, could not be entirely new because the direction of the search was determined by a romantic set of questions:<sup>16</sup>

In Norwid's works, the romantic concept of the bard and leader competes in a very interesting manner with the modern understanding of the profession of a writer making money with their pen [...] [but for him literature is an act] "taking place between the creator and the recipient."<sup>17</sup>

The dispute over romantic messianism acquired a cosmic character in Norwid's work. He contrasted the order of the stars with useless martyrdom. First, he brought out the romantic opposition of night and day, opposed delusions of dreams to work, which, however, limits the reality ("Wieczór w pustkach" [An Evening in Wilderness], PWsz I, 33). After all, Homer "cię uczył śpiewać z gwiazdami do chóru?" [taught you to sing in a choir with the stars?] ("Marmur-biały" [White-Marble], PWsz I, 100). The most important, however, seems to be the fragment of the litany "Do Najświętszej Panny Marii" [To the Blessed Virgin Mary], where a vault of stars provides the world with the constant protection of the Spirit:

Duch każdy w Twoje prorokował łono,  
Niby że chórem, co przez wieki płynie  
W gwiazdami liłą kupolę przestroną,  
Rozścielającą się nad wszech-ludami –  
O! *Nabożeństwa Dziwnego Naczynie*,  
Módl się za nami...

(PWsz I,196)

Every spirit prophesied in your womb,  
Like a choir that flows through the ages  
Into the spacious copula rich in stars,  
Spreading over all peoples –  
Oh! *Strange Vessel of Devotion*,  
Pray for us...

A *cupola* of stars provides peace, but does not stop the prospect of death:

Patrzyłem w zawrót gwiazd, w wieczne spokoje,  
Gdzie do harmonii już *Pewność i Trwoga*

<sup>16</sup> Z. STEFANOWSKA, "Norwidowski romantyzm," p. 70.

<sup>17</sup> Z. STEFANOWSKA, "Norwidowski romantyzm," pp. 81-82.

Dobiegły jako bliźniąt dziwnych dwoje...

[...]

Jak nieszczęśliwych – łza w obliczu Boga...

[...]

Bo i ja jestem śmiertelny – tak mniemam...

(“[Do Marii Trębickiej]” [To Maria Trębicka], PWSz I, 257-258)

I looked at the dizziness of stars, into the eternal peace

Where *Confidence* and *Fear* have harmony

Reached like strange two twins...

[...]

Like the tear-of-the-miserable in the face of God ...

[...]

For I am mortal too – I suppose...

Ultimately, then, the peace and harmony of the stars is not at all peaceful:

Jak się nie nudzić? Gdy oto nad globem

Milion gwiazd cichych się świeci,

A każda innym jaśnieje sposobem,

A wszystko stoi i leci...

(“Marionetki” [Marionettes], PWSz I, 345)

How not to be bored? when above our globe

A million silent stars are shining,

And each is brilliant in a different mode,

And everything is standing – and flying...<sup>18</sup>

The harmony of the stars does not weaken the tragedy of feelings in the human world:

W gwiazd harmonię poglądać weselój

Przez wiele lat samotnych,

Niż w źrenicach błyskotnych

Wyczytać raz – co? serca rozdzieli!...

(“Harmonia” [Harmony], PWSz II, 21)

Tis more cheerful to look at the stars' harmony

For many lonely years

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<sup>18</sup> English translation by Danuta Borchardt, in: C. NORWID, *Poems*, translated from the Polish by D. Borchardt in collaboration with A. Brajerska-Mazur, New York 2011, p. 121.

Than in the brilliant pupils  
Read once – what? sets hearts apart!...

Because:

Jak gwiazdy nie tam są gdzie świecą!  
("Kolebka-pieśni" [The Cradle of Songs], PWSz II, 114)

The stars are not where they shine!

Yet, the stars are a prototype of the alphabet from which the word was derived:

[...] pierwszym dla ludzi alfabetem był firmament, gwiazdy, konstelacje: tam się wzroki jednały wszystkich *wzrok nad ziemię* podnoszących, i stamtąd też spadły im pojęcia: pór roku – równań – znaczeń – liter... ("Słowo i litera" [Word and Letter], PWSz VI, 323)

[...] the first alphabet for people was the firmament, stars, constellations: there all the gazes united of those who lifted *their eyes from the ground*, and from there also fell the concepts of: seasons – equations – meanings – letters...

Therefore, the order of the cosmos was a matrix of the world, of the human order, which was only created by man through work (*Rzecz o wolności słowa* [On the Freedom of Speech]). The fight against Mickiewicz's messianism was both a fight against the sacrificial cult of the uprisings (*Zwolon*) and the deification of the nation. Admittedly:

*Naród że cierpi, więc nie jest idea,  
Lecz jest wcielenie-żywym, organicznym,  
Istotą rzeczy. – Czuć ją, poznać chcę ją...*  
(*Niewola III* [Enslavement III], DW IV, 59)

*The nation is suffering, so it is not an idea  
But it is in a non-living, organic body,  
The essence of things. – I want to feel it, meet it...*

But it must not be absolutized. Norwid ironized:

Oni kochają Polskę jak Pana Boga i dlatego zbawić jej nie mogą, bo cóż ty Panu Bogu pomożesz?  
(Letter to T. Lenartowicz, DW XI,42)

They love Poland like God and therefore cannot save it, because how can you help God?

The decisive clash between Norwid and Mickiewicz took place in Rome in 1848, when Norwid signed himself out of the Italian Legion. In literary terms, he strongly distanced himself from messianism in *Promethidion* (1851), in *Bogumił*, where he contrasted work, “*najwyższe z rzemiosł apostoła*” [the highest craftsmanship of an apostle] and “*najniższą modlitwę aniola*” [the lowest prayer of an angel], with the “*tatarski czyn*” [Tartar act] of conquests which build barren empires. The only creative thing is:

[...] *praca coraz miłością ulżona,*  
Aż się i trudów trud wreszcie wykona.  
(DW IV, 117)

[...] work *relieved more and more with love,*  
Until the toil of hardships is finally done.

Obviously, the “*trudów trud*” [toil of hardships] alluded to the life of the “*Forty-and-four Man*” from the vision of Fr. Piotr in *Dziady* [*Forefathers’ Eve*]. The emblem of communal work of people was intended to replace national messianism, hence the phrase, “*messianism of work,*” is used. It is supposed to have an expiatory and salvific function. The idea would later be developed by Józef Tischner in *Etyka Solidarności* and form the basis of the 10-million-people movement, which transformed the geopolitical landscape of Central and Eastern Europe, a bipolar world would disintegrate into “*civilisations*” after 1989<sup>19</sup>. Although manipulations around historical memory after 2010 currently divide Poland, the emblematic word “*solidarity*” retains its power and is constantly active all over the world and in various regimes.

#### THE CHURCH OF MAN

Theological developments inspired by Norwid seem to be extremely important; I mean the encyclicals of John Paul II: *Redemptor hominis* (1979), *Laborem exercens* (1981) and *Centessimus Annus* (1991), not to mention *The Letter to Artists* (1999), quoting Mickiewicz and Norwid directly.

The basic reference to the messianism of work is the famous metaphor about the necessity to change the world in spirit (because “*Ze zbudowania w duchu się buduje*” [It is built in *building in spirit*] (*Promethidion*, DW IV, 117)), to which

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<sup>19</sup> As in the well-known book by S.P. HUNTINGTON, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*.

Mickiewicz already called in *Oda do młodości* [*Ode to Youth*]: “wyjdzie z zamętu świat ducha” [the world of the spirit will come out of confusion] (WR I, 44), quoted by the Pope in his *Letter to Artists*. Norwid makes the image more precise:

– O! nie skończona jeszcze Dziejów praca,  
Nie-przepadłony jeszcze glob, Sumieniem!  
(*Socjalizm* [*Socialism*], PWSz II, 19)

– Oh, nay! History's work is still not done  
The worldnot-all-consumed by conscience yet!<sup>20</sup>

The concept of *conscience* includes both the pursuit of truth, consciousness, and ethical universalism (the French translation would be “conscience morale,” moral awareness).

This idea is at the centre of John Paul II's encyclical *Laborem exercens*, where through work, man not only produces objects, but also constructs his own personality. It is therefore about the process of hominization in the ethical dimension. The bloodless revolution of Solidarity was won by conscience and by mobilising the consciences of the working class who were supposed to legitimise totalitarian communism. Of course, political conditions were conducive, disavowing the dictatorship of the proletariat, i.e. the party, but indeed Norwid's metaphor acted like the eye of a historical storm. And due to the self-limitation and avoiding bloodshed, the “gentle eye of heaven blue” also appeared on the dome of the world. The fruit of the work of consciences would burn through the globe. It was a poetic oxymoron that combined the cyclone of history with the gaze of Heaven.

Metaphors related to “Church” and the sacraments testify to the transformation of the image of transcendence. The Church in a poem from 1851, the year of *Promethidion's* publication, contains universalist and somewhat anti-institutional phrases:

Gdybyście wiarę mieli, to już dawno  
Widzielibyście, że glob jest Kościołem,  
Który ma oną bazylikę sławną  
Piotrową – niby ołtarzem i stołem...  
Ale wam trzeba *Kościół w ołtarz* wcisnąć  
I zamknąć – i straż postawić przy grobie,  
Żeby za prędko nie mógł Bóg wybłysnąć...  
– Czekaścież... wstanie On – w cało-osobie.  
(“Fraszka(!) [III] (Petersbursko-Wiedeńskim Papistom przypisana”)

<sup>20</sup> English translation by T. Karpowicz, „Five Poems from *Vade-Mecum*,” *The Polish Review*, Vol. 28, No. 2, 1983, p. 78.

[Epigram (!) [III] (dedicated to Petersburg-Vienna Papists); PWsz I, 170)

If you had faith, then long ago  
You would have seen that the globe is the Church,  
Which has that famous basilica  
Of Peter – like an altar and a table...  
But you need *the Church* squeezed into *the altar*  
And closed – and guards placed at the grave,  
So that God does not rise too soon...  
– Just wait... rise He shall – in a whole-person.

The Church can turn into a meeting place, a parlour:

...Nim znów ucieknę, nic nie mając zgoła,  
W podartym płaszczu, o porze zawiei,  
Od zmienionego w salonik kościoła,  
Od zamienionej w karcznię epopei [...].  
                                (“[Nim znów ucieknę, nic nie mając zgoła]”  
                                “[Afore I run away again, having nothing at all]”, PWsz I,265)

... Afore I run away again, having nothing at all,  
In a torn cloak, at a blizzard hour,  
From a church turned into a parlour,  
From the epic turned into an inn [...].

Yet, baptism is a “Sakrament Kościoła” [sacrament of the Church] (“Człowiek” [Man], PWsz I, 270). Man themselves are a sacrament:

Nogi ci włosiem obetrze – kto? – strumień!  
Kto ci obetrze pot z bladego czoła?  
Jeśli nie *Prawda*, Weronika sumień,  
Stojąca z chustą swą w progach kościoła?!–  
Sakrament, poznasz, że jest jeden stały–  
I samą wzgardą pogardzisz na świecie,  
Piękny jak świeżo narodzone dziecko,  
Ten sam, co dawniej, niby Mojżesz mały,  
Nilowej lilii trzymający kwiecie.  
                                (“Człowiek” [Man], PWsz I, 274)

Your feet will be wiped with the hair – by whom? – a stream!  
Who will wipe the sweat from your pale forehead?  
If not the *Truth*, the Veronica of consciences,  
Standing with her scarf at the doorstep of the church?! –

The Sacrament, you will know that there is only one, constant –  
 And you will disregard all contempt in the world,  
 Beautiful as a new-born baby,  
 The same as before, like little Moses,  
 holding the flowers of the lily of the Nile.

The Church exceeds the material dimensions of a temple by far. It is an entire  
 “globe,” but also a community of culture:

Nie znałeś skąd jest sztandar zasiany piosenką,  
 Ni kościół skąd duchowy powstaje narodu!  
 (“Echa. Fantazja” [Echoes. Fantasy], PWsz III, 541)

You wouldn't know whence the banner was, sown with a song,  
 Or whence the spiritual church of a nation arises!

The Church is a transcendent concept:

nad Historią Kościół jest,  
 pod Historią plemiona, czyli rasy,  
 a narody tylko są w Historii  
 (“Odpowiedź krytykom ‘Listów o emigracji’”  
 [Reply to the Critics of ‘Letter on Emigration’], PWsz VII, 36)

over History, there is Church,  
 under History, [there are] tribes, or races,  
 and nations are only in History

What matters is man, not the institution, as in the famous “Fraszka (!) [II]”  
 “[Epigram (!) II]”:

Dewocja krzyczy: “Michelet wychodzi z Kościoła!”  
 Prawda; Dewocja tylko tego nie postrzegła,  
 Że za kościołem *człowiek* o ratunek woła,  
 Że kona – że ażeby krew go nie ubiegła,  
 To ornat drze się w pasy i związuje rany.

\*

A faryzeusz mimo idzie zadumany...  
 (PWsz I, 168)

[“Michelet is leaving the Church!” Bigotry shouts.

True; but Bigotry doesn't care that  
 Behind the church *aman* cries for help,  
 That he is dying – so to stop blood loss, into ties  
 A chasuble is torn, the wounds to dry.

\*

While lost in thought a Pharisee walks by...<sup>21</sup>

A response to the bigotry is the “Kościół Tryumfu wysoki” [High Triumphant Church] (“Cnót-oblicze” [Face-of-Virtues], PWsz II, 72).

It is opposed to the Death of Poetry – “w przestronnym milczenia kościele” [in the spacious church of silence] (“Na zgon Poezji. (Elegia)” [On the Death of Poetry. (Elegy)]; PWsz II, 201). Notably, Norwid devoted an important, well-known essay to silence. The series of metaphors is crowned with the concept of the “Prawda wiecznego Kościoła” [Truth of the eternal Church] (*Quidam*, IX, DW III, 158).

Its counterpart is the “Msza-Dziejów” [Mass-of-History] (PWsz II, 214), or the “Msza-wieczna” [Eternal-Mass] (PWsz IX, 60), or the Mass of Creation announced in the words of Hosea II, 18, a “covenant”: “ze zwierzem polnym i ptastwem powietrznym, I z płazem ziemskim, a łuk i miecz, i wojnę wygładzę z ziemi i dam im spać bezpiecznie” [with the beasts of the field and the birds of the air, and with the earthly amphibian, and I will wipe the bow and the sword, and war from the earth, and let them sleep safely] (*Ostatnia z bajek* [The Last of the Fables], DW VII, 248).

It is also worth emphasising that Norwid strikingly contrasted the Sacrament and the good: “Owo – nie już o Ludzkość, o ten Sakrament, ten akt w wieczności, ten sentyment, ale o rzeczywiste idzie dobro” [That–tis no longer about Humanity, about this Sacrament, this act in eternity, this sentiment, but about real good] (“Odpowiedź krytykom...” [Reply to the Critics...], PWsz VII, 33). It is not about „zbawienie Ludzkości przez *naród*” [salvation of Humanity by *nation*] (PWsz VII, 33, a critical allusion to Mickiewicz’s messianism), but about slow, progressive deification of the world:

[...] pomiędzy *wiecznym* a *czasowym* – jest jakoby pomiędzy dwoma stycznie ku piersiom Przedwiecznego zmierzającymi promieniami, i to, co *czasowe*, coraz więcej ku *wiecznemu* schylone, coraz więcej *wiecznym* zachwycone, aż przez coraz z-bożniejsze czasów sfery do *Zbożnego czasu* się włonimy [...] o czym pieśń nad kołyską narodu tego brzmi wyraźnie: “*ziści nam – spuści nam – Twego Syna Chrzcziciela Z-bożny czas*” (PWsz VII, 33).

[...] between the *eternal* and the *temporal* – it is as if [being] between two rays aiming towards the chest of the Pre-eternal One, and the *temporal*, tending more and more towards the *eternal*,

<sup>21</sup> English translation by D. Borchardt: NORWID, *Poems*, p. 89.



entranced more and more by the eternal, until through ever more divine times we enter *God's time* [...] what that song over the cradle of this nation clearly states: "*Bring us – Send us – Your Son the Baptist's Divine time.*"

All of those metaphors about the Church, the sacrament, and human work converge in the quote from the essay *Z pamiętnika* [*From the Diary*] from the year in which *Promethidion* was published, which is a report from an art exhibition in Paris in 1851 where Norwid states: "Sztuka jest kościołem pracy" [Art is the church of labour] (PWsz VI, 375), as was already announced by "Fortepian Szopena" [Chopin's Grand Piano] from 1865, where the sublimation of work acquires an Eucharistic dimension (see my essay "Parabole Eucharystyczne Norwida").

Hominization through work leads to human growth in spirit, and collective work acquires the dimension of horizontal, interpersonal transcendence. The view that "the globe is a church" creates the foundations of ethical universality and foreshadows the metaphor of the "Church of humanity" in Gombrowicz and Miłosz. The ridiculous nature of Gombrowicz's statement (Łukasz Tischner's thesis<sup>22</sup>) does not take away from the seriousness of Miłosz's considerations.<sup>23</sup> In any case, Norwid was the first to take that path thanks to his appreciation of work as a mediation.

The theistic nature of his faith is usually emphasised, as proven by many quotations from his writings. But the anthropocentric perspective also seemed close to him, and man, as a person who embodied Christian values like Christ on the cross, was the essence of the mechanism of "burning the globe through with conscience." The symbolism of the cross had unique emblematic value for him, but, as he emphasised, the cross is a combination of the vertical and the horizontal. That is also how he described the essence of the emergence of Christian art in the Epilogue of *Promethidion*:

Chryścianizm – przez przecięcie linii ziemskiej horyzontalnej i linii nadziemskiej *prostopadłej – z nieba padłej*, czyli przez znalezienie środka +, to jest przez tajemnicę krzyża (środek po polsku znaczy zarazem *sposób*) ("Epilog" [Epilogue] DW IV, 133).

Christianity – by the intersection of the horizontal *terrestrial* line and the heavenly line, *perpendicular–heaven-fallen*, that is, by finding the *centre of the +*, i.e. through the mystery of the cross (*centre* in Polish also means a *means*).

<sup>22</sup> Ł. TISCHNER, *Gombrowicza milczenie o Bogu*, Kraków 2013.

<sup>23</sup> Each appears to be dependent on "interpersonal space," or as Gombrowicz names it, "interpersonal church;" people already know that they "infect themselves mutually [with their gestures, looks, words]. The ritual constructs the sacral space." Cz. MIŁOSZ, *Widzenia nad Zatoką San Francisco*, Paris 1988, p. 169. Cf. Cz. MIŁOSZ, *Ziemia Ulro*, Paris 1980, p. 41.

That is, the means, centre, and manner determine the essence of life, identity, and purpose; it is the way of the cross, and the way of incarnation and resurrection through effort, by *re-starting* things left unfulfilled, by oneself, by the ancestors, and by culture. Norwid does not use the word “culture,” but quite in the same sense, “sztuka narodowa” [national art] (Sawicki), “duch narodowy” [national spirit] or “zmartwychwstanie narodu” [resurrection of the nation] (as opposed to its “znicestwienie” [annihilation]). A constantly relevant theological problem arises here, namely one of individual or community resurrection<sup>24</sup>. For one can and should re-start, “*Od-począć*” (“począć na nowo, począć w drugiej potędze” [to start a new, to start in a second power] *Promethidion*, Bogumił, DW IV, 115, footnote<sup>25</sup>) individually (“Bliscy” [Close Ones]), but also collectively. If the culture or the spirit of the nation disintegrates into individualistic persons, unity can only be found by referring to a higher value:

[...] każdy duch, nie szukając siebie, ale celu swego, to jest *Duchów-Ducha*, u zmartwychwstania się w ono drugie powietrze, w światłość prawdy... (*Zmartwychwstanie historyczne*), (*Historical Resurrection*), PWSz VI, 611)

Duchem-narodu [dzisiaj powiedzielibyśmy „kulturą”] jest *moralna-całość* narodu (PWSz VI, 613). [...] Naród [...] musi z ducha na nowo się odrodzić, musi zmartwychwstania pracę wszcząć. Żadna bowiem *moralna-całość* bez Ducha Świętego nie istnieje (PWSz VI, 613).

Oto dlatego, że śmierć narodu jest z zaparcia się ducha, czyli *całości-moralnej-narodu*, więc na pojedynczości, na osobne całości rozsypuje się całość narodowa, i tyle jest *ducha* ile duchów, tyle *Osoby narodu* [=kultury] ile osobistości narodowych, tyle historii narodu, ile biografii martyrologii narodowej [...]. Oto dlatego, że tylko przez całość wyższą od tej, której się zaparło, powrócić w prawdzie można do niej – to jest przez Ludzkość do Ojczyzny. (PWSz VI, 614-615)

[...] each spirit, not seeking itself, but its goal, that is, the *Spirit-of-Spirits*, is resurrected into the second air, into the light of truth ...

The spirit-of-nation [today we would say “culture”] is the *moral-entirety* of the nation. [...] The nation [...] must be reborn in the spirit, it must initiate the work of resurrection. For there is no *moral-entirety* without the Holy Spirit.

For the death of a nation comes from denial of the spirit, that is, of the *moral-entirety-of-nation*, so the national whole disintegrates into individualities, into separate entities, and there is as much *spirit* as there are spirits, as much *national Person* [= culture] as national personalities, as much history of the nation as there are biographies and national martyrdom [...]. It is because only through an entirety greater than the one that has been denied is it possible to return to it in truth – that is, through Humanity to the Homeland.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. B. WOŁOSZYN, *Norwid ocala. Heroizm, śmierć i zmartwychwstanie w twórczości post-romantyka*, Kraków 2008. Cf. also BENEDICT XVI, encyclical *Spe salvi*, 2007.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. also “Bliscy” [Close ones], PWSz II, 76: “w swój wtóry wnikiwszy *od-początek*” [entering your second *re-beginning*].

Hence, it follows that:

Znicestwić żadnego narodu nikt nie podoba bez współdziałania obywateli tegoż narodu, i to nie bez współdziałania przypadkowego, częściowego, nominalnego, ale bez współdziałania starannego. ([*Znicestwienie narodu*] [*Annihilation of the Nation*] of 1871, PWSz VII, 85).

No one can annihilate a nation without the cooperation of the citizens of that nation, and not just accidental, partial, nominal cooperation, but without diligent cooperation.

Since no nation exists alone:

[...] narody europejskie wyżej niż które inne osiąść powinny całe osobistości własne, albowiem osobistość na samotność wydalona nie jest jeszcze pełną, i dopiero przez obcowanie z osobistościami innymi wydojrzewa na właściwą istotność. Tak dalece, że jeżeli powiedziało się, iż *naród składa się nie tylko z tego co wyróżnia go od innych, lecz i z tego co go z innymi łączy*<sup>26</sup>, to powiedziało się zarazem, iż ta dołączalności siła nie jest żadnym ustępstwem, a tym mniej uszczerbkiem, ale owszem przymiotem zupełności charakteru i własnością dodatnią ([*Znicestwienie narodu*] [*Annihilation of the nation*], PWSz VII, 86).

[...] European nations should possess their own entire personalities more than some others, for a personality in solitude is not yet full, and only through communing with other personalities does it mature into its proper identity. So much so that if it is said that *a nation consists not only of what distinguishes it from other nations, but also of what binds it to other nations*, it is said in the same breath that that power of connectivity is not any concession, much less a detriment, but it is indeed an attribute of completeness of character and a positive feature.

(How relevant is that in the context of the current “cultural war” in Poland).

The key to Norwid's concepts and language is, as Zdzisław Łapiński rightly emphasises, a specific “reference group.” The expression “European nation” in the singular “tellingly emphasises the lack of independence of individual countries in our continent,” “[and] Christianity [is] the only socially tested universalism at the time—within ideology and institutions.” “About the first Norwid, we can say that he is a writer of the Polish intelligentsia.” Because “in mid-nineteenth century, the intelligentsia began to replace the nobility as a culture-forming class and as representatives of the collective consciousness of society.”<sup>27</sup> However, it was small.<sup>28</sup> “If we wish to define Norwid's “reference group” somewhat more precisely, it must be said that it is not the existing intelligentsia currently, but the one which, as the poet

<sup>26</sup> Cf. *Promethidion*, “Epilog” [Epilogue] XIII.

<sup>27</sup> Z. ŁAPIŃSKI, *Norwid*, Kraków 1971, pp. 155, 156.

<sup>28</sup> Z. ŁAPIŃSKI, *Norwid*, p. 160, quotes letters to A. Cieszkowski of December 1864; PWSz IX, 150, and to M. Sokołowski of 1865.

hoped, would arise in the future.”<sup>29</sup> Further, Łapiński states, “As he did not find available a language worthy of its time, which could be used to express new content, Norwid decided to bring such language to life. The poet intended to make his poetic endeavours on the material of an only just emerging variant of the Polish language – adapted to the needs of the intelligentsia.”<sup>30</sup> “Norwid [...] had to do a double job. He formulated a poetically understood thought and built its discursive background.”<sup>31</sup> In other words, he created a new, current language of intelligentsia and its problems.

Through the new language, he constructed a new horizon that became the vault or *copula* of the social consciousness. The metaphor of the copula has already appeared in *Promethidion*. To quote:

Te zaś dwie całości w dialogu onej myśli *ludowej* ze *społeczną* nieustannym przestają [...] Taka to jest architektura onej kupoli niewidzianej, w której siedzis skrzydlaty *duch* narodu i psalmów wstęgi prześpiewuje... (“Epilog” [Epilogue] *XIII*, DW IV, 137)

Those two entireties stay in constant dialogue between the *folk* thought and the *social* one [...] Such is the architecture of that unseen cupola, in which the winged *spirit* of the nation sits and sings ribbons of psalms...

The image of the copula rises vertically and extends horizontally, connecting both dimensions like a cross, but also encompassing space and creating a whole that is both relational and transcendent. It is worth recalling that a similar metaphor was used a dozen or so years later by Mickiewicz in his Paris lectures when discussing Krasiński’s *Legenda*, where the dome of St. Peter’s Basilica collapses to dust. However, in Mickiewicz’s commentary a troop of Polish pilgrims supports the dome with sabres:

It will not be saved by earthly weapons or the weapons of individuals, but by the spirits of nations. The spirits of nations will support this dome, in danger of collapsing. They will pierce a hole for heavenly light in it, so that it resembles that pantheon of which it is a recreation, so that it becomes once again the basilica of the whole world, pantheon, pan cosmos, pandemonium, a temple of all spirits, so that it gives us the key to all traditions and all philosophies. [...] For great nations and great people of Europe have not stopped working for the Church. (*Literatura słowiańska*, WR XI,44)

Returning to Norwid, the intelligentsia was probably intended to become the nation’s “cupola,” its consciousness, conscience, and keystone, both vertically and

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<sup>29</sup> Z. ŁAPIŃSKI, *Norwid*, p. 161.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, p. 163.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, p. 165.

horizontally. It became a parable of culture. That also explains Norwid's attachment to the parable as a literary trope linking the material and the spiritual.

*Promethidion* has already become such a parabolic work, a copula of culture, which, as Stefan Sawicki rightly states, "did become an ambitious program of creating a national culture, and even more: a prophetic message to the nation, showing it the way of liberation from both the handicaps of its own tradition and from outer captivity."<sup>32</sup>

In order for culture to become alive and authentic, it must be based on the incarnation of truth, which everyone reaches on their own, but also through collective effort. The key is the neologism "od-począć" [re-start], or "począć na nowo, począć w drugiej potęgze" [to start anew, to start in a second power], as has already been mentioned. It further refers to "incarnation" as "joining spirit and matter."<sup>33</sup> Beata Wołoszyn expands on the emblematic meaning of the cross, "Christian culture is contained in the mystery of the cross, but, what is worth emphasising, the cross is not understood as a sign of Christ's redemptive death, nor as a sign of suffering, but is a symbol of incarnation in the image of God-Man descending on earth." And further, "History is the story of the incarnation not only in the sense of salvation history work which eliminates the effects of original sin, but also in a deeply Christological sense – as a constant completion of the incarnation of Christ."<sup>34</sup> And "conscience is truth incarnate in the soul of an individual person," but also, "the word must gain public existence, it must convince the public to incarnate,"<sup>35</sup> "Norwid emphasised the social dimension of salvation so strongly that he tried to situate the salvation of an individual in the perspective of community salvation, that is, the history of salvation."<sup>36</sup> In *Niewola* [*Enslavement*] he wrote, "*W sobie i w dziejach ja ukrzyżowanym!*" [*In myself and in history I am crucified!*] (DW IV, 57). Because "man, realising himself, realises history."<sup>37</sup>

"For in order to identify the concept of art and work, and then extend them semantically towards the modern concept of culture, the poet uses a simple exemplification of various types of creative activity of man, and then amplifies the examples (*Promethidion*)," Wołoszyn develops the thought.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>32</sup> S. SAWICKI, Introduction to Cyprian Norwid, *Promethidion*, Kraków 1997, p. 32.

<sup>33</sup> B. WOŁOSZYN, "Wcielenie' w trudnym świecie pojęć Norwida," in: *Trudny Norwid*, ed. Piotr Chlebowski, Lublin 2013, p. 120.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 124-125.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 129.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 131.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 132.

NATION, EMPIRE, CIVILISATION

The opposite of a nation with its culture is “empire,” the source of slavery. It captivated Central and Eastern Europe in particular:

Lecz tobie w Rosji, bracie Słowianinie,  
*Cezarską-formę* przynieśli z zachodu  
I na rodzimej postawiono gminie,  
Także Cesarstwo masz, nie masz *Narodu!*

A tobie, Czechu, i bracie Rusinie,  
Cezarską formę przynieśli z południa,  
Co Czeskich, Ruskich, gdy napotka w gminie,  
Bierze – i sobie na *Carskich* przeludnia –

A ciebie, ciebie, Polsko! – formy trzema  
Przykryto, Bogu kłamiąc jako Kain,  
Iż życia więcej pod formami nie ma –  
Że się zapadły i obszary krain – –

Ale Bóg spyta – On – co Sam jest *celem*  
I życiem: “Kto tu pustych form czcicielem?  
(*Niewola [Enslavement]* I, DW IV, 50)

But to you in Russia, brother Slav,  
They brought the *Empire-form* from the west  
And set in the home county,  
So that there is an Empire, but no *Nation!*

And to you, Czech, and brother Ruthenian,  
They brought the Empire’s form from the south,  
Which takes the Czechs, the Ruthenians whom it finds in the land  
– and changes them into *Emperor’s* people–

And you, you, Poland! – with three forms  
They covered you, lying to God like Cain,  
That there was no more life under the forms –  
That even areas of regions had collapsed –

But God will ask – He – who is Himself the *goal*  
And *life*: “Who is here the worshiper of empty forms?”

Resurrection consists in overcoming the form:

Bo wolność?...*jest to celem przetrwanie*  
*Doczesnej formy.* Oto wyzwolenie!...  
 [...]
   
 Wiem – że i naród formy miewa różne,  
 Jak człowiek szaty świetne i podróżne,  
 Lecz wiem, że formę gdy zdejmiesz z narodu,  
 To jeszcze będzie walczył wieki całe  
 O te, co w życiu ma, formy dostałe –  
 A wiem, że cesarz gdy bezdzietnie skona,  
 Cała historia cesarstwa skończona!  
 Że – i Minister czasem lub wikary  
 Cesarstwo z sobą wywleka na mary...  
 (*Niewola [Enslavement] I, DW IV, 51*)

And freedom?... *has the purpose to eat through*  
*The mundane form.* That is liberation!...  
 [...]
   
 I know – that the nation may have different forms,  
 Like a person has smart and casual clothes,  
 But I know that when you take the form off the nation,  
 It will still fight for ages  
 For those mature forms it has in life –  
 And I know that when the emperor dies childless,  
 The entire history of the empire ends!  
 That – sometimes the Minister or the vicar  
 Drags an empire away with him to the coffin...

The nation with its culture, i.e. identity, will survive empires because there is only one “Empire-of-empires,” Christ, because “*wolność tam jest gdzie Duch Pański czuwa*” [freedom is where the Spirit of the Lord keeps vigilance] (*Niewola [Enslavement]*, DW IV, 54).

Hence, the aforementioned famous metaphor from *Promethidion* contrasting conquest and work:

Nie on tatarski czyn, krwawa drabina  
 Na rusztowanie czerwone łunami  
 W cesarstwie tego tu świata Kaina,  
 Lecz *konań* wielki psalm z *wykonaniami!*  
 Lecz praca *coraz miłością ulżona,*  
 Aż się i trudów trud wreszcie wykona.  
 (DW IV, 117)

[Not a Tatar *act*, a bloody ladder  
On a scaffolding red with fire's glow  
In the empire of this Cain's world,  
But a great psalm of *dying* with *completion*!  
But work *relieved more and more with love*,  
Until the toil of hardships is finally done.]

The “Apostolskie cesarstwo” [Apostolic empire] ([*O polskiej władzy prawowitej*] [*On Polish Legitimate Authority*], PWSz VII, 168) also appears in Norwid's work as a reference to the Christian “Empire-of-empires.”

For, while nations were born of empires, it is cultures that give them identity and form their consciences through the search of truth. The issue of civilisation-empires appears later in Norwid's work in the sense of the dialectics of historical development, where *civilisations* are opposed to each other: the Egyptian under the sign of the mummy, the creative though the militant Roman, or the “iron-turned” Spartan, and the Athenian bringing humanism (*Kleopatra i Cezar* [*Cleopatra and Caesar*], *Tyrtej* [*Tyrtaeus*]).

The dialectics of civilisations is clearly and cruelly outlined in the poems “Pieśń od ziemi naszej” [Song of Our Land], “Dookoła ziemi naszej” [Around Our Land], and “Memento,” where Poland finds itself “*między Azji tchnieniem a Zachodem*” [between Asia's breath and the West] (PWSz I, 386). However, it ought to be clarified how the term “civilisation” relates to “empire” and “nation,” is not always clear. The Online Dictionary of Cyprian Norwid's language (*Internetowy Słownik języka Cypriana Norwida*, edited by Jadwiga Puzynina and Tomasz Korpysz) defines “civilisation” as “a state, a phase of spiritual and material development of a community or the whole of humanity, ‘also metaphorically’.” Thus, such terms appear as “Christian civilisation,” “European,” “Polish,” “Chinese” civilisation, with ironic, technical or philosophical shades such as:

Cywilizacja europejska jest bękartem... [...] Dlatego że wszystkie *inteligencje praktyczne* są niechrześcijańskie – a wszystkie *chrześcijańskie* są niepraktyczne!...  
(*Za kulisami. Fantazja* [*Backstage. Fantasy*], DW VI, 88 (Omegitt's statement in a conversation with the Violets)

European civilisation is a bastard... [...] Because all *practical intelligences* are non-Christian – and all *Christian* ones are impractical! ...

There appear also concepts which may be called archaeological:

Cywilizacja składa się z nabytków wiedzy *izraelskiej – greckiej – rzymskiej*, a łono jej – chrześcijańskie – czy myślisz, że w świadomej sobie rzeczywistości już tryumfalnie rozbrnęło?



(*Quidam. Przypowieść: Do Z. K. Wyjątek z listu [Quidam. Parable: To Z. K. Excerpt from a Letter]* DW III, 120)

Civilisation is composed of the acquired *Israeli – Greek – Roman* knowledge, and its bosom is Christian – do you think [the bosom] has already come to shine in triumph in a reality which is aware of itself?

It is important and interesting to juxtapose the concept of “nation,” i.e. culture, with “civilisation.” Because:

*słowo narodu* widzieliśmy [m.in.] – w *calo-słowie-narodu*, tj. w STYLU, który jest: 1. *pokojem* wszech elementów narodowych, 2. pokojem między narodem a cywilizacją, tj. SŁOWEM-EPOKI... (*Słowo i litera [Word and Letter]*, PWSz VI, 320)

we have seen the *word of nation* [e.g.] – in the *whole-word-of-nation*, i.e. in the STYLE, which is: 1. *peace* of all national elements, 2. peace between nation and civilisation, i.e. the WORD-OF-THE-AGE...

But “civilisation” is also technique – Norwid quotes Krasieński’s *Legenda* here:

“Wielki to i posępny okręt, bez płócien i masztów, a wszystkie fale kołami rozbija na pianę – i z pośrodku jego bucha słup dymu, który lecina zad w nieskończoność.” (Okręt ten jest to arkan cywilizacji całej, w której żyjemy: wozy i okręty parowe, mechanicznie wiążące i popędzające ludy). (*O Juliuszu Słowackim [On Juliusz Słowacki]*, PWSz VI, 440)

“Tis a great and gloomy ship, no canvases or masts, and it breaks all waves with the wheels to foam – and from its centrebursts a pillar of smoke, which flies back endlessly.” (The ship is the lariat of the entire civilisation in which we live: carts and steamships, mechanically binding and urging peoples).

But the clash between Asian and Christian civilisation is more important, because it is global and anthropocentric – recalled with the example of Słowacki’s *Król-Duch* [the *Spirit King*]:

Poeta określa spotkanie z Azji przeprowadzonego „Ja” w Iwanie Groźnym z wszechmocnym cywilizacji chrześcijańskiej „nie-Ja.” [...] [Bowiem] „Co znaczy ten Bóg błady? – oto *Bóg-Syn*, *Bóg-umęczony* – Bóg-człowiek w chwili śmierci i zwycięstwa swego na ziemi! (*O Juliuszu Słowackim [On Juliusz Słowacki]*, PWSz VI, 454)

The poet describes the meeting of Asia-born “I” in Ivan the Terrible with the all-powerful Christian civilisation’s “not-I.” ... [Because] “What does that pale God mean? – that is *God-Son*, *God-martyred* – God-man at the time of his death and victory on earth!

A specific summary of those considerations is Norwid's statement in a letter to Władysław Czartoryski:

“...w warunkach Cywilizacji Chrześcijańskiej [...] słowo chrześcijańskie mniej ma *osobistości* (lubo więcej mocy i twórczego żywiołu) [...]. *Słowo* w warunkach cywilizacji jest raczej *dramatyczne* niż *osobiste*.

(Letter to Władysław Czartoryski of June 1866; PWsz IX, 227)

... in the conditions of the Christian Civilisation [...] the Christian word has less *personality* (but more power and creative element) [...]. The *word* in the conditions of civilisation is *dramatic* rather than *personal*.

That introduces us to the drama of the dialectics of civilisation, or the “clash of civilisations,” to refer to contemporary theories. The outstanding historian Fernand Braudel, the co-founder of the *Annales* school and the concept of *longue durée* and, to a certain extent, “history of mentality,” defined civilisation as a space with a specific climate, shape, vegetation, animal world, and specific achievements. Most of all, however, civilisation has a culture with some dominant features. The boundaries are never strict and impassable. Society is never separate from civilisation. The presence of cities is important. Civilisations are characterised by a collective mentality (psyche, intellectual equipment). The strongest feature of civilisation is religion, both in the past and present. Finally, civilisations are characterised by continuity, despite successive eras. Transformations, events, and heroes occupy a separate place in the history of civilisation. Civilisations also have specific structures which characterise *longue durée*. The rapprochement or mutual rejection of civilisations, mostly unconscious, causes their slow transformation. Clashes of civilisations are mostly violent and tragic, but in *longue durée*, ineffective. Ultimately, the researcher states civilisation is neither an economy nor a given society, but something that continues through a series of economic and social structures changing slowly and with great difficulty.<sup>39</sup>

The concept of civilisation was raised in modern times by Samuel H. Huntington in the *Clash of Civilisations*, describing the world after the fall of communism and the bipolar division of the spheres of influence. He distinguishes seven (or eight) civilisations that will have conflicts on their borders<sup>40</sup> at present, which to a large extent proved to be right despite the controversy related to the theory itself, which is probably too essentialist.

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<sup>39</sup> F. BRAUDEL, *Grammaire des civilisations*, Paris 1987, pp. 49-83.

<sup>40</sup> Similar to the one between Islam and the West, or India, or the recent tensions with China. The mentioned civilisations are: Western, Byzantine (Orthodox), Islamic, Hindu, Chinese, Buddhist, Japanese and Latin American; the African one is undergoing recomposition.

The reference to contemporary notions, separating Norwid's "empires" from "national cultures" and from the Christian "Empire-of-empires" allows one to approach his metaphorical divisions seriously from several of the aforementioned poems written during the January Uprising.

The strongest is "Pieśń od ziemi naszej" [Song of Our Land], where the East ("mądrość-kłamstwa i ciemnota, / Karności harap lub samotrzask z złota, / Trąd, jad i brud" [wisdom-of-lies and ignorance, / Crop of discipline or a snare of gold, / Leprosy, venom and dirt] (PWsz I, 123)) is contrasted with the West ("kłamstwo-wiedzy i błyskotność, / Formalizm prawdy – wewnętrzna bez-istotność, / A pycha pych!" [lie-of-knowledge and brilliance, / Formalism of truth – inner ir-relevance, / And pride of prides!] (PWsz I, 123)). He also mentions the north ("– Zachód ze Wschodem w zespoleniu" [– West and East united]) and the south ("– nadzieja w zwątpieniu" [– hope in doubt]). However, the most important thing is undoubtedly the juxtaposition of the West with the East, i.e. Russia, and of Western civilisation with the Byzantine one:

Gdy *ducha* z mózgu nie wywikłasz tkanin,  
Wtedy cię czekam – ja głupi Słowianin–  
Zachodzie – ty!...

A tobie Wschodzie, znaczę *dzień-widzenia*,  
Gdy już jednego nie będzie sumienia  
W ogromni twej.

(PWsz I, 124)

When you cannot extract the *spirit* from the brain's fabrics,  
I will wait for you – I, the stupid Slav –  
For you–West! ...

And to you East, I mark the *day-of-seeing*,  
When there is not a single conscience  
In your vastness.

Thus, the poet puts the Slav in opposition to both the East and the West; an East too deeply rooted in the ground and at the same time spiritual, and a West staring too hard at the sky while buried in the ground, as in the poem "Sen" [Dream].

In the next poem of this cycle, "Dookoła ziemi naszej" [Around Our Land], the concept of an empire returns in opposition to Central and Eastern Europe:

I wypełnionym będzie ogrom *grzechu*  
*Staro-rzymskiego*... Rusie! – Czechu! – Lechu!

(PWsz I, 125)

And fulfilled will be the greatness of *sin*  
*The old-Roman one...* Rus! – Czech! – Lech!

Then follows the announcement of the rebirth of those cultures in the Christian spirit:

I znajdziesz żywot w śmierci, a potęgę  
W słabości, w słowie latającym księgę,  
W ciemności jasność, a w jasności cienie!  
To wiedz – i z plewy szczerze czyść nasienie.  
(PWsz I, 126)

And you shall find life in death, and power  
In weakness, a book in the flying word,  
Light in the dark, and shadows in the light!  
Know this – and cleanse the good seed of the chaff.

That tightly intertwined fabric of works overcoming the experience of life and effort through the work of “weeding” the seed, in a way, also refers to the old hymn of *Bogurodzica* [*The Mother of God*].

However, above all, it emphasises the *processual* and not *essentialist* character of national cultures, as well as civilisations. Despite the organic unity of the “suffering nation”, it also opens the prospect of becoming, resurrecting, and re-starting both individual and collective life.

#### THE GESTUAL MATTER OF THE POEMS

It should be remembered that the contents of Norwid’s poems and poetic metaphors are primarily gestures and behaviours, the fundamental matter of culture. It is obvious in Norwid’s dramas, as emphasised by Irena Sławińska. This is particularly evident in the well-known book *Sceniczny gest poety* with the famous study “‘Ciąg scenicznych gestów’ w teatrze Norwida,”<sup>41</sup> but also in her other books about the poet, especially in *Reżyserska ręka Norwida*.<sup>42</sup> In the latter book, she even applied the key of gestures and behaviours to the interpretation of epic prose, his short stories. Also, numerous poems contain elements of dialogue, micro-drama, and dramatic situations. Because “any contemplation does not take place in solitude, it requires a partner,” says Michał Głowiński in his famous essay “Norwidowska

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<sup>41</sup> Kraków 1960.

<sup>42</sup> Kraków 1971.

druga osoba.”<sup>43</sup> The poet “immediately makes the recipient a co-partner in the meditation, and thus – in a sense – a participant in the drama.”<sup>44</sup> “It could be said that Norwid’s poetry is always polyphonic [in Bakhtin’s understanding], a poetry of many reasons and many attitudes, entering into various relationships with each other. A poetry of incessant discussion.”<sup>45</sup>

Głowiński’s statements became the starting point for an important book by Józef Fert, *Norwid poeta dialogu*.<sup>46</sup> Apart from the widely known fact that most of Norwid’s plots are located in a salon or parlour, the researcher indicates that such phrases as “chór spojrzeń” [a chorus of glances] (p. 27), prayer as a conversation with God (p. 84), silence (p. 81: “zmówiłem na nim pacierz – potężnym milczeniem” [I prayed on it – with mighty silence]), listening (p. 87), gestures and postures (p. 85), dialogue as communion (p. 93), the importance of “presence” (p. 114); and finally, typology of personal relations (p. 147).

Yet, the problem of Norwid’s dialogicality, or dominant monologue, divides researchers. On one hand, Mieczysław Jastrun states, “That poetry of inner truth, poetry of [...] the ‘eternal man,’ had to monologue [because] who ever says difficult things or such as are impossible to express in a full voice, is left with monologue, even if they divide it into voices.”<sup>47</sup> Such an approach does not contradict the search for dialogue, but to some extent subordinates it to the metaphor of the “inner tone.”<sup>48</sup> Similarly, Sławomir Świontek believes that in Norwid’s dramas there is the superior inner voice of the poet and the uniting gaze of the Viewer and the Causer.<sup>49</sup> Stefan Sawicki also states that “Norwid is not a poet of dialogue. He needs the lyrical ‘you’ not so much to have an equal partner in the conversation, but to convince someone, to oppose someone, to ‘bounce off’ someone’s attitude and views and to formulate or suggest own position through that negative situation.”<sup>50</sup>

<sup>43</sup> M. GŁOWIŃSKI, *Intertekstualność, groteska, parabola. Szkice ogólne i interpretacje*, Kraków 2000, p. 342.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, p. 345.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, p. 346.

<sup>46</sup> Wrocław 1982.

<sup>47</sup> M. JASTRUN, *Gwiazdzisty diament*, Warszawa 1971, pp. 63-64.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, p. 60.

<sup>49</sup> S. ŚWIONTEK, *Norwidowski teatr świata*, Łódź 1983, p. 182: “It is an order established by the hidden Viewer of that theatre, but at the same time its Causer.” The text was translated into English and published in the first volume of *On Cyprian Norwid. Studies and Essays* as “Norwid’s Theatre of the World,” Berlin 2019, p. 217-239.

<sup>50</sup> S. SAWICKI, *Wartość – sacrum – Norwid. Studia i szkice aksjologiczno-literackie*, Lublin 1994, p. 196.

On the other hand, with Norwid the desire to talk or to contact another is, even when unsatisfied, almost obsessive! The question is whether that difficulty of dialogue and the desire to meet are related to the attitude of the monologist as the one who teaches; the attitude of the Master-teacher, reviving in a meeting with the students. A meeting is bound with a living word. In the introduction to *Rzecz o wolności słowa* [*On the Freedom of Speech*], Norwid wrote: “*Głos żywy ma do siebie, że: nikt nigdy dwa razy nie wypowiedział tychże samych rzeczy tym że samym wydzwiękiem i gestem. Słowo więc raz rzeczzone ma niepowrotność swą*” [A living voice has the feature that: no one has ever said the same things twice with the same tone and gesture. Thus a word once spoken has an irreversibility to it] (DW IV, 215). An important ideal of Norwid was Socrates teaching by word and deed and witnessing the truth with his life.

Characteristically, the category of teacher-Master plays an important role in Lévinas’ philosophy, which may help add understanding to the implications of such an attitude. He notes:

Ideas instruct me coming from the master who *presents* them to me [...]. The master, the coinciding of the teaching and the teacher, is not in turn a fact among others. The present of the manifestation of the master who teaches overcomes the anarchy of facts<sup>51</sup>.

Because he implements the ideas he proclaims, Norwid would have added. Lévinas continues, “truth is made possible by relation with the Other our master.”<sup>52</sup> Which is somewhat analogous to the words of Norwid from *Promethidion*:

[...] Prawdy powietrze  
Póki jest czyste, wszystko się rozwija –  
Weselsze kwiaty, liście w sobie letsze,  
Jaśniejszy lilii dzban, smuklejsza szyja,  
Wolniejszy człeka ruch i myśli człeka...  
(*Wiesław* dialogue, DW IV, 127-128)

[...] Truth’s air  
As long as tis clean, everything unfolds –  
Flowers are happier, the leaves lighter of weight,  
Lily’s chalice brighter, its neck slimmer,  
Human movement freer, as well as human thoughts...

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<sup>51</sup> E. LÉVINAS, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, transl. A. Lingis, Dordrecht-Boston-London 1991, pp. 69-70.

<sup>52</sup> E. Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 72.

In a sense, Norwid is such a Master and teacher who incarnates the Other as well as Wisdom, and incarnates it with both his own Voice and with writing. An interesting complement to this discussion is the article by Paulina Abriszewska on "Norwid's longing for orality."<sup>53</sup> It nuances Zofia Mitosek's thesis about the dominantly written nature of Norwid's poetry,<sup>54</sup> emphasising the ambivalence of the poet, torn between his attachment to the living word and writing which preserves memory, but definitely hostile to the "civilisation of print."

"[O]ral culture is built on the master-apprentice relationship. The teacher confirms the truth with their person, while writing reduces the role of authority nearly to zero."<sup>55</sup> Further, Norwid's opposition to "the philosophy of (heroic) *wisdom* to the philosophy of (systemic) *knowledge*" is symbolically represented by Aeschylus and Aristotle.<sup>56</sup> The Socratic tradition taught to "practice the truth" as opposed to the abstract, tautological nature of the system.<sup>57</sup> Even if there is no simple return to oral culture, "printed books are associated with apparent, systematic knowledge, and true wisdom is related to the working dimension of the great words that sound in human history."<sup>58</sup> According to Abriszewska, the procedure of Norwid's specific graphic decisions is a certain score, "an instruction for oral performance" and "an equivalent of the author's gesture."<sup>59</sup> Such an understanding of Norwid's versification could be reinforced by a quote from the essay *O deklamacji* [*On Declamation*], where Norwid postulates that the point is "ażeby słowa pisarza tak wygłosić, jak duch pisarza onego poczynał je..." [to deliver the writer's words such as they were conceived by the spirit of that writer...] (*O deklamacji*, PWsz VI, 483). That is from where Osterwa's Reduta school of declamation rose later, and then the Teatr Rapsodyczny (Rhapsodic Theatre).

<sup>53</sup> P. ABRISZEWSKA, "XIX-wieczna tęsknota za oralnością. Przypadek Norwida," *Studia Norwidiana*, Vol. 32, 2014, pp. 25-40.

<sup>54</sup> Z. MITOSEK, "Przerwana pieśń. O funkcji podkreśleń w poezji Norwida," *Pamiętnik Literacki*, No. 3 (1986).

<sup>55</sup> P. ABRISZEWSKA, "XIX-wieczna tęsknota za oralnością," p. 31.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*, p. 32. The researcher refers to the lecture *O Juliuszu Słowackim* [*On Juliusz Słowacki*], and to Plato, and then to *Milczenie* [*Silence*] (PWsz VI, 247).

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, p. 32.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, p. 35. The researcher refers to quotes from "Wielkie słowa" [Big Words].

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 37, 38.

Agnieszka Ziółowicz<sup>60</sup> develops an analogous, broadly developed critique of the thesis that makes Norwid into a poet of writing, referring to Jack Goody's term of "lecto-orality,"<sup>61</sup> "a writer uses living speech as a man of the era of writing and printing."<sup>62</sup> It is not so much a compromise, but rather an attempt to synthesise the value of both phenomena, writing and orality. Ziółowicz states, "a lecturer [...] preaching the truth, gives it a corporeal form – their voice, gestures and behaviour testify to it, co-creating the lecture as a *quasi*-performance."<sup>63</sup> And she completes the idea in a footnote with a quote from Norwid's *Nota (Suplement)* [Note (Supplement)]: "Ton, gest (*gesta* znaczy przecież historie ludu), apolog mimiką i tonem rzeczony był główną posadą tego periodu języków, czyli spólnego języka" [Tone, gesture (*gesta* means stories of the people, after all), apologue expressed in mimicry and tone were the main foundation of that period of languages, that is the common language] (PWsz VII, 450). The "principle of the identity of word and life, word and truth, word and deed" applies.<sup>64</sup> Such is the principle of Wisdom, both preached and embodied by the Master.

Stefan Sawicki also drew attention to the kinship of Norwid's poetry with the biblical Books of Wisdom: "poetry was for him [...] the accumulation of wisdom, a human book of life."<sup>65</sup>

It is the tone of the wisdom which gives the poems of *Vade-mecum* the nature of commandments-signposts mentioned by Feliksiak, and the presence of the topic of "błoga, poufna i częsta" [blissful, confidential and frequent] conversation in the Dedication is a testimony to the embodiment of the ideal. In the poems the Poet appears as a Master-teacher, even if the conversation is egalitarian by nature and the contact with the poems is graphic (visual). The relationship between the student and the teacher is of a kind of responsible love, similar to Hebrew *chesed*, often translated as kindness.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> A. ZIOŁOWICZ, "Cypriana Norwida sztuka żywego słowa," *Ruch Literacki*, Vol. 58, No. 4, 2014, pp. 359-376.

<sup>61</sup> J. GOODY, *Myth, Ritual and the Oral*, Cambridge 2010).

<sup>62</sup> A. ZIOŁOWICZ, "Cypriana Norwida sztuka żywego słowa," p. 360.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid*, p. 366.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, p. 365.

<sup>65</sup> S. SAWICKI, *Wartość – sacrum – Norwid*, p. 207.

<sup>66</sup> See J. POGONOWSKI, *Ekwiwalencja w tradycji tłumaczeń Biblii na język polski a przesunięcia pola semantycznego – analiza hebrajskiego pojęcia chesed (חסד)*, [https://www.academia.edu/41473184/Ekwiwalencja\\_w\\_tradycji\\_tlumaczen\\_Biblii\\_na\\_jezyk\\_polski\\_a\\_przesunięcia\\_pola\\_semantycznego\\_analiza\\_hebrajskiego\\_pojęcia\\_chesed](https://www.academia.edu/41473184/Ekwiwalencja_w_tradycji_tlumaczen_Biblii_na_jezyk_polski_a_przesunięcia_pola_semantycznego_analiza_hebrajskiego_pojęcia_chesed).



Therefore, his poems are conversations or extensions of conversations, letters, exchanges of views, and they are dialogical, as Józef Fert indicated, but with a specific nature of the Master-teacher dialoguing with the audience (students?). Paradoxically, Norwid's poetry has, at the same time, the tone of a monologue which gives a personal unity to the poems, but also a dialogue, because it enters the network of exchange and clashes between people's opinions, accumulating the distance of wisdom and opening the gates of choice.

### ETHICAL UNIVERSALISM

Norwid's thought is anthropocentric. It is evidenced by the metaphor that "piękno jest formą miłości" [beauty is a form of love] or "profil Boży" [God's profile]. It is the same with truth, i.e. with goodness. The three Platonic ideas are places of God's presence in the world. That is, God is incarnate in the world through art, in goodness, and in truth, which man is to seek and embody. Norwid's concepts about work were taken up by John Paul II in the book *Osoba i czyn*, but above all in the encyclical *Laborem exercens* where he indicated that through work, man not only produces things, but even more importantly constructs themselves, which is a profound anthropological truth of both the entire process of hominization and the individual course of personalisation. It can be assumed that John Paul II took the thought from Norwid, whom he read, experienced, and internalised very deeply.

Another metaphor of strategic importance is the statement that each person is a priest, although "bezwiedny / I niedojrzały" [ignorant / and immature] ("Sfinks [II]" [The Sphinx [II]], PWSz II, 33). It is revolutionary, pioneering, and foreshadows the spirit of the Second Vatican Council. Believing that man is a priest overthrows the division of the sacred and the profane which is still glorified, e.g. in the theological discourse in Poland, and is contrary to the Gospel, in which we read that the veil in the temple separating the Most Holy Place was torn at the moment of Christ's death on the cross (Mt 27:51; cf. Heb 9:3, 12), which abolished the division (actually pagan in nature) into the sacred, often associated with the sacred power (and then separate from sanctity), and the profane, which should be available to all called to spiritual maturation. In Norwid's works, the overthrow of this division is already implicitly introduced by the metaphor of the man-priest.

The next strategic symbolic images are the cross and the gate. The cross, which should be carried by oneself, means Christian Prometheism, which Norwid took over from Mickiewicz. In Mickiewicz's work, the nation carried the cross, but here everyone must bear the cross individually, that is, everyone must become Christ, although "to a different degree." That is in line with the esoteric thought of the

eighteenth century (Louis Claude de Saint Martin), but also with the encyclical *Laborem exercens*, which shows man as God's partner in redeeming the world. (LE § 27). The national messianism of Mickiewicz was taken over by Norwid and reinterpreted in the spirit of the universalist messianism of the community, where collective work is the "gate" and the messianic way of man on earth. Building humanity is the same as rising from the dead through work. The heroism of charismatic individuals is replaced by the collective heroism of humanity which is constructed through work. The statement is both very radical, theologically valid, and, at the same time, convergent with the theories of hominization in contemporary anthropology.

Those features of Norwid's modern understanding of faith justify the statement of Father Jacek Salij, a well-known theologian, that Norwid is the most outstanding Polish theologian.<sup>67</sup>

Through his ethical universalism, Norwid also brings answers to the contemporary crisis of the concept of the universalism of rationality as constituted in the Enlightenment. In her latest book, *The Waning of Universalism*,<sup>68</sup> Chantal Delsol brings out the aporias of the postmodern understanding of universalism, reduced in the West to the individualism of human rights, and echoes Herder's criticism as the individual exists only in relation. Contemporary critics of Western civilization contrasts Western, liberal, and global individualism with the principle of *rooting* individual cultures. Humanism became humanitarianism, "On peut décrire l'humanitarisme comme un héritier déçu de l'humanisme judéo-chrétien, qui a remplacé la sacralité de l'homme par la sacralité du monde [...] qui a remplacé l'humanisme *stricto sensu* par la philanthropie; qui a remplacé la personne par l'individu."<sup>69</sup> Further, "La sacralisation de la liberté individuelle mène à la déresponsabilisation à tous les niveaux."<sup>70</sup> Hence, the importance of *bonds* for creating humanity<sup>71</sup>. Extreme emancipation from relations as imprisonment ("hell is other people" – Satre) corresponds with the dignity of personal responsibility. "Je m'autolimite parce que je suis conscient de mes responsabilités."<sup>72</sup> Rationalism is afraid of the transcendence of vertical religion and thus relates to materialism. Romantic thought, and, to a large extent, Norwid developed the perspective of

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<sup>67</sup> Cf. S. SAWICKI, *Wartość – sacrum – Norwid 3*, Lublin 2017, p. 187.

<sup>68</sup> Ch. DELSOL, *Le crépuscule de l'universel*, Paris 2020.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75.

<sup>71</sup> As Delsol points out, the opposition between bond and individualism stems from the opposite of Vico and Descartes's theories.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 361.

*horizontal transcendence*.<sup>73</sup> Interpersonal relations of solidarity and responsibility are forms of transcendence related to human action. It was especially developed by Emmanuel Lévinas. Interpersonal relations are not reduced to simple subjectivity, as they are in rationalism, but are transcendent to the individual they embrace and transcend.

Norwid's metaphor of man, a priest of another, their neighbour, and the mechanism of self-creation through collective work, create the humanity of man. Later in the background there also appear the metaphors of Gombrowicz, later taken by Miłosz, of "the church of the man." Norwid also harmonises with the philosophy of dialogue developed by Józef Tischner.

Emancipation of an individual should not lead to the resignation of belonging, which is common to the modernism of Norwid, of Central Europe (Kundera, Patočka), and even Asian thought.

"Seule la responsabilité individuelle (à condition qu'elle soit valorisée et non constamment ridiculisée), peut sauver une société de rôles (c'est-à-dire de liens réels et durables) tout en garantissant l'émancipation," concludes Delsol. "Une Europe fondée sur le personnalisme, au lieu de l'être sur l'individualisme, aurait échappé à cette mauvaise passe."<sup>74</sup>

What survived Norwid was his "winged words," such as the poem below about prayer, which is worth recalling because cultures are an expression of a collective desire, and "the desire is thy prayers," as St. Augustine claimed:

Modlitwy idą i wracają – nie ma niewysłuchanej.  
(“Monolog” [Monologue], PWSz I, 79)

Prayers go and return – there is no unanswered one.

Cultures, as an expression of collective desire, shape responsibility and a sense of belonging. They are a response to the crisis of narcissistic individualism of our era. Norwid can still help us.

*Transl. Agnieszka Gernand*

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<sup>73</sup> Delsol refers here to my entry in *La vie de l'esprit en Europe centrale et orientale depuis 1945 – Dictionnaire encyclopédique*, Paris 2021. Cf. also my "Wprowadzenie. Transcendencja pozioma," in: M. MASŁOWSKI, *Etyka i metafizyka*, Warszawa 2011.

<sup>74</sup> Ch. DELSOL, *Le crépuscule de l'universel*, pp. 369-370.

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## MIEJSCE NORWIDA W KULTURZE

### S t r e s z c z e n i e

Norwida, nawet w obecnej fazie „postnowoczesności”, nie sposób sprowadzić do jednej formuły – jest raczej „konstelacją”, wymagając od czytelników „dyskusji nieustającej” problemów czasu. W centrum uwagi znajduje się człowiek w perspektywie dualistycznej, zmuszającej do poszukiwania syntezy materii z duchem, w perspektywie uniwersalizmu etycznego. Odwołuje się do „kopuły „*monologu-nieustannie-się-parabolizującego*”: kultury jako paraboli świata. Oryginalna estetyka „bieli” odwołuje się jakby do „łagodnego powiewu wiatru” z Biblii świadczącego o przejściu Boga i jest znakiem sprzeciwu wobec romantycznego uwielbienia wulkanu, któremu przeciwstawia wagę pracy. Filozofia ta, rozwinięta przez Brzozowskiego, Tischnera i Jana Pawła II doprowadziła do samoograniczającej się rewolucji „Solidarności” lat 1980-81, i ostatecznie do delegitymizacji i upadku komunizmu; po dwuset letnim panowaniu krwawego mitu rewolucji francuskiej – do przemiany paradygmatu przemian historycznych w świecie.

Norwid opracowywał romantyzm epoki przemysłowej, i przeciwstawiając się mesjanizmowi martyrologicznemu narodu wypracował swoisty „mesjanizm pracy”. Łączył go z wizją Kościoła człowieka, który „przepała glob, Sumieniem”. Kościołowi globu – przeciwstawiał parafianšczyznę, „kościół zmieniony w salonik”. Liczy się człowiek a nie instytucja, dobro a nie Sakrament formalny. Chodzi o zmartwychwstanie świata, a sztuka jest kościołem pracy. Bliska mu była perspektywa antropocentryczna, gdzie człowiek wezwany jest do „*od-poczynania*”, poczynania na nowo, w drugiej potędze – błędów przeszłości.

Swoim językiem i stylem Norwid konstruował nową warstwę społeczną – inteligencji – (Łapiński) jako rodzaj kopuły narodu, zwornika sumienia, świadomości zbiorowej. Tworząc rodzaj międzyosobowej transcendencji poziomej zarówno wwyż jak wszere społeczeństw.

Przeciwnieństwem narodu ze swoją kulturą jest „cesarstwo” – źródło niewoli. Zniewalające zwłaszcza Europę Środkowo-Wschodnią. Szczególnie ważne jest starcie się cywilizacji azjatyckiej z chrześcijaństwem, czyli Europą zachodnią, „rzymską”. Poeta stawia jednak Słowianina w opozycji zarówno do Wschodu jak do Zachodu. Pada nacisk na *procesualny* a nie *esencjonalistyczny* charakter kultur narodowych.

Problem dialogiczności Norwida czy dominującego monologu dzieli badaczy. Ale Norwid jest w pewnym sensie Mistrzem, nauczycielem, który wciela Innego, wciela Mądrość własnym Głosem i Gestem. Istota Mądrości jest antropocentryczna, gdyż człowiek jest kapłanem, choć „*bezwiednym / I niedojrzałym*”, co obala podział na *sacrum* i *profanum*. Poprzez swój uniwersalizm etyczny Norwid przynosi odpowiedzi również na Oświeceniowy kryzys pojęcia uniwersalizmu racjonalności. Emancypacja jednostki nie powinna bowiem prowadzić do rezygnacji z przynależności, co jest wspólne modernizmowi Norwida i Europy środkowej (Ch. Delsol). Kultury jako wyraz pragnienia zbiorowego kształtują odpowiedzialność i poczucie przynależności – są też odpowiedzią na kryzys indywidualizmu narcystycznego naszej epoki.

**Słowa kluczowe:** człowiek; cesarstwo; cywilizacja; dialog; dobro; inteligencja; kopuła; kościół; kultura; nowoczesność; *od-poczynanie*; Oświecenie; parabola; poezja; praca; Romantyzm; Solidarność; transcendencja pozioma; uniwersalizm etyczny.

## NORWID'S PLACE IN CULTURE

## Summary

Even in today's "postmodern" world, Norwid cannot be reduced to a single formula. He is rather a "constellation," requiring that readers join the "continual discussion" on issues specific to a given era. His focus is on humanity, which he regards from a dualist perspective that necessitates pursuing a synthesis of matter and spirit under the sign of ethical universalism.

Norwid refers to the "cupola of *'a monologue-that-keeps-parabolizing-itself'*" and regards culture as the parable of the world. His original aesthetics of "whiteness" refers, as it were, to the biblical "gentle gust of wind," which announces God's presence and indicates the rejection of the Romantic veneration for volcanoes, which he contrasts with the importance of work. This kind of philosophy, developed by Brzozowski, Tischner and John Paul II, has led to the self-limiting revolution of Solidarity in the years 1980-81, and ultimately to the de-legitimization and fall of communism; finally, after the bloody myth of the French Revolution reigned for two hundred years, this philosophy altered the paradigm of historical changes around the world.

Norwid elaborated on the industrial-era Romanticism and opposed martyrological messianism, developing the original idea of a "messianism of work," linking it with a vision of human Church, which "burns through the Globe with conscience." He would contrast the global church with the parochial "church-turned-living-room." Human beings count more than institutions, he argued, just like goodness prevails over formal sacraments. With the ultimate goal defined as the resurrection of the world, art becomes a church of work. Norwid embraced an anthropocentric perspective, in which human beings are called upon "to un-make" [od-począć] the mistakes of the past, and thus to begin afresh at a whole new level.

With his language and style Norwid was constructing a new social stratum: intelligentsia (Łąpiński), understanding it as the nation's copula, i.e. the unifying force of conscience and the collective consciousness. It would form an interpersonal, horizontal transcendence spanning the length and breadth of societies.

The opposite of nation and its culture is "empire" – the root of subjugation – which particularly enslaved Central and Eastern Europe. Of special importance is the clash between Asian civilization and the "Roman" one, i.e. Christianity or Western Europe. However, the poet opposes Slavs to both the Westerners and the Easterners, emphasizing the processual and not the essentialist character of national cultures.

The question whether Norwid's work is fundamentally dialogic or monologic in character continues to divide scholars. However, Norwid is in a way a Master or teacher who embodies the Other and incarnates Wisdom in his Voice and Gesture. The nature of Wisdom is anthropocentric because man is a priest, although "involuntary / And immature," which abolishes the distinction between the sacred and the profane. Through his ethical universalism Norwid provides a solution to the Enlightenment crisis of universal reason. Emancipation of the individual should not entail abandoning a sense of belonging, which is something that Norwid's modernism shares with that of Central Europeans (Ch. Delsol).

Understood as the expression of collective desires, cultures shape responsibility and a sense of belonging, at the same time constituting an answer to the crisis of narcissistic individualism characteristic for our times.

*Translated by Grzegorz Czemieli*

**Key words:** humanity; empire; civilization; dialogue; goodness; intelligence; copula; church; culture; modernity; unmaking; the Enlightenment; parable; poetry; work; Romanticism; Solidarity; horizontal transcendence; ethical universalism.

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