

Hypostases of Krzysztof Jaworski's Poetry

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Abstract: The article contains a hermeneutic analysis of Krzysztof Jaworski's poetry. Jaworski is not only an attentive observer of contemporary social reality, a master of retrospection and an internal monologue but first and foremost he is a poet not afraid to ask moral questions. Key words such as truth, self-knowledge, wisdom were used here to present the aesthetic and ethical stratification, to describe the leitmotifs of the interpreted texts and to indicate the significant place of Jaworski's works in Polish postwar poetry.

Key words: hyphenated, existentialism, individuation, lyric poetry, poetic word

Hipostazy poezji Krzysztofa Jaworskiego

Abstrakt: Artykuł zawiera analizę hermeneutyczną liryki Krzysztofa Jaworskiego, baczego obserwatora współczesnej rzeczywistości społecznej, poety moralnych pytań, mistrza retrospekcji i monologu wewnętrznego. Słowa kluczowe: prawda, samopoznanie, mądrość posłużyły do przedstawienia stratyfikacji estetyczno-etycznej, opisu leitmotywów interpretowanej twórczości i wskazania jej istotnie ważnego miejsca w najnowszej poezji polskiej.

Słowa kluczowe: hipostaza, egzystencjalizm, indywidualizacja, liryka, słowo poetyckie

Krzysztof Jaworski's unique output is beginning to earn him his rightful place among prominent contemporary Polish poets who are also recognised abroad¹. A careful reader of his poetry, not susceptible to the superficial judgements of critics, will soon come to realise that the author of *Drażniące przyjemności*², resistant to all kinds of literary fashions and isms (calling himself oxymoronically an affirmative nihilist), is a sensitive observer of personal experiences from the vantage point of multidimensional time-space and at the same time he highlights various shades of paradoxes. He

¹ Krzysztof Jaworski's poetry has already been translated into English, Czech, Danish, German, Russian, Ukrainian and Hungarian.

² K. Jaworski, *Drażniące przyjemności 1988–2008 [Irritant pleasures 1988–2008]*, Wrocław: Biuro Literackie, 2008.

speaks to us with poems which ‘write the poet’ and – like a mirror – tell the reader: this is you! He enforces upon us a mode of reading that is mercilessly objective, to the extent of protecting us from disappointment. Only poetry, a value in itself and initiator of activities, is capable of impacting people’s will and ethics, and at the same time, of awakening their self-criticism. Only poems that are exploratory and poetically revealing can inspire the reader to have trust in their multiple layers of meaning.

[...] ja nie piszę wierszy
Dziecino ja je rodzę.

[...] I do not write poems
Kid, I give birth to them³.

Truth, self-knowledge, wisdom – all trying to balance out the tension between openness to the world and egocentrism – have their foundations, for the author of *Do szpiku kości*⁴, beyond the ego. The human “I” is not capable of absorbing everything into itself, it cannot balance its sphere of control, consciousness, and experience of liminal states with the horizon of the whole reality. Certainly, beyond its reach lies everything that in human nature and experience is random, unforeseeable or provisional, that, due to inherent contradictions, increasingly prevails over *ratio*. Human desire continues to focus on becoming one with the world that constantly adopts new shapes, not so much due to technological progress, spiritual culture or changing morality as, primarily, to the search for sense in dramatic individual fates:

Myśl pozytywnie.
Dokonaj wizualizacji.
Życie ma sens.

Think positively.
Make a visualisation.
Life has got sense⁵.

Only in a world that is a complete entity can human life as a whole achieve or preserve a balance. And this is why the poet so unequivocally

³ K. Jaworski, *Ubywanie [Declining]*, in: idem, *Drażniące przyjemności 1988–2008*, op. cit., p. 13. „Dla mnie jednak najpiękniejszą muzyką są rozmowy ludzi. To są moje wrota, to jest moja brama, moje odrzwia, a czasem furtka, a czasami tylne wejście, a czasami brama garażowa segmentowa, oto moja *cloaca maxima* wiodąca ku świątyni sztuki. W tę pieśń jestem wsłuchany całe życie” [“People’s conversations is the most beautiful music for me. These are my portals, my gate, my door and sometimes a wicket, and sometimes a back door, a garage sectional door, here is my *cloaca maxima* leading towards a temple of arts. I listen intently to this song all my life”], in: K. Jaworski, M. Baran, *Choroby symboliczne wagi ciężkiej [Heavyweight symbolic diseases]*, in: <https://www.biuroliterackie.pl/biblioteka/wywiady/choroby-symboliczne-wagi-ciezkiej/> (access: 12 March 2020).

⁴ K. Jaworski, *Do szpiku kości. Ostatnia powieść awangardowa [To the core. The last avant-garde novel]*, Wrocław: Biuro Literackie, 2013.

⁵ K. Jaworski, *Myślenie pozytywne [Positive thinking]*, in: idem, *.byłem [I was]*, Wrocław: Biuro Literackie, 2014, p. 7.

emphasises the search for harmony in diversity, sees far-reaching connections in different life situations, and draws, from a given event, a universal message, as a kind of gloss to the well-known syllogism from the Buddhist Sutra: "Emptiness is form, form is emptiness".

After all, the equating of the "I" with the reality is a time-sanctioned definition of truth. The destiny and marker of man's identity is existence in truth. 'The poet pays with himself for his poems' when, discarding political and cultural correctness, he uncompromisingly and often naturalistically (his predilection for verbal directness to emphasise the emotional nature of his statements is not to be mistaken for coprolalia) uncovers the true facets of the private and collective life of Polish society and reveals its hypocrisy reflected in the attitude of thinking one thing, saying another, and doing something else altogether. Open to Otherness and 'things separate', he makes us realise that irony, grotesqueness and nonconformity turn out to be an effective weapon against the pettiness, stupidity and narrow-mindedness of people whose rule-book bears the title 'Only this way, none other'⁶. The most significant finding seems to be the fact that as a poet of probing moral questions he keenly enquires about the ethical motives behind human actions and that he eschews arbitrary exclamation marks of admiration or acceptance while inserting the question marks of soliloquies⁷.

Grzebię w dobru, pięknie i prawdzie.
Zagrzebałem się.

I'm digging in goodness, beauty and truth.
I got buried⁸.

Dilemmas and crises articulated in his poetic pathos-free prose (*Wyrwany z korzeniami*⁹ and *Pamięci Krzysztofa Jaworskiego*¹⁰), are woven by the poet into a relationship between people so close, yet so different from one another in their perception of the surrounding reality¹¹. It is not a relationship between two people who identify with one another, engage in mutual projections or play the game of love while being full of falsehood, lies or illusions. We are dealing here with a relationship between two people who are preparing to walk the same road to the truth so as to expose their

⁶ K. Jaworski, *Dlaczego nieprzemysłane decyzje* [Why badly-thought-out decisions], in: idem, *Do szpiku kości...*, op. cit., p. 62.

⁷ K. Jaworski, *Z Kielc do Kielc* [From Kielce to Kielce], in: idem, *Drażniące przyjemności 1988–2008*, op. cit., p. 101–103.

⁸ K. Jaworski, *Dobro piękno i prawda* [Goodness, beauty and truth], in: idem, *Ciąg Fibonacciego. 111 wierszy* [The Fibonacci sequence. 111 poems], Warszawa: Convivo, 2019, p. 160.

⁹ K. Jaworski, *Wyrwany z korzeniami* [Uprooted], in: idem, *Kameraden* [Friends], Kraków: Miniatura, 1994, p. 12–17.

¹⁰ K. Jaworski, *Pamięci Krzysztofa Jaworskiego* [In Memory of Krzysztof Jaworski], in: idem, *Drażniące przyjemności 1988–2008*, op. cit., p. 84–86.

¹¹ K. Jaworski, *Kłopoty, kłopoty* [Problems, problems], in: idem, *Drażniące przyjemności 1988–2008*, op. cit., p. 40.

mutual fears and falsehoods and set apart appearances from reality, form from essence, goal from means.

The feelings between two people, apart from being physical, reach their fullness when accompanied by psychological and spiritual ties, in their growing old together¹². The poet identifies love with a dimension of being, a vision of life. The problem here is not meeting the right man or the right woman, as there are no unsuitable men or unsuitable women. It is more a question of interpreting oneself and one's surroundings, of giving sense to all forms of interaction, of overcoming one's sense of loneliness or disillusionment, which affect a man and a woman equally. It is time to understand love and its limitless power of making people become one: I am you. It is not true that everybody is capable of love. In practice, few of us truly experience love. Most people believe that they are experiencing a genuine feeling but in reality it is others who impose emotions upon them, mainly at a subliminal level, by taking advantage of their neuroses or complexes. Many regard love as a means of manipulating another person to gratify their own interests and personal comfort, or to satisfy their own whims¹³.

According to Jaworski, sincere love marks out a route to achieving complete awareness. It goes far beyond sentimental musings and focuses on finding sense in life. If hackneyed expressions like Darling, Sweetheart, My dear, were sufficient, there would be no crises in relationships. Despite appearances to the contrary, true love grows even in the absence of constant expressions of devotion. It has nothing in common, in today's image-based civilisation, with the state of specialness one experiences under the influence of infatuation or the sense of being desired or extra-appreciated by someone.

Jaworski with innate intelligence (see the etymology of the word *interlegere*) conducts an in-depth analysis of surrounding reality and clearly reads situational contexts and interactions. He has more than once admitted that saying something clever in a simple way is the best token of a rich imagination. Far from arty exploits, it has a lot in common with honesty. Nevertheless, the simplicity of poetic expression must not be confused with calling a spade a spade¹⁴. This is why poetry is not for everybody¹⁵ and cannot be objectivised. One can always find the old and the new in it and reawaken one's fears in the face of the transience of creation, arouse the pride of being kind and altruistic and the fear of wrongdoing and materialistic arrogance. But most of all one can find respect for the Other, which can in no way be separated from one's own humanity. This is because every person who reflects on their own existence carries within them the potential

¹² See the poem *Adoracja* [Adoration], in: K. Jaworski, *byłem*, op. cit., p. 8.

¹³ K. Jaworski, *Dlaczego miłość* [Why love], in: idem, *Do szpiku kości...*, op. cit., p. 32.

¹⁴ K. Jaworski, *Dlaczego w momencie absolutnego zaświecenia* [Why in the moment of absolute exposure], in: idem, *Do szpiku kości...*, op. cit., p. 71.

¹⁵ K. Jaworski, *Autoportret dla celów medytacji* [Self-portrait for the purposes of meditation], in: idem, *Drażniące przyjemności 1988–2008*, op. cit., p. 81.

for inner freedom unconstrained by any form of social dependence. And this means dangerous living.

Jaworski's intelligence is reflected not only in the clever way he weaves various elements of the cultural background into the main poetic discourse¹⁶, but also in his wide cognitive horizon, up-to-date knowledge in various disciplines, and masterly use of motifs and symbols. It would be in vain to scan his works for needless ornaments, stylistic embellishments, or crude borrowings. To provide an example, the expression surgical "surgical" referring to the horror film *Excision* dealing with Otherness and to Stanisław Barańczak's poetry on the world and transcendence, becomes a perfectly original supplement to the metaphor of the physiology of human death. It is not form that evokes new contents but new contents that evoke a new form. Will-power towards the outside world reveals itself in the ceaseless exploration of imperfect words for describing emotional states. Jaworski emerges as an original poet given to deep reflection and equipped with the temperament of a philosopher possessing Witkiewicz's "metaphysical thrill", for he discovers the rich heritage of existentialism. And he has enough reasons, while referring to Thomas Mann's diary entry "the most intimate is the most universal and the most human", to conclude that "Life is a walk on really muddy water"¹⁷.

The impact of existentialism on Jaworski's output is visible in the way he presents the proto-experiences of fate's inevitability¹⁸, in the sense that man has been imprisoned in the very centre of undeserved suffering. Words about death, seemingly spoken indifferently, suddenly acquire cabalistic features, become heavy with meanings, decide about the sudden opening of the chamber of ambivalence in an unknown region of the future and return with the horrible accuracy of a boomerang. The labels "cabalistic" and "cosmic" help characterise the paradoxes of poetic formulations that are subject to the laws of another reality. Again and again, while trying to describe the reality the Other lives in, one comes up against the limitations of words. Yet paradoxically, the experience of liminal situations opens before one the road to a fulfilled future. Emmanuel Mounier called such an attitude "tragic optimism"¹⁹.

Potrzebni!
Umierają samotnie i dają do myślenia.

¹⁶ K. Jaworski, *Dlaczego potęga arcydzieł* [*Why the power of masterpieces*], in: idem, *Do szpiku kości...*, op. cit., p. 93.

¹⁷ „Życie to przechadzka po naprawdę mętnej wodzie” (K. Jaworski, *Powrót wikingów* [*Return of the Vikings*], in: idem, *Czas triumfu gołębi* [*The time of the triumph of pigeons*], Wrocław: Pomona, 2000, p. 30).

¹⁸ K. Jaworski, *Policzono. Zważono, rozdzielono* [*Counted. Weighed, divided*], in: idem, *Drażniące przyjemności 1988–2008*, op. cit., p. 69.

¹⁹ E. Mounier, *La petit peur du XXe siècle*, Neuchatel: La Baconnière / Paris: Les Éditions du Seuil, 1959, p. 89.

Needed!
They die in solitude and make others think²⁰.

The metaphysical element in the works of the author of *Triumf woli* [*Triumph of will*] appears not in verbal declarative formulas or in his moulding of characters that are declared as religious believers but rather in his shaping of the secular world and his presentation of the actual relations between people, both private and social. The realistic contents of symbols with metaphysical origins become clearly visible once we have come to realise that they are almost always linked with concrete events from the poet's life²¹. This means that, on the one hand, the pulsating fabric of reality is squeezed into symbolism, which entails a measure of exhibitionism on the part of the lyrical speaker, but on the other, it lends the events and experiences a more general dimension against the background of what is happening now²². On occasion, the reader will be surprised to find in the poet's very personal reminiscences a close link between his individual experience and a concrete political or social occurrence. The symbols aim at exposing the links between an individual's seemingly prosaic experiences and incidents and social, cultural or spiritual processes, but also at reducing them to the formula of "three dimensions": the past, the current present, and dreams. Jaworski is consistent in juxtaposing this triad with himself in order to highlight an individual's inner conflict. And this thoroughly inner conflict reveals itself to us as an objective one, stemming from the irrevocable past. It takes the form of a counterpoint to the various worlds which the lyrical "I" inhabits. Thus, in his picture of the worlds and the people, in his handling of time and space, there are no separate layers of the past, the present and the future. Such a mode of shaping the presented world could lead to the elimination of the social reality, should the given memories remain subjective. The poet avoids this effect by introducing an element of simultaneity into his creative process. He combines the literary timespace with colloquial language and timespace. Various simultaneous events, but first of all the various memories of concrete events and experiences from the past that are connected with a definite timespace, are always presented from different angles. It is evident that, with this method of poeticising, retrospection and inner monologue acquire special significance. By creating associations, these formal means allow the poet to transfer the past to the present, project the present onto the future, and link the past and the present with the future. In this way Krzysztof Jaworski continues the best traditions of critical realism in literature.

²⁰ K. Jaworski, *Starzy ludzie* [*Old people*], in: idem, *Dusze monet* [*Souls of coins*], Wrocław: Biuro Literackie, 2007, p. 22.

²¹ K. Jaworski, *Dlaczego gabinet nr 94* [*Why office 94*], in: idem: *Do szpiku kości...*, op. cit., p. 79.

²² K. Jaworski, *Łopata, dół, ziemia* [*Spade, hole, earth*], in: idem, *Ceremonia* [*Ceremony*], Poznań: Wojewódzka Biblioteka Publiczna i Centrum Animacji Kultury w Poznaniu, 2019, p. 27.

From the lyrical narrator's numerous reminiscences the poet creates a kind of film consisting of memories which thus become as mundane or basic as eating and drinking, laughing and weeping. A concrete memory is connected with a definite image, person, word, smell, object, colour or sound. Accordingly, we are dealing here with something more than associations of memories, i.e. with the reiteration of associations functioning as a refrain (suffice it to point to a set of words that reappear regularly in Jaworski's poems). In effect, they acquire the status of a code, or a leitmotif. Associations become a formula for uniting various figures of the presented world, and subsequently also a formula for linking the reality with transcendence. In the specific social reality he presents, Jaworski manages, through situational interplay and various forms of projection, to transfer transcendence into everyday life. Associations collide with one another like billiard balls. The collisions involve, on the one hand, the past, the present and the future, and on the other the individual and transcendental realities. What comes to the fore and shows its impact in this intricate game of associations is *analogia entis*. The title Jaworski gave to a selection of his poems, *Ciąg Fibonacciego*²³, thus comes as no surprise.

Everything around us, within us, and before us keeps changing²⁴. Can one be sure that in this context the outcome will match one's predictions? Reminiscences are not in themselves a simple model of the process of retrospection or recreation of the past in its inherent transience. They do not disappear with the past events that gave birth to them. They correspond, within a human being, to an inner process which in his/her consciousness does not belong to the order of time. They are evidence that the past captured by memory has a dimension that is different from pure temporality²⁵. It is through the constant negating of the interdependence between volatility and indestructibility, through the painful experiences of what once was and what is dying which people live through at every moment of time, that the past awakens in them memories of themselves and of the primary perspective of human consciousness where time does not exist or becomes a reflex of eternity²⁶.

The composition process in the case of the author of *44 lata 33 miesiące*²⁷ is not limited to putting together poetic cadences. He has mastered the rare skill of making few words express many complex ideas²⁸. Concise words go

²³ K. Jaworski, *Ciąg Fibonacciego. 111 wierszy*, op. cit.

²⁴ K. Jaworski, *Sytuacja dramatyczna [Dramatic situation]*, in: idem, *Drażniące przyjemności 1988–2008*, op. cit., p. 19.

²⁵ K. Jaworski, *Cisza [Silence]*, in: idem, *Drażniące przyjemności 1988–2008*, op. cit., p. 141.

²⁶ K. Jaworski, *Pamięci Krzysztofa Jaworskiego*, op. cit., p. 86.

²⁷ K. Jaworski, *44 lata 33 miesiące [44 years 33 months]*, in: idem, *.byłem*, op. cit., p. 22–29.

²⁸ See collections of the following poems: *Kapitał w słowach i obrazach [Capital in words and images]*; *Ceremonia [Ceremony]*; *Dusze monet [Soul's of coins]*; *Do szpiku kości. Ostatnia powieść awangardowa [To the core. The last avant-garde novel]*.

together with deep thoughts. A word is like imagination, offering numerous gifts; it can stand for rain and sunshine, a weapon and a brother. A word even contains something that is invisible and inaudible: death; because every written word turns against death. If people who are aware of the burden of inheritance that words carry started to explore their wealth of meanings, they would discover whole worlds hidden behind each word. Those who make use of words, a journalist writing a news item or a poet writing an epic poem, should be aware that they are setting in motion new worlds and liberating split creatures. What for one person brings comfort may mortally wound another. One tendency needs to be stressed here: when Jaworski criticises negative behaviours and attitudes, he never attacks a person and his or her self-esteem. With great respect, without flattering anyone but with great conviction, he will highlight their salient virtues.

In a sequence of associations and synaesthesias, a word-leitmotif not unlike a major or minor premise creates in Jaworski's poetry a chain of words and meanings, and these in turn get transformed into images of ideas enhanced with sounds, smells and flavours. Synaesthesia is accompanied by hyperbolisation of feelings with all its features of open-action movement, which is an expression of aesthetics and ethics at the same time. Visuality provokes moral judgement. The revealed demystifies what has been shamefully left unnamed. Perceptual synergism exposes the power of kinematic imagination. The poet, unlike Rimbaud, gives all the vowels a single colour: „A czerń, E czerń, I czerń, U czerń, O czerń” [“A black, E black, I black, U black, O black”]²⁹. Visualisation is accompanied by conceptualisation and the use of oxymorons. The seeming simplicity of language interspersed with anti-aesthetic elements hides a perverse stylistic sophistication. A metaphoric calligram appears as if straight from Apollinaire (the poem *W*³⁰). Exploiting the ambiguities of words and their similarities results in word-thought sequences that evoke unexpected associations. Paradoxical conclusions of poetic statements often take the form of strong lines of the kind used by the English metaphysical poets: „odbyt rozpoznaje smaki” [the rectum recognises tastes]³¹, „olfaktoryczny renesans” [olfactory renaissance]³², „objąć skurwysynistykę na rodzimym uniwersytecie” [given the chair of bastardology at his Alma Mater]³³. His criticism of mindless pop-culture consumers takes the form of sarcastic puns (*Jesień stulecia*)³⁴. The game of paradoxes derives from the spirit of contrariness, self-irony and high satire. The essence of the

²⁹ K. Jaworski, *44 lata 33 miesiące* [44 years 33 months], in: idem, *.byłem*, op. cit., p. 23.

³⁰ K. Jaworski, *W*, in: idem, *Hiperrealizm świętokrzyski* [The hyperrealism of the Świętokrzyskie region], Białystok: Kartki, 1999, p. 20.

³¹ K. Jaworski, *Przeczucia* [Premonitions], in: idem, *.byłem*, op. cit., p. 15.

³² K. Jaworski, *44 lata 33 miesiące* [44 years 33 months], in: idem, *.byłem*, op. cit., p. 25.

³³ K. Jaworski, *Kazanie na górze* [The Sermon on the Mount], in: idem, *Czas triumfu gołębi*, op. cit., p. 29.

³⁴ K. Jaworski, *Jesień stulecia* [The autumn of the century], in: idem, *.byłem*, op. cit., p. 6.

contradictions consists in the fact that while reminiscing nostalgically on the past (*Słodkie lata 90*³⁵) the poet juxtaposes it with the grey shades of the present reality which, however, he cannot accept because the prospects for the future appear to be even darker.

Krzysztof Jaworski faithfully preserves the contrast which, according to Stéphane Mallarmé³⁶ exists between utilitarian language, intended only to express contents based on the conventional senses of words, and poetic language, which constantly, like a swaying pendulum, draws the reader's attention to the sounds of words as a clue to their sense. In his poems, the endings remain on the same level as the beginnings. Each cadence, each dialogue, has its own carefully considered place, including commas and full stops. Meticulous observance of the rules of prosody is visible primarily in the perfect matching of the words to the lines of dialogue. We are dealing here with prosody seeking ever new solutions always faithful to itself, and as startling as cascades of meteors. His poems form a circle, enclosing us within a ring of intellectually engaging discourse. The poet looks at words "inside out", but not because he stumbles over them like over obstacles. No, he looks at them from the inside. Penetrating perception is accompanied by sententiousness. The intellectual content and the precision of language structure bring the poem's individual phrases closer to aphorisms. For Jaworski, the words come together of themselves to produce paronomastic, polysemic, baroque, and homonymic effects. In *Balet wielkostopnych* he contrarily exploits lexical ambiguity:

Finka zardzewiała,
Szwedkę zjadły mole,
Juniorki schodziłem do cna.

Rust got the knife
Moths got the anorak
I wore out the boots³⁷.

The poems from the collection entitled *.byłem [I was]*, which is a lyrical attachment to the meaningfully rich set of poetic prose pieces *Do szpiku kości. Ostatnia powieść awangardowa [To the core. The last avant-garde novel]*, are saturated with references to existentialism or freudism³⁸. For Krzysztof Jaworski, *.byłem* means taking possession of, but also the impossibility of fulfilling, all the aspirations whose fulfilment he has left till some uncertain time in the future, as he has lost them in the present time. The phrase ". I was" expresses astonishment which Auguste Comte compared

³⁵ K. Jaworski, *Słodkie lata 90. [The sweet nineties]*, in: idem, *.byłem*, op. cit., p. 21.

³⁶ See S. Mallarmé, *Symphonie littéraire. Œuvres complètes*, éd. H. Mondor et G. Jean-Aubry, Paris: Gallimard, 1945, p. 261–265.

³⁷ K. Jaworski, *Balet wielkostopnych [Ballet of the bigfooted]*, in: idem, *Czas triumfu gołębi*, op. cit., p. 32. Finka: A Finnish girl or woman / a camping knife; Szwedka: A Swedish girl or woman / an anorak; Juniorki: Juniors (feminine gender) / hiking boots.

³⁸ K. Jaworski, *Karl Jaspers*, in: idem, *Dusze monet*, op. cit., p. 20; *Myśl Blake'a [Blake's thought]*; Søren Kierkegaard, *Drażniące przyjemności 1988–2008*, op. cit., p. 78, 97–98;

to the most horrible feeling that overwhelms people whenever it seems to them that something affecting them directly is happening not according to the familiar laws of nature, by now largely tamed by human beings. This amazement reveals itself as a moment of great shrewdness and insight rather than as a nightmare upsetting the rhythm of day-to-day existence. The poet is surprised that the future has advantage over the present; the admission “I was” changes the existential convention while preserving its essence. Only the loss of that essence means nothingness. To change this state of affairs, to restore the meanings of many words spoken or heard so that human existence could finally be truly experienced meaningfully and joyously while taking advantage of every single opportunity and acknowledging its accompanying mysteriousness, it is necessary to open up to the Other in the process of shaping one’s identity.

Nasze życie nie jest ani lepsze, ani gorsze niż życie insekta.
Jego ostatecznym celem, bez względu
na prasę czy obuwie, jest
przetrwanie.

Our life is neither better nor worse than an insect’s life,
Its ultimate aim, regardless of the press or footwear, is
to live on³⁹.

Our identity defines – according to the poet – our conscious existence in the world. Our inherited genes, as well as social and cultural heritage, condition the cognitive side of our personal situation and attitude to the Other. Each individual life-story consists in the dialectic continuity of our encounters, confrontations, and even collisions with others⁴⁰. The jockeying for power, ideological bullying, intolerance, and instances of narrow-mindedness, racism or hate result in a degenerate identity and lead to dire egocentricity. This derives from the conviction that only what I think and believe is true and right, that I am the centre of the world. Everybody else is different and therefore alien or Other, that is to say someone who questions and undermines my sense of “normality”. Such a conviction entails distrust and fear of other people who become “pests” who disturb my peace of mind and encroach on my territory. As a result, my own identity, unquestionable and strong, gets reduced⁴¹.

Paradoxically, the more I inflate it with prejudices and egoism the more I render meaningless my *humanitas*, which stems from my belonging to the world and stands above groups of interest, language, skin colour, nation, gender and religion. Otherness as distance, and closeness as proximity and readiness to accept, mark two different approaches to diversity, diversity

³⁹ K. Jaworski, *Mucha [Fly]*, in: idem, *Drażniące przyjemności 1988–2008*, op. cit., p. 58.

⁴⁰ K. Jaworski, *Dlaczego Saturn w znaku Skorpiona [Why Saturn in the sign of Scorpio]*, in: idem, *Do szpiku kości...*, op. cit., p. 63.

⁴¹ K. Jaworski, *Dlaczego zmiana podpunktu widzenia [Why a change of the subpoint of view]; Dlaczego optymizm [Why optimism]*, in: idem, *Do szpiku kości...*, op. cit., p. 86, 103.

which shapes humanity⁴². For the poet, the challenge the people of today face, independently of all the contradictions and turmoil, derives from the simple principle of human rights, the rights of an individual as a free person and citizen of the world in which they live, work and procreate.

The poetry of Krzysztof Jaworski awakens its readers from an illusion of peace that comes when one asks oneself only superficial questions. Jaworski, in his poem *Jedynie dzieci średnich ośrodków przemysłowych* asks a series of questions:

Kim jestem? Skąd przybyłem? Dokąd zmierzam?
Wszystko mam napisane na bilecie.

Who am I? Where did I come from? Where am I heading?
I've got everything written down on the ticket⁴³.

This way, the author of *Noc filozofów* [*The night of philosophers*] helps ask fundamental questions characteristic of a genuine search for true answers, so that they might help the spiritual travellers – readers not afraid of looking inside their souls – make decisions concerning the true course of life: how to determine the time and space of our appearance in this best (according to Leibnitz) of all possible worlds? Is it worth living and when is it worth living? Does my existence have any sense? Does identifying strongly with history let me forcefully break into the course of events? Who do I appear to be in the bottomless chasm of the cosmos? The search, if it lives up to this label, serves to understand the core sense of human life with all its misfortunes, violence, encounters, joy, sexuality, illness, love, nonconformity; what I am unable to see is not focused. Despite everything, the world each of us lives in remains a mysterious magical world.

Śmierć każdego stworzenia umniejsza mnie, albowiem ludzkość mierzi mnie. Ciekawe jak działa to w drugą stronę? Taki na przykład pająk? Widzę go. (Mam 7760 fotografii moich kotów w folderze „Moje koty”. Katolicka wersja Biblii posiada 1261 rozdziałów, oznaczonych jedynie umownymi skrótami). Nie, nie wezmę łódki i nie popłynę na ryby.

The death of every creature belittles me because I despise humankind. Interesting to know how it works the other way round? A spider, for instance. I can see it. (I have 7760 pictures of my cats in the folder named 'My cats'. The Catholic Bible consists of 1261 chapters, marked only with arbitrary abbreviations). No, I will not get into a boat and go fishing⁴⁴.

Krzysztof Jaworski's lyrical "I" does not live purely for himself, does not put himself in the centre of things, but becomes what he has gifted others with. The poet's protest is provoked by people who, without any reflection,

⁴² K. Jaworski, *Szosta rano. Lustro nie żyje* [*Six in the morning. The mirror is dead*], in: idem, *Drażniące przyjemności 1988–2008*, op. cit., p. 111.

⁴³ K. Jaworski, *Jedynie dzieci średnich ośrodków przemysłowych* [*Only the children of medium industrial centers*], in: idem, *Kapitał w słowach i obrazach* [*Capital in words and images*], Kielce: SFS, 2002, p. 48.

⁴⁴ K. Jaworski, *Dlaczego potrzeba prostych słów* [*Why is there a need of simple words*], in: idem, *Do szpiku kości. Ostatnia powieść awangardowa*, op. cit., p. 56.

allow themselves to be limited by economic issues, by the idol of today's world: consumerism, superficiality of inter-personal relations, hypocrisy and falsehood, all the symptoms of contemporary Grundyism. In today's world, the rights of another person are not respected but exploited. Even though each of us lives a lonely life, in our uniqueness we need others to confront and compare ourselves with, to co-participate. The wise lyrical reflection present in Jaworski's poetry serves as a reminder of the truth that being capable of authentic humanity is directly proportionate to inner freedom. The more I feel free inside the more I love living.

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