

THE ETHOS OF LIGHT

ABSTRACTS

From the Editors – The Need for Clarity (D.Ch.)

“In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless wasteland, and darkness covered the abyss, while a mighty wind swept over the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light. God saw how good the light was. God then separated the light from the darkness. God called the light ‘day,’ and the darkness he called ‘night.’ Thus evening came, and morning followed—the first day” (Gen 1:1-5). The biblical description suggests that the existence of ‘light’ enabled further creation and helped overcome the ‘welter,’ thus introducing a basic order into the world. Light was created as the opposite of and counterweight to the darkness that ‘chronologically’ preceded it. The biblical description seems to emphasize that the ‘light’ which made vision possible in a way determined the existence of the reality in its metaphysical and epistemic aspects by the very act of permeating it. On the one hand, light has the power to constitute things (‘by separating them from darkness’), and on the other it makes them visible and recognizable (‘light was good’).

The constitution of things through light—indeed the constitution of life—continues endlessly in the physical world. In the theological (or symbolic) sense, this fact may be interpreted as a particular continuation of the act of creation the Bible describes. Thus beings philosophers do not normally attribute the category of efficacy need to engage in an activity which might be conceptualized in terms of intention and pursuance. “In the forest, there’s a battle for every last ray of sunlight, and each species is specialized to grow in a particular niche so that it can soak up some energy, however paltry the amount might be. In the upper story—the executive offices—the mighty beeches, firs, and spruce stretch out and soak up 97 percent of the sunlight. This behavior is cruel and inconsiderate, but doesn’t every species take what it can?”¹ In this quest for life-giving light man does not stay aside: the survival of primitive men depended on the possession of fire, which was the source not only of light, but

¹ Peter Wohlleben, *The Hidden Life of Trees: What they Feel, How they Communicate—Discoveries from a Secret World*, transl. by Jane Billinghamurst (London: William Collins, 2017), 162-3.

also of the brightness that frightened away animals. This particular rank of light and fire was conceived in the ideational process already at a very early stage of the development of cultures and civilizations, and expressed by means of a symbolism referring to the transcendent reality. Interestingly, such attempts at a symbolic rendition of the power of light were (and still are) universal: they may be found in all cultures and civilizations, and proved particularly telling in the culture of Polish Slavs. "The beliefs of the inhabitants of the Polish lands in the early Middle Ages reflected the tripartite Vedic division of the holy fire: the Slavs worshipped 'thunder-fire,' 'heavenly fire,' or the sun, and 'earthly fire.' The 'heavenly fire' was believed to be the highest. The one that revealed itself in the form of 'thunder' was considered to be in a way 'closer' to humans, but it was also attributed divine qualities, in particular two forms of agency: the power to manifest the sacred reality, and, due to the fact that everything it reached would lose its form, the ability to introduce change."² Thus light, in its manifold forms, posed a challenge to the imagination and intellect, and it occupied a special place in the image of the world human beings constructed. Their view of the reality was also determined by the fact that light could not be comprehended in any other way than by being conceived as the opposite of darkness, and thus entwined with a contingency considered as a danger. The dichotomy of light and darkness frequently recurs in the biblical texts, both in the Old and in the New Testament, metaphorically and symbolically conceptualizing the polarity of human experience which spreads between such opposites as good and evil, truth and falsity, knowledge and ignorance, or love and hate (see e.g. Ps 27:1; Ps 119:105; Ps 119:130; Eccles. 2:13; Mt 4:16; Mt 5:16; Lk 11:34-35; J 1:5; J 8,12; J 12:35-37; 1 J 1:5-9; Eph 5,14, Jm 1:17; 1 P 2:9; Rev. 21:23). One might say that the number of such pairs of opposites in a human life is infinite, thus turning it into a dynamic space of continuous choice-making. All of them exhibit radical and enduring polarity, as well as mutual irreducibility, which is the reason why the human person must continuously strive to assume the right attitude towards them in order to be able to give justice to the surrounding reality in any and every situation. Good and evil remain intertwined with each other in the sense that neither of them may be conceptually grasped unless we already have a concept of the other. Having known light, we may imagine the consequences of being deprived of it; having experienced darkness, we understand the meaning of the pursuit of light. The existential condition of the human being is marked by imperfection—ontological and epistemological contingency—which engenders the need for clarity, the need for a reliable vision enabling an insight into the essence of things, as well as their discernment, even though totally adequate cognition is not a reachable goal. In the European culture, the clarity which results from the pursuit of a truthful and ultimate cognition, and which in a sense is built in such pursuit, has been called 'wisdom.' Indeed, the desire to reach wisdom has animated philosophy since the time of its birth in ancient Greece until our

² Joanna W a r z e n i u k, *Kilka refleksji na temat prób rekonstrukcji wierzeń mieszkańców ziem polskich we wczesnym średniowieczu*, "Ethos," vol. 29, no. 3(115) (2016): 50. All translations are mine, unless otherwise indicated.

times, when philosophers, even should they advocate skepticism and unintelligibility of the reality, emphasize the clarity, or the obviousness of the insight they have themselves made into it.³ It must be noted though that the category of wisdom does not denote a target state of the human mind, rather, it grasps a certain process of finding one's orientation in the world, including an increasingly deeper and more conscious participation in the moral universe. Due to the inherent imperfection of human cognition the category of wisdom not only acknowledges the need for doubt, but also finds doubt well-justified. Thus the cognitive route from darkness to light does not follow a straight way or one delineated once and for all. History has shown that attempts to pave this way in too clear-cut a manner inevitably result in the rise of ideologies that usurp for themselves the right to grasp the world in cognitive categories, and then relentlessly destroy their opponents.⁴

In this context, European culture, shaped in its core and its history by Christianity, again appears unique. The encounter of Christianity with the reflection conceived of as the 'love of wisdom' and accompanied by a need for the verification of knowledge by putting it into doubt has resulted in the emancipation of reason and respect for the autonomy of individual conscience⁵ unknown in other civilizations. The universality of this desire is reflected in the European languages, rich in phrases such as the 'clarity of judgment' or 'finding clarity of mind.'

The metaphor of light and darkness is certainly universal and may be found also in other religions and civilizations, for instance in the Hindu religion, in Sikhism, or in Buddhism. Still the characteristic mark of the Christian world is that the Bible, its sacred book, neither proposes a casuistic morality, nor provides an exhaustive code of norms to organize the entirety of human life. Rather, the Bible remains a source of inspiration by formulating its percepts and commandments in a manner that ultimately—in any conceivable situation—leaves the decision whether to take an action or rather refrain from it to the

³ On philosophy as a centuries-long cognitive effort which is doomed to failure and has currently reached its end, see Richard Rorty, *Philosophy as Cultural Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). In the introduction to the Polish edition of this work Bogdan Baran writes: "If philosophy may be conceived as climbing up the mount of ignorance, Richard Rorty is among those few who have reached its summit and found themselves in another world—on the other side of the mountain. The brief moment of wobbly standing on top and instantly losing your footing lets you grasp a landscape that is impossible to retain in mind. Yet once you find yourself on the other side, you have accomplished a different vision." Bogdan Baran, *Szczyt Rorty'ego*, in Richard Rorty, *Filozofia jako polityka kulturalna*, transl. by Bogdan Baran (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 2009), 7.

⁴ "This is crucial for civilization. If we do indeed renounce the notion of a ready made distinction between good and evil, one that is independent of our own decision ... then no moral boundary prevents us from engaging in any action for no better reason than that it promotes the success of a tendency which, by definition, will be legitimate if it succeeds, even if it carries the name of Hitler or Stalin." Leszek Kołakowski, *Why Do We Need Kant?*, in Leszek Kołakowski, *Modernity on Endless Trial* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 47.

⁵ It is worth noting that conscience, which provides the ultimate norm of morality, is also based on rational cognition which springs from the need for discernment of truth and falsity, and its goal is epistemic and moral certainty.

human being, presuming that such a choice is always freely accomplished in an individual conscience. In these ramifications the root of both individual and social morality is a cognitive effort aiming at the discernment of truth and falsity, or, in other words, at “separating the light from the darkness.” The effort in question is convincingly rendered in literary fiction and in poetry, which also frequently voices a complaint about the impossibility of reconciliation between desire and conscience, between duty and joy, or between necessity and opinion. Such a complaint, which articulates an urgent need of clarity, may sometimes assume disturbing tones.

The following are empty synonyms:

man and beast
love and hate
friend and foe
darkness and light.

...

Ideas are mere words:

virtue and crime
truth and lies
beauty and ugliness
courage and cowardice.

...

I seek a teacher and a master
may he restore my sight hearing and speech
may he again name objects and ideas
may he separate darkness from light⁶

—writes Tadeusz Różewicz.

In times when history did not provoke moral dilemmas the generation of Różewicz faced after the second world war, British poets of the Romantic age, inspired by Friedrich W. Schelling’s ideas, proposed a quest for clarity by reference to imagination the highest level of which has a creative nature as well as the power to constitute a reality where all the opposites are reconciled, in a way mingled together within the value of beauty. According to their view, poetry was supposed not only to be a ‘mirror’ of nature, but also to enlighten nature in order to bring out its so far unnoticed qualities, including the moral ones.⁷

Literary fiction also points to the blinding power of light. Dazed by the brightness of the sun, Mersault, the hero of a novel by Albert Camus, kills an accidental

⁶ Tadeusz R ó ż e w i c z, *The Survivor*, transl. by Adam Czerniawski, in Tadeusz Różewicz, *Poezje wybrane: Selected Poems*, transl. by Adam Czerniawski, Richard Sokolski, Barbara Bogoczek and Tony Howard (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2005), 6.

⁷ See M.H. A b r a m s, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (Oxford–London–Glasgow: Oxford University Press, 1953).

man.⁸ William Faulkner in turn uses the words *Light in August*⁹ to give the title to his novel on bad fate and harm done by men to men. The authors then seem to remind us that light may also turn against a human person, that it demands constant attention, or even calls for an uncompromising attitude of attentiveness. Sharing a personal reflection in his *Notebooks* Albert Camus writes though that “no one who lives in the sunlight makes a failure of his life.”¹⁰ We propose that the articles collected in the present volume be read through the prism of this particular thought.

JOHN PAUL II – The Light: The Symbol of Life

1. Lumen Christi!

“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it” (Jn 1:5). This is what the Prologue of John’s Gospel proclaims, effectively summarizing the drama of the rejection of Christ from the moment of his coming into the World. But on this night, the night of Easter—according to the Scriptures and beyond any human expectation—the opposite takes place: the light overcomes the darkness.

This is the first symbolic act of the solemn Easter vigil: the deacon carries the candle, symbol of Christ the Light of the world, into the Basilica immersed in darkness. From the ‘new fire’ of this candle the flames of other candles are lit, and from these, little by little, the candles of all the faithful, until the church is filled with light.

Then the deacon sings the Easter Proclamation, which is the hymn to Christ our Light. During the night, praise is sung to the Redeemer, who from the darkness has led us into God’s marvelous light (cf. 1 Pet 2:9).

2. “O felix culpa, quae talem ac tantum meruit habere Redemptorem! O happy fault, which gained for us so great a Redeemer!” (Easter Proclamation).

So great are our joy and wonder at the salvation which we have been given that the fault itself seems worthy of being blessed!

After all, what is the darkness, if not the symbol of sin and death? And what is the light, if not the symbol of the life which conquers death? The night of Easter, this ‘blessed night’ (beata nox), is the witness of this victory.

“The three Marys went, carrying costly ointments to anoint Christ’s body and to give him praise and glory. On the way they said to one another: The stone there is so large who will remove it for us?” (from an ancient Polish Easter song).

The women, the first to reach the tomb, saw that the stone of the tomb had been rolled away. And an angel appeared to them: “Do not be afraid; for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has risen” (Mt 28:5-6).

⁸ See Albert Camus, *The Stranger*, transl. by Stuart Gilbert (New York: Vintage Books, 1946), 38-9.

⁹ See William Faulkner, *Light in August* (New York: Spark Publishing, 2007).

¹⁰ Albert Camus, *Notebooks: 1935–1942*, transl. by Philip Thody (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2010), 25.

At Easter, symbols give way to reality: "The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it! (Jn 1:5). Life himself was killed, nailed to a Cross. But "in him was life and the life was the light of men" (Jn 1:4). And now in the Risen Christ that light finally shines. *Lumen Christi*. It was necessary that there should be "darkness over all the land" (Mt 27:45), so that the Light could shine in all its splendor. Life had to die, so that he could give life to all things.

3. During the Easter Vigil, the Church addresses the catechumens preparing to receive Baptism. She speaks to them using the words of the Apostle Paul: "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.... If we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him.... So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus" (Rom 6:3-4,8,11).

These words resound in a particular way for you, dear brothers and sisters, who in a little while will be baptized and signed with the holy Chrism. For the first time you will approach the Eucharistic Table. My greeting goes to you with special affection!

In welcoming you, I wish to greet also the local Churches and the countries from which you come: South Korea France, Japan, Italy, the People's Republic of China, the United States of America and Viet Nam.

The light of Christ is for all peoples, and you, in this celebration, represent in a certain way the response of the nations of the whole world to the new evangelization.

In the fact that of the 10 of you seven come from Asia we can see a sign of Christ's and the Church's great desire to meet the peoples and cultures of that immense continent, so rich in history and noble traditions.

Let no one be afraid of the light of Christ! His Gospel is the light which does not bring death but which develops and brings to full maturity whatever is true, good and beautiful in every human culture. The Gospel of Christ is meant for man, for the life, peace and freedom of every individual and of all people. May you yourselves, dear catechumens, be witnesses of this, enlivened by the Holy Spirit who in a little while will be poured abundantly into your hearts.

4. Baptism means 'immersion,' being baptized means being 'immersed' in the mystery of God's love which gushes forth from the pierced heart of the Crucified One.

In the liturgical year, the great Easter Vigil is the ideal moment for Baptism. During the Vigil, the symbol of light is linked to that of water and reminds us that we are all born again of water and the Holy Spirit, in order to share in the new life revealed by Christ's Resurrection.

"In him is life, and the life is the light of men" (cf. Jn 1:4). O vere beata nox! Night truly blessed which brings Christ's light to all people! Night of limitless splendor shed the light of hope and peace on every corner of the earth!

Amen.

Keywords: the Bible, the light, the darkness, Easter Vigil, Easter Proclamation, Baptism, joy

Easter Vigil Homily, Vatican, 6 April 1996. "The Light: The Symbol of Life" is the title given by the editors.

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Fr. Dariusz DZIADOSZ – "Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path" (Ps 119:105). A Theological Reading of the Idea of Light in the Traditions of the Old Testament

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Light is one of the Hebrew Bible's most complex symbols and the common literary theme in the ancient Near East civilizations (Sumer, Ugarit, Babylonia, Egypt). In many of its biblical figurative uses, the exact significance of light is uncertain, but often some links to physical light are present. There are four main thematic lines in the biblical concept of light: the integral relationship of light to God, its importance to the world and man, its rich symbolism, and the eschatological dimension.

Keywords: light, darkness, the ancient Near East civilizations, Hebrew Bible

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Krzysztof LEŚNIEWSKI – To See the Light: Divine Light in the Tradition of Eastern Christianity

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According to the Revelation, God is the Light that is totally different from natural light. Yet how to understand Divine Light? What is it and how does it manifest itself? In order to answer these questions the author examines biblical premises concerning Divine Light and traces them in the teaching of the Eastern Fathers of the Church. The essential point of reference for the reflection on Divine Light is the Transfiguration of Christ on Mount Tabor. The Light of the Transfiguration is one of the important themes in the Orthodox hymnographic and iconographic traditions, as well as in the hesychastic doctrine on the uncreated Energies that deify the human person. The manifestation of Divine Light

can likely take place in the lives of particular people. This truth has been taught by the hesychasts. It is worth mentioning that Divine Light was experienced by St. Seraphim of Sarov and Nicholas Motovilov.

Keywords: Divine Light, Transfiguration of Christ, the Transfiguration Icon, Transfiguration hymns, Hesychasm, deification, St. Seraphim of Sarov

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Bartłomiej BRAŹKIEWICZ – The Taboric Light and the Light of the Icon: From Byzantine Mosaics to Andrei Rublev

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The icon, having originally been an image, is not only a piece of art, but above all a visible sign of God. Such an interpretation of the icon was approved in the early Christian theological thought referring to the aesthetic theories of ancient Greece which linked beauty with the essence of the transcendent being revealed to mankind. A thorough overview of Byzantine mosaics and Old Russian iconic paintings, the preserved works of sacred art, shows that both of them developed under the influence of monastic hesychasm, the former shaped in the spirit of the Egyptian desert fathers, the latter formed by the impact of the Palamist doctrine. The belief in the potentiality of seeing God's Light as a result of contemplative ascetic practices was not only reflected, but also grounded in the biblical narrative of the Transfiguration. The Light revealed at Mount Tabor was the Light coming to humanity from without, which signified a possibility of *theosis*: obtaining inner Light by the human soul and its resultant divinization. The theme recognized in the Byzantine mosaics, as well as in the icons by Theophanes the Greek and Andrei Rublev, can be seen not so much as the fulfilment of didactic purposes, a plain illustration spreading religious content, but rather as a source of prayerful reflection leading to inner metamorphosis.

Keywords: Byzantine Art, Old Russian Art, Theophanes the Greek, Andrei Rublev, Hesychasm

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Dobrosław KOT – The Honorable Yoke of Metaphor: Some Remarks Inspired by Plato’s Allegory of the Cave

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Apparently there is no metaphor more firmly established in philosophy than that of light which denotes truth, cognition, and meaning. In Plato, light is the bond that yokes together visibility and the faculty of sight. A hermeneutic analysis of the metaphor of ‘yoke’ engenders numerous issues, and the most important among them, as well as the most disturbing, is whether all we know and intuit about truth (or about our cognition, the idea of the Good, etc.) results from our knowledge of these important concepts, or rather it is a consequence of a thorough and detailed analysis of the metaphor of light itself. In other words, how much do we know about truth as such, and how much of this knowledge is our insight into the workings of light? Or is it rather the case that the tension between truth and light, the tension within the ‘yoke’ Plato refers to, does not prove as radical or aporetic as the initial alternative would suggest? Regardless of how we answer this question, it is indubitably worthwhile examining what the metaphor of light introduces into our understanding of truth, since an analysis of the metaphor in question may bring out the fundamental cognitive aporias and tensions we experience.

The article analyzes, among others, the transcendent nature of light. Philosophies as diverse as Platonism, transcendental phenomenology, and the philosophy of encounter manifest a uniform approach to the understanding of light and tend to perceive its source outside the visible reality, whether they locate this source in the idea of the Good, in the transcendental ego or in Buber’s ‘Thou,’ thus considering each of them, respectively, a source of meaning. Heidegger’s considerations of the truth (aletheia) make the author confront another problem, namely, that of light obscuring darkness. However, does the issue in question concern the nature of the dark (e.g. evil) as such, or rather, does it manifest merely a language game valid within the scope of the metaphor of light? All these ideas prompt the conclusion about an irreplaceable status of the metaphor of light in philosophical thinking.

Translated by *Dorota Chabrajska*

Keywords: light, truth, the good, meaning, the metaphor of light, transcendent nature of light, aletheia

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Marcin TREPCZYŃSKI – The Light as the *arché* of the World: Robert Grosseteste's Metaphysics of Light

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Although Robert Grosseteste (ca. 1168-1253) is still not a widely known thinker, he significantly contributed to world philosophy, both as the one who deeply rethought and combined ideas of his greatest predecessors and as the author of the conception called a 'metaphysics of light.' Grosseteste's main thesis was that the universe is made of light, which is its *arché*, or rather, that the light is the first corporeal form of all the bodies, the noblest and the most important one, constituting their *species* and *perfectio*. This idea was compliant with his other theses which originated from his theology and held that there is also spiritual light and that God himself is the Light which is above both corporeal and spiritual light. Thus Grosseteste concluded that light is the factor that 'holds together' all the reality, both in its corporeal and spiritual dimensions. An analysis of his conception, which he put forward in his work entitled *De Luce*, shows that it logically combines well justified and clear theses, based on some axioms, other statements, and at least one definition. This is true in particular about his first, main theses which are proven by careful and correct syllogisms. With a view to Aristotle's idea of metaphysics (which he calls "the first philosophy" and "theology"), one may say that Grosseteste's conception may be rightly be called a "metaphysics of light." Since Grosseteste much appreciated and followed Aristotle's methodology of science (understood as indubitable knowledge about what is necessary, or *episteme*), which the Stagirite put forward in his *Posterior Analytics*, the former conclusion leads to another one, namely that Grosseteste himself might have considered his own ideas as a metaphysics of light. Finally, due to the originality of the conception proposed by Grosseteste, despite its being based on the ideas of his predecessors, one may claim that its description as 'Robert Grosseteste's metaphysics of light' is well justified.

Keywords: light, metaphysics of light, the first form, Robert Grosseteste, *arché*, *De Luce*

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Tomasz SIKORA – Theurgy of Light: Selected Issues of the Mysticism of Light in Judaism

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This article presents selected issues of light mysticism in the texts of medieval Kabbalah. First, the author focuses on the basic considerations that place this

topic in the context of general anthropological and religious studies. Following that the description of the semantics of Hebrew light terminology, as well as notes on the concept of space and ether, and the function of meditation practice in early Kabbalah, serve as an introduction to the translation of relevant source texts by Azriel of Gerona (?) and Moshe de Leon illustrating the discussed issues. The article results in comments on problems and limitations of understanding and interpretation of the Kabbalistic sources.

Keywords: evolution of photic experience, light mysticism, Jewish esotericism

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Katarzyna PACHNIAK – The Concept of Light in Islam: The Mysticism of Light in *The Niche of Lights* by Al-Ghazali

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The introductory focus of the article is the verse on light present in surah An-Nur [24] of the Quran. The author first analyzes the concept of light in the culture of early Islam, attempting to establish how the verse on light found its way to the Quran. After presenting general difficulties in a reconstruction of the early history of Islam the author shows how its concept of light was affected by older religions, in particular by Zoroastrianism and Manicheism, and later Neoplatonism. The influence in question is discussed in relation to mystical philosophy in Islam (Sufism), where the impact in question was most visible. Subsequently, the basic concepts of Sufism are discussed.

The second part of the article comprises an analysis of *The Niche of Lights* [*Mishkat al-anwar*] by Al-Ghazali. The treatise is described with a view to the ways in which God is shown in it as the highest Light which radiates itself onto other beings and is cognizable by people on various levels, the highest of them being accessible solely to mystics, i.e. those capable of seeing pure light and ‘pouring’ it into themselves, thus annihilating their own selves.

Translated by *Dorota Chabrajska*

Keywords: Al-Ghazali, *The Niche of Lights*, light, Quran, Zoroastrianism, Manicheism, Neoplatonism, Sufism, mysticism of light, God

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Adam POTKAY – “Something Evermore about to Be.” The Transformation of Hope in the Romantic Era

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Hope is a double-edged concept in the Western tradition: on one hand, it is an emotion, and its opposite is fear. On the other hand, hope of a specific kind is one of the three theological virtues (along with faith and love), and its opposite is despair. As a theological virtue—the anticipation of sharing eternally in the glory of God—hope is always a good thing in Christian cultures. As a secular emotion, hope is more clearly related to assessments of an unknowable future. And depending on its object, it may also be morally problematic. This essay examines hope in British literature and philosophy from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, with particular attention to the writings of William Wordsworth, Percy Shelley, and John Stuart Mill. Hope comes in the Romantic era to underwrite a new, semi-secularized virtue: the hope, more or less independent of revealed religion, for more life, a better or perfected condition of the individual or of the species in time or eternity.

Keywords: emotion, hope, John Stuart Mill, Romanticism, Percy B. Shelley, theological virtue, William Wordsworth

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Agnieszka K. HAAS – A Darkness Full of Light: German Literature and Painting of the Turn of the 19th Century Facing the Problem of Cognition and Introspection

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The present article discusses the issues of darkness and light in selected works by Friedrich Hölderlin and Georg Philipp Friedrich Freiherr von Hardenberg (Novalis), notable German poets of the turn of the 19th century. The author considers Plato’s concept of light and other sources of Romantic inspiration in poetry, such as Neoplatonism, alchemy, empirical sciences, Jakob Böhme’s theosophy, and Johann G. Fichte’s subjective idealism, as well as the ways light is portrayed in paintings by Philipp O. Runge and Caspar D. Friedrich. Against this background, the author analyzes the motifs of light and dark-

ness appearing in selected poems by Hölderlin and Novalis in order to refer them to Johann W. von Goethe's *Faust*. The author observes that, according to Novalis and Hölderlin, darkness necessarily accompanies the encounter of a human being with the transcendent reality. Both poets also draw a contrast between metaphysical darkness and the charismatic blindness caused by poetic inspiration. Hölderlin's and Novalis's interest in Fichte's philosophy, as well as their tendency to transfer — in the poetic message — all the experiences to the consciousness, reconciles the world of ideas with that of everyday life, as well as light with darkness.

Translated by *Dorota Chabrajska*

Keywords: Plato, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Friedrich Hölderlin, Philipp Friedrich Freiherr von Hardenberg (Novalis), Philipp Otto Runge, Caspar David Friedrich, Friedrich Schiller

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Michał SOKULSKI – On Seers and Prophetic Acts: Zygmunt Krasiński's Reflections on Poetry and Poets in the Context of the Origins of the Prophecy of *Przedświt*

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In his epic poem *Przedświt* ["Predawn"] Zygmunt Krasiński appears as a prophet announcing the Kingdom of God, "a new heaven and a new earth." However, the poem does not merely express the 'Adventist dreams' of the Polish diaspora, since it is also a literary work advancing the ideas of the new prophetic and idealist "poetry of the third epoch." *Przedświt*, the voice of the third Polish Romantic "seer," is simultaneously the conclusion of the "discernment of its own being" by the "nation's soul" deprived of a political body: the poem explains, in a possibly fullest manner, the meaning of the past and of the future of the Polish nation, pointing to the core of the nation's mission in the world. Last but not least, *Przedświt* is also a love poem: while conveying the revelation of the final things, Krasiński also immortalized his Beatrice.

Translated by *Dorota Chabrajska*

Keywords: Zbigniew Krasiński, *Przedświt*, Polish Romantic messianism, prophetism, Juliusz Słowacki, Adam Mickiewicz, August Cieszkowski, literature as an expression of the consciousness of the nation, national character, philosophy of history, Polish Romanticism

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Michał HAAKE – The Language of Transcendence: The Hermeneutics of Light in Caravaggio's Religious Paintings

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The goal of the present study is to examine the insights the hermeneutic method enables once applied to an analysis of the motif of light in Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio's religious paintings. The source of light the artist used in order to bring out the models he painted in an otherwise dark room was either a lantern put high above them or a window. The light in Caravaggio's paintings has been diversely interpreted: as a means either to heighten the impact of the dramatic scenes he depicted, or to convey the power of God, or—whenever the light used in the painting was correlated with real light emanating from the windows—to blur the demarcation line between the scene the painting represented and the space of the viewer. The latter gave the painting an air of reality.

Within the hermeneutic approach, the interpretation of a work of art is accomplished individually, in the process of the spectator's perception. Comprehending a work of art is tantamount to the spectator's gaining a better self-knowledge. The hermeneutic method of the interpretation of paintings rests on the assumption that a work of art conveys its particular iconic meaning which is essentially different from knowledge derived from other, non-iconic sources. The iconic meaning results from the overall structure of a work of art, or from the way in which all its elements are optically combined. The particular character of this unity, as well as its autonomy recognized by the spectator, is a consequence of the way the structure of the painting is referred to its plane. Therefore, in the spectator's perception, the plane of the painting is present in every element of the depicted world without simultaneously itself being one of these elements. Yet the plane of the painting goes beyond them, thus giving the spectator the impression of the painting transcending the depicted world.

According to the hermeneutic method, the light, as any other element of the painting, is interpreted as part of the overall structure of the work. The hermeneutic analysis applied to selected paintings by Caravaggio shows how, in particular paintings, the light focuses the spectator's attention on given parts of the depicted world, thus initiating the logic of perception which ultimately enables the spectator to grasp the iconic meaning of the painting. The key element of this logic is that the main figures in the painting point to its boundary, and thus to a cognitive horizon that transcends their world. The spectator's experience of this relation is then translated into an internalization of its iconic meaning. The internalization in question results from the spectator's inability to adequately translate this meaning into the language fully grasping the relation between the representation and the boundary of the painting. The boundary of

the painting both belongs to the represented world and goes beyond it, which cannot be fathomed by the verbal language, since any verbal statement would imply a clear identification of the represented world as well as of the boundary of the painting. Yet this inexpressible simultaneity ('as well as') is grasped in an act of perception which is communicable, thus providing the possibility of a hermeneutic interpretation, or a translation of a visual experience into the medium of language. The meaning of this translation, however, is to bring out its inadequacy to the reality represented in the painting.

Translated by *Dorota Chabrajska*

Keywords: Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, light in religious painting, hermeneutic method of painting interpretation, boundary of the painting, iconic meaning of a work of art

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Agnieszka TES – The Present, the Contemplative, the Creative: On the Manifestations of Light in the Contemporary Polish Abstract Painting

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The problem of light in contemporary Polish abstract painting has heterogeneous aspects. Light is explored in its natural, physical state by artists who develop new formal qualities in their artworks, but there is also a tendency to reveal the spiritual dimension. I analyze some of the most representative examples of the usage of light in its metaphysical meaning. It would be impossible to present the full panoply of this tendency, which is why I have chosen to focus on four cycles of artworks by recognized Polish painters: Adam Brincken, Stefan Gierowski, Tadeusz G. Wiktor, and Władysław Podrazik. I examine the specifics of treatment of light in each case and I try to emphasize the religious, philosophical or spiritual basis for it. In the paintings one can find original interpretations of the biblical, Neoplatonic or Orthodox traditions, which is combined with personal experiences of the artists. What also interests me is the connection between the archetypal symbol of light and its contemporary form and expression.

Keywords: light, painting, abstraction, spirituality, transcendence

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Tomasz FERENC, Bartłomiej TALAGA – *Lux machina*, or Some Remarks on Photography and Light

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In this text we assume that the invention of photography was a consequence of the study of light and its properties, which began in antiquity. We analyze the philosophical premises leading to the invention of photography and the factor which was crucial to the entire process, namely, the phenomenon of image formation taking place inside a device called a *camera obscura*. We pay close attention to the differences between natural and artificial light and the changing trends in the use of light by photographers.

Keywords: photography, light, *camera obscura*, flash, art, perception

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Agata SKAŁA – Axioms and Mystifications, or On Light and the Dark Side of Cognition: A Preliminary Sketch for the Portrait of Julian Ochorowicz

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The whole civilized world takes advantage of Julian Ochorowicz's (1850-1917) technological-scientific thought, although he does not exist in the contemporary consciousness as a genius-constructor and the author of scientific ideas. The aim of the article is to present studies on the character and significance of scientific activity led by this versatile scholar—a theorist of positivism and a writer. During his life Ochorowicz gained recognition of many international psychological societies—in Great Britain, New York, Paris, Köln, Berlin, Budapest, and Leipzig. In Poland the scientific circles treated Ochorowicz's works (also those concerning new technologies) indulgently or disqualified them and doomed the scholar himself to exclusion. There exists a need to verify false findings concerning the significance of Ochorowicz's creative works, mistakenly associated with romanticism, charlatanism and lack of scientific correctness. Ochorowicz

is very frequently perceived through the prism of occultism and hypnology, first of all connecting the name of the author of the treatise *Mental Suggestion* with spiritism. The initial recognition shows that Ochorowicz was an advocate of scientism and rationalism. His research findings are strictly scientific.

Keywords: Julian Ochorowicz (1850-1917), positivism, the ethos of cognition, mediumism, spiritism, axiology

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Jacek JANOWSKI – The Dark Side of the Optical Fibers: On the Need for an Integral Study of the Information Civilization

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The article proposes an integral study of certain complex and dynamic social phenomena which come to light in the information civilization. The integration in question needs to embrace various areas of knowledge which have the potential of exhibiting a deeper and broader background of the current global technological and informational trends (megatrends). Described and discussed merely in their certain aspects, they might seem accidental, spontaneous and unrelated. However, critically verified by the data available within multiple domains of knowledge, they show a common background and similar tendencies. Interestingly, finding similar symptoms of various social phenomena and bringing them to light is frequently avoided even in the field of science, the bias being the stronger the more complex the phenomena in question are, in particular once they are qualified as bringing progress.

The author identifies five layers of the possible discourse on the information civilization, corresponding to five levels of power organizing the new world order it introduces, namely: ideologically entangled politics, bureaucracy and the judiciary, technocracy, economy, and ideation. The latter turns out a crucial factor in the sufficient and ultimate explanation of the megatrend of globalization with its accompanying phenomenon of a rapid spreading of the Internet, which introduces undisciplined information control and frequently deprives societies of their subjectivity, making nations forget their identities and states lose their sovereignties.

Translated by *Dorota Chabrajska*

Keywords: civilization, information, the Internet, knowledge, power

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Jarosław KUPCZAK, OP – From Encounter to Cognition: On Karol Wojtyła's *Song of the Hidden God*

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The article presents the theology of the early poem of Karol Wojtyła/John Paul II *Song of the Hidden God* from 1944. The poem contains a description and analysis of the many dimensions present in the human encounter with God. Respecting the analogical nature of theological knowledge, the author describes the Christian experience of God using the natural experience of man, especially of: the sea, the light, and the sun. The internal dynamics of the encounter with God is described by Wojtyła as a transition from natural longing and natural cognition to a knowledge through faith, and finally to a knowledge through love. This development leads the human person from a solitude of the cognizing subject to an experience of friendship with God which is described by Wojtyła in terms of the mystical theology of Saint John of the Cross. For every Christian this encounter with God starts with and culminates in the sacramental order, especially in the sacraments of baptism and Eucharist.

Keywords: Christ, baptism, experience of God, Eucharist, the Cross, love, 'dark night,' knowing God, sacrament, solitude, creation, light, faith, salvation

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Adam FITAS – The Light from Below: On the Role of a Polish Philology Student Research Group in the University's Humanities (A Side Note to the History of the Polish Philology Student Research Group at the Catholic University of Lublin)

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The article discusses, on selected examples from the history of the Polish Philology Student Research Group at the Catholic University of Lublin, the model and the main activities of a student research group. The author refers to the tradition of this kind of association and describes its structure and activities in order to show the importance and the multifarious function of a well-working student research group at the university. The text emphasizes the significance of the presence of a Polish Philology student research group which usually

contributes to the promotion of the entire milieu of the university by integrating its different faculties. A well functioning *Alma Mater* eventually becomes the place of encounter of the light emanating from two sources: from above, *ex cathedra*, from the masters and professors, and from below, from the students active in their research groups.

Translated by *Dorota Chabrajska*

Keywords: student research group, Polish Philology student research group, university, the humanities, the light, science, knowledge, instruction

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Józef F. FERT – A Little Philosophy, a Little Poetry... On *76 wierszy* by Alfred Marek Wierzbicki

Review of Alfred M. Wierzbicki's *76 wierszy* ["76 Poems"] (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Test–Stowarzyszenie Pisarzy, 2017).

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Krzysztof POLIT – Between Happiness and Suffering

Review of Bohdan Dziemidok's *Filozofia i sztuka życia* ["Philosophy and the Art of Living"] (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2017).

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Bogumiła TRUCHLIŃSKA – The Dusk of Europe: The Dusk of Christianity?

Review of Robert T. Ptaszek's *Zmierzch Europy? Perspektywy przyszłości a chrześcijaństwo* ["The Dusk of Europe? The Prospects for the Future, and Christianity"] (Warszawa–Radzymin: Wydawnictwo von Borowiecky, 2017).

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Books recommended by *Ethos*

From the Absurd to Revolt: Dynamics in Albert Camus's Thought. De l'absurde à la révolte. Dynamique de la pensée d'Albert Camus, ed. by Maciej Kałuża and Piotr Mróz (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2017).

Maciej Rajewski, *Ku antropologii procesualnej. Dyfuzjonizm brytyjski przełomu XIX i XX wieku* ["Towards Processual Anthropology: British Diffusionsim of the Turn of the 20th Century"] (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2017).

Patrycja MIKULSKA – To Carry the Light

The feuilleton discusses the image of the shared carrying of light (inspired by an excerpt from Francis Scott Fitzgerald's novel *Tender is the Night*) as a metaphor of the quest for knowledge and of human life as such.

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Maria FILIPIAK – The Light We Are Awaiting

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A Bibliography of Addresses by John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Francis from 1978 to 2017

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