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## **Totalitarianisms as systems of lawlessness (Miłosz's remarks)**

“Starting from unlimited freedom,  
I conclude with unlimited despotism.”  
(Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Demons*)

### **Gnostic freedom**

Miłosz's remarks on freedom have a biographical foundation. Already in his youth in Vilnius, the most important dimension of the experience of freedom for him was existence. Miłosz was not interested in the nation's liberty. In his poetry and articles, he wrote with the fervour of a revolutionary, yet the rebellion against social and economic inequality was for him just an ersatz for contesting specific existences. In “List do obrońców kultury”, published in *Po prostu* in 1936, he expressed his scepticism towards the Marxist project of mending the world: “Had I opposed the system because I felt solidarity with the mass of the defective, I would be lying.”<sup>1</sup> Young Miłosz was, in fact, rebelliously opposing the timeless markers of the human place in the world. Being overcome with the desire for existence without any limitations, and driven by his longing for infinitude, he craved a superhuman state, and since the human condition cannot achieve in earthly existence a godly superhuman nature, his freedom-focussed *yes* correlated with the exorbitant Prime – as reflected in his poetry and essays – transitioned into an eschatological *no* against the world enveloped in apocalyptic visions of the final extermination. The imperative of total freedom transitioned logically into a total rebellion – as extreme *yes* changes into absolute *no* because

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<sup>1</sup> Cz. Miłosz, “List do obrońców kultury”, in idem, *Przygody młodego umysłu. Publicystyka i proza 1931–1939*, A. Stawiarska (ed.), Znak, Krakow 2003, pp. 151–152. [English version translated from Polish].

on the reverse side of freedom, as Camus posited, there is rebellion.<sup>2</sup> We can call that rebellious and vengeful freedom gnostic. It evokes the most extreme metaphysical contestation. It far exceeds in its radical nature the versions of rebellion defined by Albert Camus in *The Rebel*. If the sons of Prometheus and Cain turn against evil Gods, they are, in fact, for them, Rulers of the world worth saving – worth the fire of progress and supposed justice. Only the rebellion shown by Byron did not fit Camus's typology, as for Cain in the mystery play of the English Romantic the Earth is not worth life but extermination. His claims against God as the cosmic botcher are gnostic (Marcionistic) and Manichaeistic. Among Slavs, the fullest presentation of Byronic folly was presented by, close in that respect to Miłosz, Fyodor Dostoevsky. A similar freedom from the entanglement of Earthly existence, and the resulting rebellion were shared by the persona of the poetry, prose, and essays of the Nobel Prize winner. His autobiographical *Three Winters*, and his pre-WWII essays were a record of his desire for freedom from any bodily or material limitations as being temporal and mortal, searches for freedom from interpersonal relations due to their limiting nature. Escapism and contempt for community as a biologised mass are characteristic of Miłosz's statements. That aversion is inevitable when freedom demands existence outside earthly time and space, when *yes* applies only to the existence of the Prime: on another Earth and under a different sky.

### Breakaway freedom

Gnostic freedom creates a division between the hell of the world and the heaven of the after-world. That anti-worldly separation was considered by, e.g. Dostoevsky, Nikolai Berdyaev, and Bogumił Jasinowski as the algorithm of the Russian vision of the world and man. Miłosz discovered it in himself as the *Eastern* particle.<sup>3</sup> Through it he possessed a sense of kinship with eastern cultists and religious thinkers. The eastern cult dualism imposes a vision of the world as a valley of death ruled by Satan, the Prince of This World. He defined an image of

<sup>2</sup> Vide: A. Camus, "Człowiek zbuntowany", in idem, *Eseje*, selection and trans. J. Guze, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warsaw 1971, p. 265. At the foundation of metaphysical rebellion, according to Camus, lies the total yes in the name of which the rebel says no to the whole world and the human fate anticipated in it: "The metaphysical rebel rises to demand unity for the broken world. (...) By protesting against the human condition, against that which remains unfinished by death and broken by evil, the metaphysical rebellion is a justified demand of a joyful unity against the suffering of life and death." (ibid., p. 278). [English version translated from Polish]. Miłosz considered gnostic contestation demands as unfounded. That turn resulted in the crisis of his gnostic individualism.

<sup>3</sup> Cz. Miłosz, *Rodzinna Europa*, Czytelnik, Warsaw 1990, p. 149.

man as a soul bound by the body and matter. That duality is also eschatological. It bears apocalyptic longing – a desire for the end of the evil world. That was why Berdyaev considered Russians as naturally apocalyptic souls and, in relation to that terminal temperament, nihilistic towards worldliness. Miłosz accepted that diagnosis. In *Native Realm* (1958) particularly he emphasised that the anti-worldliness of the gnostic dualism towards worldliness implies nihilism. He offered examples that the fallen world is not worth engaging in for a dualist, fulfilling positive postulates, and sacrifice in defence of the socially accepted axiological order. The experienced good does not deserve any gratitude from a nihilist. It vanishes in the void of insatiation. Miłosz, similarly to Albert Camus, stressed that that nihilism was religious, not atheistic. He posited, mainly after Jasinowski and Berdyaev, possibly under the influence of *The Russian Idea* (1946), that Russian nihilism was apocalyptic, or, even more precisely, that it was a nihilism of gnostic eschatology.

### Redemptive freedom

It is worth noticing that gnostic freedom is a freedom of extremely individualistic religiosity: one which despises the world, and longs for its end. That freedom does not want to have anything to do with religious orthodoxy, or any form of a collective cult. It discovers an unknown God, foreign to others. It considers that discovery as being redemptive. Thus, the freedom is a freedom of self-redemption. A dualist cannot lose it, because they would lose redemption. Because their freedom is the freedom to redeem themselves, they would have to abandon their belief in self-redemption to depart from gnostic freedom. Since the essence of their belief is obstinate, i.e. belief in the self by the self being redeemed, they remain just as obstinate by their absolute freedom as a guarantee of the choice of gnosis. Religious free-thinking opens a follower to heretic beliefs and religious ideas. Through that openness, the gnostic individualist finds redemption through a reinterpretation of faith. It is based on dark theophany, discovering that existence is wrong as it is ruled by an evil demiurge. The Good God has nothing in common with the demiurge's creation. He remains in an acosmic space as *deus otiosus*. The extreme nature of religious individualism appears precisely in a dualist's openness to heretical ideas as the components of redemptive *gnosis*. A significant feature of Miłosz's religiosity was his common inclusion of Slavic syncretism – adopting the heretical ideas of the religion of gnosis.

### Gnostic freedom as fate

In gnostic freedom, the power of the contestation of worldliness is the power of one's desire for a world not as it is, but as it should be. Freedom which says *yes* to the world it desires, demands immortality in contrast to that which is mortal, it is a desire of the timelessness contrary to that which is temporal, it is fuelled by the unifying desire for self-redemption contrary to wasting life in everyday loitering, finally, it is a desire for godliness contrary to the status of Eve's exiles on the wretched Earth. That is the essence of the predominance of gnostic freedom. Motivated by the desire for immortality, accessing timelessness, belief in self-redemption, and godliness, it becomes fate. It is the freedom of galley slaves to existential sensitivity. It is constantly lurking. It is intended. The act of realising it is like revealing predestination. It is a burden and a curse which, as in the case of Miłosz, the galley slave sometimes tries to escape through abandoning the desires for immortality, timelessness, self-redemption, and godliness. Gnostic freedom discovers it is a slave to selfishness, which makes it subject to usurpation, and the supporting operations of a speculative mind. It realises that it is the subject of a contrived self-redemption. It is a freedom of the necessary, i.e. involuntary taking redemption into *one's own hands*. The religious individualist discovers that they are slaves to their religious wilfulness. Its strength lies in one's selfishly ensuring one's eternal life. It is a freedom of a personality subject to solipsism all the way to egolatriy. They realise that the freedom is the freedom of a demigod on Earth, and that is their tragedy as they discover that their freedom is hostage to the image their demigodness.

The tragedy of having realised the temptations of anthropotheism was discussed in Miłosz's essays before WWII, and it remained a persevering theme in his later collections of essays, novels, and poetry.

### The freedom-necessity opposition

The division between the world and the after-world prime (the gnostic Pleroma) means a separation, and a transition to a binary opposition system of two dimensions: the realm of worldly necessities and escapist freedom. Bogumił Jasinowski, after Nikolai Berdyaev who authored *Dostoevsky: An Interpretation*, wrote "the sense of the division into reality and perfection, or even a type of delight in internal contradiction and psychological disharmony", and considered "the psychological disposition, specific for the Russian nature" as the most impor-

tant<sup>4</sup>. A specialist on Russia, he stressed the enormity of the Slavic ideal: “We need to add a word or two of explanation in relation to the thesis of the duality of the after-world perfection, and worldliness within the mental history of Byzantium, and later Russia. That duality, as discussed above, is contrary to freedom or necessity, contrary to individual consciousness, immortal and godly, and the society-state bond, bad and necessary.”<sup>5</sup>

The enormously inbred (and thus split) will of a dualist, who wishes to control only themselves – not the will of God, state, society, the obligations of tradition and customs – inevitably and painfully enters into conflict with that which is not theirs. That which is not their own seems necessary. In the gnostic experience of freedom, that which is necessary is not only incidental, but mostly it is associated with the timeless flaws of the body and matter. Gnostic freedom manifests its opposition towards their decay, stench, senility, atrophy, ergo: mortalisation. That freedom is also irritated by such obligations (necessities) of the body as: satisfying hunger, thirst, need of warmth, and, most of all, sexual drive. The experience of gnostic freedom expressed in Miłosz's works was peculiar for its consideration of the everyday needs of primitive man as an unbearable thrall.

Because an anti-worldly dualist enters into conflict with those needs, they even more so experience their power, which they considered a sign of superhuman tyranny. Thus split, they radiate the experience of the necessity onto the figure of the Creator as a tyrant, an evil demiurge. Given to existence, they are for gnostic freedom an insult, and a source of permanent dissension. Unbound in its struggle with the necessities of the body and matter, it achieves the antipodes of contestation. The sensory body is the enemy of a gnostic, and leads to a division with the spirit as a body of drives taking freedom onto a lead of necessity. It evokes disgust because it is a prison for freedom. It would be difficult to imagine a more extreme duality of the spirit and the body than that in the gnostic experience of freedom in the shackles of innate rules. Therefore, the whole nature seems to a gnostic dualist as demiurgic, subject to a material cycle of birth, copulation, and death.

The principle gnostic freedom discovered in nature is the eternal devouring of beings. As proof of the demiurgic character of nature, that freedom delights in the image of nature as carnage. Therefore, when a gnostic dualist finds for their world-view structure an anti-naturalist ideology, they become a fanatic. The belief in the new order is their belief in themselves. They will rather die than abandon it. When they hold the means of state-sanctioned enforcement, they will unleash terror, and will develop a world of planned and mechanical extermination unknown to nature. They become what they had fought.

<sup>4</sup> B. Jasinowski, *Wschodnie chrześcijaństwo a Rosja. Na tle rozbioru pierwiastków cywilizacyjnych Wschodu i Zachodu*, Instytut Naukowo-Badawczy Europy Wschodniej, Vilnius 1933, p. 4. [English version translated from Polish].

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

### Crisis of gnostic freedom

The division between exorbitant freedom, and life's necessities leads to a crisis of gnostic consciousness. In Miłosz's autobiographical creations, it was a crisis of gnostic voluntarism. It was most visible before WWII in the essays *O milczeniu*, *Zejście na ziemię*, *Radość i poezja*, *Dystans spojrzenia*<sup>6</sup>. They were filled with anxiety resulting from Miłosz's realisation of the temptations of gnostic freedom as wilfulness. Their author already understood that the power of gnostic freedom is destructive. When nihilistically turned against the world, it destroys the worldly life of its carrier. That apocalyptic freedom is, in relation to worldliness, capable of wilfulness's extravagance. Social ideology is not a remedy to its existential whims. In *Zejście na ziemię* (1938), the author stated the fiasco of the transition from gnostic freedom under the banner of Marxist historic necessities. He demanded freedom to develop from the position of calling for godliness against passing and death, but he already understood the folly of a terrific contestation of the world. He discovered the barrenness of the earth presented to man who does not want to mend the world, but rather strives for final redemption from it. He understood that the freedom to escape *from* the world is an invertive freedom, turning into its opposite of acquiescence towards the ideology of life's necessities. The author reported on his realisation that the result of the inability to immanently reconcile mortality with the body and matter is associated with aversion, disgust, and resentment towards reality. Therefore, he declared in his psychological plan the intent to restrain his megalopsychological rebelliousness. In his metaphysical plan, he declared his coming to terms with mortality, with the "Eve's exile" condition, declaring his ability to accept the conditions of existence as given for earthly self-fulfilment. In his imagination, he passed the gates of death like Faustus as it is a trial of hell releasing him from the pestering fear of mortal life. "Descends to the bottom of hell on Earth, and travels those circles of fire flickering like the furnaces of Westphalia, untouched by the flames."<sup>7</sup> In an essay *Radość i poezja* (1939), he considered becoming accustomed to death and evil as a condition for becoming accustomed to life, i.e. a condition on which one's ability to accept the limitations of existence depends. It is a condition for the ability to suppress the gnostic contestation of the world – to prevent the freedom *from*, and its transition into freedom *to*. The author of the pre-WWII essays, having identified an existential thorn, or husk of dualism between man and his life, no longer wanted to deaden its pricking with a substitute political rebellion. He wished to solve that problem there where it had been born, i.e. within the ex-

<sup>6</sup> Vide: Cz. Miłosz, *Przygody młodego umysłu...*

<sup>7</sup> Cz. Miłosz, "Radość i poezja", in: idem, *Przygody młodego umysłu...*, p. 281.

istential plan by raising himself for accepting its elemental data. He rejected the domain of political necessities in the name of freedom measured by the awareness of the folly of wilfulness – in the name of positive existential freedom. He understood that positive freedom requires an agora, yet it does not have to be a forum for political activity. It can be apolitical art and culture. They did not require the artist to conceal the marks of godliness, and, at the same time, enabled him to pay tribute to necessity, though not for the price of adapting freedom to the requirements for accepting collective ideologies.

Since existential thorns include: a multitude of realities thwarting the fulfilment of the desire for the Unity, the diffusion of the destructive imperative of the Entirety, and the confusing of the defiling spirit of Purity of the subject consciousness, one must acquire an ability to adapt the order to the *I* of the Only, the Entire, and the Pure the trials not – *I* of chaos *here* and *now*, which threatens with multitude, diffusion, confusion, but enables one to be victorious in that trial, and continue to regain the verified: Unity, Entirety, Purity – check *être* (eternal) within the crucible of *devenir* (variable).

### **Obduracy of the antinomy of freedom and necessity**

Miłosz's pre-WWII attempts at reconciling freedom and necessity were of a declarative nature. The destructive wilfulness sought a bridle for itself. The concocted affirmation of necessity was of a temporary nature. It consisted of a rational pragmatism, which, however, did not neutralise outbursts of gnostic freedom. It offered hope of a unity of contradictory elements (*coincidentia oppositorum*). Before WWII, the issue of freedom and necessity became the tragedy of the *I* of the Only. The poet developed his imperative of sensible acceptance of necessity. In eroticism, as opposed to ascetism, he sometimes was a libertine – a fickle indulgence for the body as the nest of drives that cannot be curtailed. In his relationship with Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, the master of the craft, there existed a visible submissiveness in their letters – years later referred to by Miłosz himself as *kolanopokłonność* [knee-bowing]. In war-time reality, that pragmatism, bursting as a result of the history revealing the demiurgic terror, transformed into the cynicism of professing the necessity of Hegel and Engels. He needed the aegis of a simplified anti-personal doctrine. Influenced by Tadeusz Kroński, Miłosz readily considered that freedom was realised necessity. He combined Darwinism with the philosophy of history under the banner of historic necessities creating an original biological philosophy of history. Through a Hegelian initiation, he found himself in opposition to the resistance, and to the totalitarian authorities after WWII, as that which exists is intelligent, and intelligence is shared only by that

which has the power to exist, and becomes victorious. Miłosz, having discovered the necessity to subject his will to the rules of nature in order to establish bearable relations with reality, transferred that rationalism about history – considered in the light of Hegelianism as a set of processes both inevitable and intelligent. However, just like Marxism before WWII, in the years after WWII, particularly after emigrating in 1951, he was fighting Hegelianism as an ideology legitimising Soviet colonialism. In the following decades of his American exile, he rejected Hegelianism not as much within its historical dimension, as in the existential and metaphysical plan as a school of legitimising the necessity of scientism making Earth a materialistic Ulro.

### Totalitarian wilfulness

Free will within the folly of wilfulness remained the central focus of Miłosz's consideration of the roots of totalitarianism. Before WWII, the discord between freedom and worldly necessities became his view of the European mind in the age of quasi-religious ideologies. His biographical experiences brought the poet a conviction of the danger of captivity as a result of escaping from freedom both when a human being strives *for* the world, as they may succumb to the pernicious submissiveness towards the institutions of the totalitarian state, and when they escape *from* the world, as that may be forced and destructive escapism – resulting from their inability to consider related existences as their own. Nihilism coupled with cynicism can, in that instance, suggest far-reaching compromises with the necessity to cause historic evil – for example, to justify the necessity of terror. Miłosz was desperate to find a remedy for the scandals of gnostic wilfulness, yet his alliances with social and historic necessities (“New Faiths”) proved to be inefficient attempts at overcoming the escapist *from*. Due to his problems with freedom, he became a thorough analyst of it. He shaped his searches in the form of literary works. He considered them as laboratory studies, and himself as a research tool. Just like Romantics, he treated his biography according to the principle of *pars pro toto*. He considered how freedom led in the 20<sup>th</sup> c. to the folly of wilfulness as a method of looking into himself. He analysed the sicknesses of freedom in the West from a greater distance. Its eastern distortions were as close to him as his own shirt.

The criticism of the denigrations of freedom in the West conducted by Miłosz was close to that of Mickiewicz within the aspect of secularisation of beliefs and religious ideas. The Polish Romantic, e.g. in *Księgi narodu polskiego i pielgrzymstwa polskiego*, related freedom to monotheism, and captivity to secular polytheism. He argued that in modern Europe, the role of God was played by the calves

of secular values. He considered that polytheism to be modern neo-paganism. He thought that it led towards substituting God with God-man. Miłosz noticed that the Darwinian principle of the fight for existence between the stronger and the weaker had become a dogma considered as a modern fetish within European thought. It served as a basis for decreeing the confrontational nature of human reality, and elevated the will to fight to the top of all values. Miłosz concluded that the contamination of Darwinism with the national ideology fertilised Nazism, while the Enlightenment's anthropology of the naturally good man gave rise to communism. Even before WWII, he sought intellectual foundation for the etiologies of totalitarianisms. In an essay entitled *Dystans spojrzenia* (1939), he considered naturalistic monism and Enlightenment humanism as their roots: "Theoreticians, closely examining those murky waters of 20<sup>th</sup> century consciousness, are pessimists, and they're entitled to that. Some see the causes of evil in the detachment of ethics from its metaphysical basis, within the legacy of positivism and naturalism, attempting to reduce the phenomenon of the spirit to the category of time-space phenomena, and thus to negate the difference between human and animal nature (Kozak, Chévalier). Others in an excessively bright humanism..."<sup>8</sup>

The author of *Legenda nowoczesności*, written during an occupation night, argued that capitalism gave Europeans a new form of individualism. It subordinated their innovativeness to the lust for money. Having been seduced by its power, they stopped living according to a will subject to God's will. They subjected their freedom to mercantile goals. Miłosz considered that will for wealth as the modern equivalent of megalomania. Free-market democracy proved, according to the essayist, its incubator. He considered that megalomania as the blind will to magnify a unitary being and communities at the cost of others. In the capitalist law of absolute competition distorted in colonialism, he saw the kernel of the ideology of racial domination. In his eyes, capitalism associated market freedom with the will for financial power. In essence, capitalism legalised the right to fight for one's existence. Balzac's achievement was that he indicated the legalisation of the principle of the survival of the fittest, according to which the stronger individuals devour the weaker ones. The author of the essay *Legenda miasta potwora*<sup>9</sup> (1942) valued Balzac mainly for his bold analogy of the natural world and the world of economics.

According to Miłosz, Stendhal in *The Red and the Black* presented that same process of the cult of will for power in the capitalist struggle for existence in the form of the god of career. That modern deity lured Julian Sorel to the expanse of permissivism. He associated freedom with the will for achieving social rank –

<sup>8</sup> Cz. Miłosz, "Dystans spojrzenia", in: idem, *Przygody młodego umysłu...*, pp. 292–293. [English version translated from Polish].

<sup>9</sup> Vide: Cz. Miłosz, "Legenda miasta potwora", in idem, *Legenda nowoczesności*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Krakow 1996, p. 18.

regardless whether within a church (black) or military (red) hierarchy. “However, both Stendhal’s and the readers’ sympathies lie with the protagonist.”<sup>10</sup> That sympathy was considered by Miłosz as an expression of western nihilism. In his eyes, the fetishisation of money and career detached European rationalism from ethics. Without it, the rationalism of social Darwinism became dangerously irrational. The essayist’s argument was: where the mind falls asleep, there the demons of capitalist and colonial voluntarism awake. The will of the European eventually detached from religion as the axiological foundation. That European irrationalism of the liberated will, born from pragmatism, reached its peak in the work by Andre Gide entitled *The Vatican Cellars*. Miłosz devoted an essay to the transition from the European will to total wilfulness with the telling title *Zupełne wyzwolenie* [Total liberation] (1942 ?). The actions of the protagonist in Gide’s novel were framed within the categories of necessity and freedom: “Lafcadio threw an old man he did not know out of a speeding train – he had no goal there, the crime will not benefit him in any way. He did that to find out whether ‘act gratuit’ was possible, i.e. an act independent of any determinants, the higher proof of man’s absolute freedom. (...) All those instances consisted of idolisation of will, and all the cases were founded on the obsession of necessity. (...) Suppressed resentment exploded in a rebellion against necessity, seeking at least an illusion of freedom.”<sup>11</sup> In the essays *Legenda woli* (1942 ?) and *Zupełne wyzwolenie*, he argued that in philosophy, wilfulness had been sanctioned in the writings of Frederick Nietzsche. Considering his interest in the philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer, which he expressed in an essay entitled *Religijność Zdziechowskiego* (1943), one ought to note that Miłosz regarded as his own view the fact that the will which exists in nature and human history of one being to dominate other beings had led the philosopher to dark pessimism. Schopenhauer considered that will as a burden difficult to carry. His position towards human nature was critical rather than affirmative. He postulated man should remain self-critical towards blind will, not self-affirmative. Zdziechowski, who offered lectures on Schopenhauer’s philosophy and discussed it in *Pesymizm, romantyzm a podstawy chrześcijaństwa*, regarded blind will as an equivalent of a gnostic demiurge. Miłosz, familiar with the theses of the author of the study *The World As Will and Representation*, considered the inversion of the notion of blind will as the essence of Nietzsche’s philosophical revolution. He presented the philosopher as the one who nullified the *blind* predicate to be substituted with power. Thus, he definitely liberated will from the harness of Christian axiology. After Nietzsche: “thus is the procedure of ‘strong man’: prove to herself/himself her/his own freedom, own unlimited ability. Human deeds are determined through a chain of causes. I remain under the burden of the fatal nature of

<sup>10</sup> Cz. Miłosz, “Legenda woli”, in idem, *Legendy nowoczesności...*, p. 43.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

the social machine, yet I – I am free, and I can do that for which I can find courage, overcoming my smallness, fear, and emotion.”<sup>12</sup> Miłosz presented Nietzsche as an opposer of Christian traditions inspired by Darwinism, who bereaved will of any moral inhibitions. He adored will for its power. He also brought to heights of sacred axioms the principle of self-affirmation of the instinctive side of human personality. He agreed with Lev Shestov, who juxtaposed Nietzsche with Dostoevsky as the prophet of the coming totalitarianisms in the work *Dostojewski i Nietzsche. Filozofia tragedii*. According to Miłosz, “Nietzsche, by calling: ‘*Pereat veritas, fiat vita*’ – may the truth perish, may there be life – cast a spell, which explained almost the entire intellectual ferment of the last century.”<sup>13</sup> By rejecting the criterion of the truth, the German philosopher proclaimed a new voluntarism to Europe and the world: who cares whether it is blind, if it is the will of superhuman power. He disdained the truth, which in turn ousted European freedom to the antipodes of Nazi madness. During his French exile, Miłosz agreed with Camus in that Nietzscheanism was a sign of the malady of the European mind, and an important root of the race totalitarianism. For the Polish poet, it was obvious as he considered that Darwinism was the common denominator of the philosophy and ideology of Nazism – the enforcement of blind will of superhumans to dominate sub-humans.

### Philosophy of wilfulness

When in America, Miłosz focussed on Dostoevsky, and found in him a prophet, who offered the most insightful vision of the outcomes of the European degeneration of freedom into wilfulness, who saw in the Western and Eastern wilfulness a degeneration of freedom leading to totalitarianisms. He focussed on that issue in a paper *Dostojewski a zachodnia wyobraźnia religijna* included in the *Ziemia Ulro* collection. There, he presented Dostoevsky as a prophet, who foretold the deviation of freedom as a result of the capturing of minds with false notions. That prophet of the time of contempt considered the idea of elevating man to replace God as the most dangerous of all. Miłosz stressed that for the great Russian writer, it had been a spew of the mad path of humanity, i.e. the diffusion throughout Europe of the Enlightenment idea of human self-affirmation of naturally good man. He noted in an essay entitled *Legenda wyspy* that the Rousseauistic idea of good will and the naturally good man became the foundation the anthropology of Auschwitz. That served as the foundation for the development

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 42.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 50.

of the idea of anthropotheism defined by Ludwig Feuerbach in *The Lectures on the Essence of Religion*, which gave man Godly prerogatives. As a result, Christian eschatology was replaced by secular eschatology, i.e. socialist and nationalistic projects for building heaven on earth. That was why both for Berdyaev and Miłosz *The Grand Inquisitor* in *The Brothers Karamazov* was a brilliant work. Miłosz's statements on the legend collected in the volume *Rosja. Widzenia transoceaniczne*<sup>14</sup> indicated the influence of Berdyaev on the mind of the Polish poet. The legend... was also for him a prophetic foreshadowing of the delivering to the emperor that which is the emperor's and that which is god's. It was a prophecy on the human abandonment of freedom for the certainty of earthly joy. It foreshadowed ideological "New Faiths." It prophesied an escape from freedom towards fanaticism triggered by the notions of a glorious worldly future.

According to Miłosz, Darwinism became the breeding ground for those notions, while fanaticism was a result of considering the findings of Darwinism as universal – binding both in the natural world and in human communities. Considering them as binding within history implied the error of accepting the *homo homini lupus* principle, i.e. the opportunistic affirmation of wolf-like rules of survival, and, eventually, the admiration of the wilfulness of races exterminating other races considered deficient, ergo: unworthy of existence. Freedom at the folly of the blind will for power became, according to Miłosz, in the German totalitarianism a wilfulness for killing, carnage, and extermination. It became the sacred will, motivated through eugenics, of the master race, for which it was befitting to destroy the useless sub-humans in order to gain Lebensraum (living space).

Miłosz found the essence of the distortion of freedom in the German totalitarianism in the falseness of the *pro naturam* self-affirmation. Similarly to Dostoevsky, he saw in it the kernel of the dethroning of man-God by God-man, who elevated the savagery of human nature to the level of godliness. The time of war gave the poet the conviction that an ideology which draws inspiration from the spirit of Darwinian principles, i.e. draws its banner from the earth's Spirit, inevitably brings to the world the carnage of the Spirit of history – the spirit of nations and classes. From that stemmed Miłosz's postulate of opening one's eyes to Darwinism so that freedom remained *contra naturam* – aware of what dark powers it offers its *veto*, so that man could fulfil themselves in accordance with their controlled nature, while their freedom controlled their personal darkness, not for the darkness to rule and destroy their freedom. Miłosz's essay entitled *Legenda wyspy* indicated that Darwinism is necessary in human cognition, so that people do not remain in the clutches of earthly powers. The awareness of the power of Darwinian laws is necessary to remain independent of them. It facilitates wilful-

<sup>14</sup> Vide: Cz. Miłosz, *Rosja. Widzenia transoceaniczne*, vol. I, *Dostojewski – nasz współczesny*, B. Toruńczyk (ed.), Fundacja „Zeszytów Literackich”, Warsaw 2010.

ness, as it helps man realise what powers of nature they summon in themselves as its part. One such power is the instinctive treatment of space as a realm of ideological purity. His war-time essays (*Legenda wyspy*) proved that it was the common unawareness of the immanent nature of the deadly powers of nature and human nature that led to the deformations of naturalistic monism in politics. The joyful celebrations of the discoveries of the principles of willpower constituted, according to Miłosz, the culmination of the captivity of the West European mind. "It may be the case that that version of life's devotees proved the most dangerous for the West."<sup>15</sup> In that context, he emphasised in his later essays and poems Charles Darwin's objections towards evolutionism as a devilish theory. He argued that the biologist realised the world-view dangers of Darwinism. According to Miłosz, an intellectual aberration impelled millions of Germans to escape from freedom to the ideology of the race of a totalitarian state as Nazism appealed to their natural drives and instincts. It infested Germans with an affirmation of that ideology. It defined for worldly life devotees a goal to capture Lebensraum for themselves. Therefore, Nazism turned Germans into the joyful media of dark Darwinism. Extreme wilfulness gave them captivity within the thrall of deadly laws, to which they became obedient servants as Nazism did not leave them anything with which to defend themselves against the natural rules of selection and annihilation. To conclude: the initial assumption of Miłosz's essays was a conviction that freedom cognitively opened to the influence of primitive laws of nature shall remain freedom, provided that it is *contra naturam* in relation to them.

### Cultural foundation of Darwinism

Miłosz's war-time essays indicated that German totalitarianism was a wilfulness organised against freedom. It was founded in European individualism. The degeneration of wilfulness consisted of the mind's dismissal of moral and rational inhibitions under the influence of natural monism. Miłosz saw the essence of the German scandal in the subjection of politics to emotion, primal inspiration, and pagan mythology. He saw the beginning of Nazism in the concept of irrational freedom – following intuition, feeling, emotion, and political exaltation. Therefore, in his war-time essays, Miłosz remained disinclined even to Bergson's intuition as he was convinced that the opening of the will to the suggestions of all types of irrationalism opened in Germany the gates for the insane ideology.

The German madness led to a mutation of the urban ethos. By spurning the truth, as everyone has such a truth, according to Nietzsche, as they need for their

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<sup>15</sup> Cz. Miłosz, *Legenda woli...*, p. 52.

life goals, Germans derailed the ethos grounded in the Protestant foundation. They chose the banner of science interpreted within the spirit of extermination based on the race criterion. According to the essayist, an extreme version of individualism was the subjection of the will of Germans to the ethos of racial war. It required them to sacrifice European rationalism together with Christian traditions. It was negated through the unification of the Romantic will with Darwinian laws of the survival of the fittest – considered as intelligent. Thus, the god of Germans was considered the granter of homicidal laws. Inspired by the laws of nature, they grew to believe that He was with them, especially when they were killing. The extermination of the weak became for them an experience of freedom unified with the laws of god's nature. Miłosz's analysis indicated that Nazism (inspired by Darwinism) elevated killing to the top of religious exaltation. In that mental condition, Germans experienced killing as an act of unity with the god of nature. An important cause of their mania was the urge to transcend death, as the discoverers of Darwinistic revelations deserved, in their eyes, to be the medium of god's laws. Once unified with the immortal god, they fell into a sense of already sharing immortality here: on Earth. The ethos of extermination proved for them an ethos of self-extermination.

### **Gnostic freedom in the ages of secularisation**

Miłosz got to know communist totalitarianism by being its proponent. Though he rarely returned after WWII to Germans possessed by Nazism, the phenomenon of the fall of freedom into wilfulness of the Eastern type became the main focus in his works, and continued to interest him throughout his later life. It was expressed most fully during his exile in France and America. Communism, similarly to Nazism, was for Miłosz a result of secularisation. However, he did notice differences in the process of the secularisation of the Orthodox Church. His knowledge of Russia enabled the poet to capture the differences between German and Russian wilfulness. Both forms were, in fact, examples of extreme sicknesses of freedom, yet their origins had been different. The differences of the religious movements had a decisive influence on the differences of the intellectual captivities in the Nazi and Soviet totalitarianisms.

Dualism remained at the centre of Miłosz's consideration of Eastern freedom. He carefully traced Eastern cults as he considered Russians as the successors of a gnostic and Manichean understanding of good and evil. He argued that in gnostic and Manichean (Bogomilian) cults, the opposition between the spirit and the body, the ideal and reality, and the over-world and the world reached the extreme level particular to Russians. He found dualism as a model for analys-

ing Russian culture in Jasinowski's work entitled *Wschodnie chrześcijaństwo a Rosja* (1933). That model had already been used by Berdyaev in a work entitled *Dostoevsky: An Interpretation* (1923). Jasinowski, however, in a breakthrough discovery, concluded that it was a gnostic-Manichean dualism. Berdyaev applied that gnostic-Manichean model of dualism to the fullest only in his work entitled *The Russian Idea* (1946). However, he did not quote Jasinowski, but Adolf Harnack. In the remarks, he offered a single sentence of commentary on the concept of the German religious scholar: "Harnack asserts that there is among the Russians a disposition to Marcionism."<sup>16</sup> Berdyaev considered that statement to be true. Miłosz, being prepared through the lectures of Marian Zdziechowski, shared the view of Jasinowski, which he considered accurate throughout his life. In relation to Russia, he considered as true the statement: "an isolated formation of individual consciousness, which displays a character formally less concise, and less coherent than in the West (sometimes applicable even to the dualistic division), while in terms of its contents, it is transcendently-contemplatively aimed at the after world, and diverted from worldliness, which is negatively and pessimistically disposed to socio-political bonds, to the entire worldly reality in fact. The gnostic-Manichean dualism of good and evil transforms easily into another opposition pair: into the antithesis of the individual 'I', which adores freedom and is diverted from the earthly and evil in its fabric reality, and the reality based on 'the ruler of this world', i.e. Satan or his state, thus, eventually, in the State of generalness."<sup>17</sup> In cultism, and the saturation of the Orthodox Church with dualistic elements, Miłosz saw, after Jasinowski and Berdyaev, the answer to the question on the origins in the Eastern mentality of the gap between the zones of earthly necessities and freedoms. And why Eastern freedom is *implicite* anti-worldly. In fact, all agreed that the "gnostic-Manichean dualism formed as a prelude to the dualism of ideals and reality, freedom and compulsion."<sup>18</sup> Miłosz shared Jasinowski's conviction that: "One could, in fact, talk about (as German Romantic philosophy did) the antithesis of freedom and necessity as the basic stream of general human history,"<sup>19</sup> but he also thought that the dilemma possessed a strictly Slavic nature. In the East (the poet was his own example that it applied not only to Russia), freedom turned, principally, against the evil world, itself become its own reverse, i.e. wilfulness. Justyna Kurczak offered the following summary of the concept of the birth of Eastern civic freedom, and Eastern wilfulness in her work entitled *Wschodnie chrześcijaństwo a Rosja*: "While in modern times in Western culture, there occurred an evolution the axis of which was the liberation of 'man

<sup>16</sup> M. Berdyaev, *Rosyjska idea...*, p. 270. [Berdyaev, M. *The Russian Idea*. New York 1948].

<sup>17</sup> B. Jasinowski, op. cit., p. 5.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

and citizen,' the emancipation of the individual, in Russian culture there consolidated, according to Jasinowski, the gnostic negation of the worldly order by the individual, for whom collective life is filled with evil, whereas the perfect order can symbolise both the autocrat and the collective. He had a very strong sense of the division into the ideal and reality, into the individual absolute freedom 'out of this world' and the acceptance of the society-state reality characterised by extreme omnipotence and compulsion."<sup>20</sup>

In Miłosz's analyses, as he remained under the influence of Jasinowski, dualism was a model of mental structure, without which it is not possible to explain the nihilistic character of Russian freedom. The apocalyptic anti-worldliness of the Russian mentality (the religion of dualism) fertilised its nihilism being expressed in the disdain for nature, for the values of the earthly material and spiritual culture, for law and economics, and most of all for morality in politics and social life. Nikolai Beryaev, who influenced Jasinowski, found that mental state in the following passage of *The Diary* from the 1840s by Aleksandr Nikitenko: "a pathetic sight of our contemporary society. There are neither any lofty pursuits, nor lawfulness, simplicity, or fair morals, in short: nothing which would indicate a healthy, natural and energetic development of moral forces... The deprivation of the society is so high that the notions of honour and justice are considered either as weaknesses or a manifestation of Romantic exaltation... Our education is pure falseness... Why should we care about gaining knowledge when our life and society are hostile towards grand ideas and truths, when any attempts at fulfilling any thought of justice, good, and common benefit is met with persecution and stigmatisation as if they were crimes?"<sup>21</sup> As one can see, the systems in Russia change, but Russia shall remain the same as long as the state of things described by Nikitenko continues. Following Berdyaev, Jasinowski assumed that "In public life in Russia, extreme maximalism evokes polar attitudes: rebellious or filled with endless humility, verging on self-annihilation."<sup>22</sup> Miłosz was discovering that eternal Russia. He discovered its relic religiosity as being constitutive. He considered the rule of the tzars and communism as the guises of autocracy. He considered the duality of exorbitant intentions, and opposite necessary actions as the essence of the Russian mentality, genetically explaining its political fate. The chronic conflict between ideas and deeds within the practices of social and political life, the illusionary façade nature of the state and its institutions – that is the proper social system of Russia, the condition of its fabric, and the actual reality.

<sup>20</sup> J. Kurczak, "Rosyjski komunizm w perspektywie polskiej myśli filozoficznej", in: M. Broda, J. Kurczak, P. Waingertner, *Komunizm w Rosji i jego polskie interpretacje*, Wydawnictwo Ibidem, Lodz 2006, p. 44. [English version translated from Polish].

<sup>21</sup> As cited in: M. Berdyaev, *Rosyjska idea*, trans. J.C. – S.W., Stowarzyszenie Kulturalne Fron-da, Warsaw 1999, p. 78.

<sup>22</sup> J. Kurczak, op. cit., p. 45.

That mental state is the true enemy of Russians. It builds their self-destructive civilisation. Russians, the born anti-worldly dualists, apart from some exceptions unaware of the state, build that system together with the authorities.

The model of the dualistic analysis was also considered accurate in the late-20<sup>th</sup> c. by Boris Uspensky and Yuri Lotman, within the diagnostics of the states of social psychology in Russia, as it explained the etiology of the Russian mentality as gnostic freedom fertilising nihilism described, e.g. by Nikitin. Therefore, it is noteworthy that Berdyaev discovered the adequacy of the model under the influence of Dostoevsky in the initial decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> c., when he analysed the Russian dualism in relation to the anti-worldly nature of nihilism motivated through the will for apocalypse restoring like apocatastasis a different Earth under a different sky: "The antinomial polarity of the Russian soul combines nihilism with religious pursuit of the end of the world, to a new revelation, a new Earth, and a new sky. Russian nihilism is polluted with Russian apocalypticism. That type of spiritual disposition considerably hinders the work of the nation, the creation of the values of culture, and it is not conducive to any spiritual discipline. That was the focus of Konstantin Leontiev when he said that a Russian can be a saint, but he can never be a man of honour. Honour entails moral mediocrity, a bourgeois virtue which is not interesting for apocalypticism and nihilists. That quality proved fatal for the Russian nation as saints include only the chosen few, while the majority is doomed to a life without sanctity. Only a few achieve the higher spiritual life, while the majority of people prove to have a below average cultural life."<sup>23</sup>

Miłosz, following that train of thought on Russia in *Native Realm*, considered the Russians' approach to truth significant. He noted that the lenient approach to facts in social life was characteristic of the Eastern culture. For example, according to dualistic convictions, our statements on facts are defective truths. Those polluted earthly truths cannot access the Truth: The truth of truths. Alain Besançon noted that in Russia, *Pravda* signifies not only truth, but also justice and obedience towards God, who is the primary source of truth and justice. *Istina* signifies positive actual truth, one which appears in front of one's eyes, and is verifiable. *Istina* is something less dignified than *pravda*. The distortions of the prophetic truth, *istina*, are of no major significance as over it there shines *pravda* as the sanctuary. That enables Russians to lie honestly, wholeheartedly (which is often noticed by foreigners).<sup>24</sup> The dualism of the earthly *istina* and the heavenly Truth entails the typical Eastern practical conclusion: in everyday life, it is not worth pursuing truth as either way it is always only a partial truth, i.e. a partial

<sup>23</sup> M. Berdyaev, *Światopogląd Dostojewskiego...*, p. 11.

<sup>24</sup> A. Besançon, *Święta Ruś*, trans. Ł. Maślanka, Fundacja Świętego Mikołaja Redakcja „Teologii Politycznej”, Warsaw 2012, p. 36.

lie. A lie does not deserve to be condemned as it is necessitated by the earthly deficiency. According to Miłosz, the fact that Russians abandoned the position of seekers of truth is not surprising as it is obvious in earthly reality. It is forced by specific existences. Therefore, earthly necessities evoke hatred, but that hatred, Miłosz continued, constituted only an alibi for nihilism. Precisely that suppressed idiosyncrasy is its birthplace. The mother of that nihilism is hatred for the earthly deficiency of existence, while its father is the Eastern fatalism which states that the world lies in evil. It results in an unlimited tolerance for the necessary evil. And thus, Miłosz's analyses uncovered the main conflict of the Russian soul: the hate of evil thwarting the adequacy of life, and the admiration of the necessary evil, which enables one to nurture that hatred of life and the world. The maintenance of that anti-worldly ambivalence is aided by the opportunistic subjection of freedom to the necessities of lies and evil, as those are the necessities of earthly life. Only in the Heavenly Kingdom can we stand in truth and goodness, while the lamb shall lie aside the lion. Because we live in the earthly hell, any pursuit of truth and goodness is insane. Only an *idiot* can pursue them. The same applies, according to Jasinowski, to freedom, equality, fraternity, law, justice, beauty, and love. The exorbitant nature of Eastern idealism makes them inaccessible within the earthly horizon. After Berdyaev and Jasinowski, Miłosz assumed as his own a view that "In relation to culture, almost all Russians are nihilists. Culture does not solve the problem of the end; emerging from the worldly process, culture amplifies mediocrity. Russian boys (Dostoevsky's favourite expression) focus on solving the ultimate problems of the world, the problem of God and immortality, or the organisation of humanity according to a new pattern; it appears to atheists, socialists, and anarchists as an obstacle in their pursuit of the end of the world. Russians contrast the leap towards eschatology with the historic and cultural work of the people of Europe. Thus the animosity towards form, the formal principle in law, state, morality, art, philosophy, and religion. A Russian is disgusted by the formalism of European culture, it is foreign to him. A Russian is only characterised by slight formal skills. Form brings measure, it retains within certain limits, it establishes borders, and amplifies within mediocrity. The apocalyptic and nihilistic rebellion destroys all forms, cancels all limitations, and drops all inhibitions."<sup>25</sup> That explains the Russian passiveness towards worldly matters. In Miłosz's analyses, the indolence of Russians towards worldly material and spiritual culture had gnostic-Manichean origins, and was related to the anti-worldly type of eschatology (apocalypitics according to Berdyaev). Simply the fatalistic awareness of earthly necessities justified Russians' humble enduring captivity, inequality, submission, lawlessness, harm, all which is despicable, contempt, and hatred, as they stem from innate evil. They are even desired, as they confirm the

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<sup>25</sup> M. Berdyaev, *Światopogląd Dostojewskiego...*, p. 11.

Manichean position according to which the world lies in evil. That satisfaction, justifying fatalism and gnostic freedom, is the essence of the perversion of Eastern anti-worldliness. The mental dualism enables most Russians to delight in the evidence of the futility of rebellion, as the world is not a good place to live in, which is why there is no point in regretting the wasting of it. Miłosz's Russians delight in anti-worldly inflammation, i.e. rebellious fatalism. When there occurs an eruption in the form of a revolution or a war, it is extremely destructive for the fundamentally evil world, and, at the same time, it is self-destructive.

After Berdyaev, Miłosz identified that Russian ambivalence of the Eastern realisation of evil in Dostoevsky: whoever lies, spreads terror, rapes, and kills, they sin, but experience the sinfulness of the world and their nature in their own experience. Having been afflicted by evil, in decline, one is closer to God. The nihilistic freedom of Russians possesses the anti-worldly justification of religious gnosis. That is why Russian freedom easily becomes a wilfulness of rejecting orthodox norms, social values, collective life norms, and the permanent goods of material and spiritual culture. The wantonness of destruction is a manifestation of that freedom. The Russian freedom is, according to Miłosz, gnostic, i.e. correlated with evil. Germans unified in the Darwinism-adoring Nazism, overtly included God in their collective. Russian communists officially rejected him, but by destroying the world of the Evil, indirectly referred to God, i.e. in the communist doctrine and practice there existed a religious dimension of gnosis.

Russian wilfulness laced with gnostic-Manichean fatalism strikes the individual to the bottom of captivity, yet at the bottom of the totalitarian hell, through closeness to Satan, it enables one to recognise God. That was one of the reasons why communists severely treated in Gulags usually did not betray or curse Stalin. At the foundation of profound fatalism, the wilful cruelty of the authorities also appears as their charisma. It enables one to recognise the power of God in their titanic nature. The cruelty of the Authorities and the subject is, essentially, a measure of mythical unity. The Russian fatalism, as discussed by Miłosz, offered a sacral basis for the unity of the cruel leader, the power institutions of the totalitarian state, and the subjects. The traditions of wilfulness produce in Russians a natural inclination to submitting to totalitarian systems. In fact, in Miłosz's eyes, the model of Russia's political system was a cult unified in professing the necessity of wilful evil. Communist totalitarianism had a legitimacy of cultist mentality. Secularisation, as foreseen by Dostoevsky, resulted in Russians taking the apocalypse in their own hands, under the pretext of building a heaven on earth. Their freedom degenerating into wilfulness became their hard captivity in the grind of life's necessities of evil. Michał Heller and Aleksander Niekricz in a chapter entitled *Z królestwa konieczności do królestwa wolności (1918–1920)*, presented the Russian revolution as the intelligentsia standing up to the Russian state being the "kingdom of necessity." They presented the revolutionary zeal as a passion for

destroying the old order. They saw its motivation in the utopian dream of a “kingdom of freedom.” They emphasised the prophetic words by Engels that “Nations boast of having performed a revolution always discovered too late that they did not realise what actually happened. That the revolution which had just occurred, was nothing like the revolution its originators desired.”<sup>26</sup> Russian researchers found the appearance of the “Spirit of destruction” – the wantonness of war-time terror – most unexpected.

### Dostoevsky on freedom

Miłosz’s remarks regarding freedom included Dostoevsky’s main division. According to the latter, Western self-affirmation is Pelagianistic. By rejecting the evil of human nature, Pelagianism made man blind to personal evil. Man, unable to perceive his own original evil (the evil of human nature) is devoid of self-criticism. His self-affirmation is selfish, it is basically a form of adoring one’s naturally good self. Due to a lack of self-criticism, one does not see that the affirmation world-view is, in essence, a rejection of the consideration of selfishness as sinful. Such men make evil as a bee makes honey, yet cannot see it in themselves. Therefore, the strategy of self-affirmation is a form of cognitive indolence. Man’s establishing himself in the moral comfort of good disposition entails the price in the impairment which excludes any actual self-assessment. Self-affirmation is a form of utopia. A utopian is happy, yet their pragmatic *episteme* keeps them in a cloud of illusion.

Eastern self-affirmation, contrary to its Western counterpart, does not cherish nature and man as its part. On the contrary, it is an anti-worldly affirmation, a recognition of despising nature as it views the body and matter as devilish. According to Miłosz, rebellion against the world in the name of discovered laws of nature is different from a rebellion against the world as it is, because it cannot include an order which could be recognised. Therefore, the only thing which can be recognised is destruction. The Russian self-affirmation derives from a contestation of the laws of nature. Gnostic contestation, by transitioning into its opposite, is the reason why a Russian eventually affirms himself as an adorer and originator of life’s evil. Thus, the self-affirmation spreads to personal evil, and it also affirms the evil of this world. Miłosz’s Russians take pride in their readiness to oust the earthly oppressions of life, yet, forced to act within the earthly reality, they also take pride in their cruelty, aware of the necessity. That mental affliction,

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<sup>26</sup> M. Heller, A. Niekricz, *Utopia u władzy. Historia Związku Radzieckiego od narodzin do wielkości 1917–1939*, trans. A. Mietkowski, Wydawnictwo Zysk i S-ka, Poznan 2016, pp. 85–86.

according to Justyna Kurczak, was seized upon by Jasinowski: "The principle: all or nothing, valid in Russia, precludes any consensual attitudes and evaluations, and actually leads to negating reality."<sup>27</sup>

In the age of secularisation, Russian dualists adore the opposition of the *this* and *that* world. They absolve their *notthisness* (rejection of the world) in the name of self-redemption through destroying the old order. By reducing the world to the *tabula rasa* condition. Therefore, one could note that the German destructiveness was pro-worldly in the sense that it was laced with trust in this world – how dysfunctional and self-destructive the *New Faith* was is a different matter. The Russian destructiveness, then, was essentially anti-worldly, as it was the eruption of the power of anti-worldly dualism accumulated on the basis of cultist religiosity. The peak in the development of both totalitarianisms was the establishment of the God-man: the builder of the system of extermination and self-extermination.

### Remarks on freedom

The experience of two totalitarianisms helped Miłosz recognise that freedom is *opus contra naturam*. It opposes ideologies inspired by Darwinism. Anthropocentrism, or anthropocentrism emulating the Man-God model, removes the temptation to flee from freedom into the ideology of extermination and self-extermination, into the structures of a state organising the unifying rituals of death. On the other hand, freedom, unwilling to succumb to the laws of dark Darwinism, cannot succumb to the temptation of gnostic-Manichean escapism as its anti-worldliness leads to wilful destruction of the completely evil world. Through the indolence in the act of making earth subject, the freedom simply changes into killing wilfulness. Rebellious against the evil world, against the thrall of natural laws, it itself becomes the medium of wilful evil, and in turn falls into limitless captivity.

The tragedy of freedom in the era of secularisation recorded in Miłosz's essays consisted of placing it within the field of binary stress between the extreme of Nazi wilfulness and the extreme of communist wilfulness. Having been deprived of the foundation of religion, it became lost in *New Faiths*. It became lost in ideology on the basis of naturalist monism or on the basis of a radical dualism of cultist provenance as "The religious roots of Russian maximalism do not prevent it from becoming the carrier of secular utopia."<sup>28</sup> Those extremes were its Scylla and Charybdis. The Charybdis of freedom is to make nature and its laws an oracle

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<sup>27</sup> J. Kurczak, op. cit., p. 45.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

offering sufficient guidelines for the human world. That freedom leads to absorption of the transcendent dimension by the immanence – until losing the model of God-humanity. On the other hand, freedom led astray within cultist transcendence becomes lost in disdain for demiurgic immanence. Once secularised, it holds the world in disdain. That is the Scylla of wilfulness – of escapism (*from*) or a destructive turn against immanence (*to*). The essence of the derailing of European freedom is the escape into the structure of a totalitarian state motivated with hard-line will of its racial redemption or the will for destructive redemption from the evil world fulfilled under the pretext of ensuring the happiness of a chosen class.

Nazism and communism taught Miłosz that freedom is the tragedy of contradictions. Its dynamics create internal opposition. It is possible when man as the *opus contra naturam* fulfils himself exactly through those *pro naturam* values. That is its *coincidentia oppositorum*. In other words: a free person is that who elevates their humanity above Darwinist nature, and from the position of that transgression turns towards the world to, within the corporal and material framework of specific existences, anthropocentrically transform that world or transform it anthropocentrically based on the Man-God model. Berdyaev read from Dostoevsky that “Man exists thanks to a higher nature than his nature.”<sup>29</sup> Miłosz did not reject secular humanism, though he often expressed doubts whether it is possible to use it as the basis for freedom in the age of totalitarian faiths. His anthropocentrism was Christian, and yet open to non-orthodox visions placing Man within the centre of the cosmos: for example Adam Kadmon from cabala.

### Stone-solid world of scientism

During the American period, Miłosz called the world of physical-biological necessities the land of Ulro. In *Vision from San Francisco Bay*, he concluded that reality will increasingly often appear as a system of necessities. He anticipated an areligiously or religiously motivated contestation of its stone-solid laws. That meant humanity’s past entering the ruts of neo-Manicheistic anti-worldliness. Freedom remained threatened by the temptations of destructive wilfulness. Due to the progress of scientism, it is difficult to breach the stone-solid firmament of the world. In *The Land of Ulro*, he argued that it would be the transcendent development of the scientific image of the world, i.e. a combination of the deep image of the cosmos of modern astrophysics, and the evolutionism with the religious visions of creationism or a religious syncretism which would consider the visions of gnostic-Manichean religion. That was the way for freedom to escape

<sup>29</sup> M. Berdyaev, *Światopogląd Dostojewskiego...*, p. 42.

the prison of the *Euclidean mind*. According to Berdyaev, Dostoevsky considered that scientific mind of three physical dimensions as “detached from the eternal Meaning”,<sup>30</sup> and unable to grasp the irrational mystery of freedom of falling into the evil of wilfulness. Due to that mind “it is not possible to accept God who created so terrifying, and horrible a world.”<sup>31</sup>

In Miłosz's notion of freedom, its openness to infinity is irreducible. According to the author of *The Land of Ulro*, the world of physics, devoid of a window onto the metaphysical dimension, is for freedom a hell of submission within the mathematical shackles of the laws of matter. That leads to metaphysical disinheritance and closing in immanence. That applies to opening Infinity for freedom, where the former does not bear any anti-worldly dualism, but rather inspires the affirmation of the world. Within the penal system of the mind of rationalism and empiricism, the religion of God-humanity is the gateway to freedom, which is not subject to determinism. It negates the stone-solid heaven. Miłosz, certain of historic irrationalism, was inclined towards its metaphysical form. That irrationalism of faith in a miracle was the only way to break away from the block of determinism. In that sense, the necessities of faith as freedom in Ulro. The Man-God model transcends the reductionism characteristic of naturalistic monism, and negates the sense in redeeming oneself from the world through escapism or destruction. It is a model of freedom verified through the ability to redeem the world, not of escapist redemption from the oppression of earthly life. The mature Miłosz was convinced that a remedy for the madness of wilfulness inspired by the Spirit of the earth, and by the Spirit of anti-worldly dualism is the acceptance of the beauty of Creation, at the same time opposing its dark cruelty. The price of freedom is the need to tolerate the contradictory state of admiring the beauty of the world in combination with sympathy for the pain immanently present in it.

### Freedom and demise

Being influenced by Dostoevsky, Miłosz argued that in a world which does not wish to be totalitarian, there should be a place for the demise of wilfulness, as without the possibility of freedom deteriorating into wilfulness, there emerges an order of violence. Miłosz assumed as his own a statement by Berdyaev reading Dostoevsky: “Man feels an indestructible need for irrationality, mad freedom, and suffering. Man, contrary to common belief, does not pursue comfort. In his wilfulness, man prefers suffering. He opposes the rational order of life. Freedom

<sup>30</sup> Vide: M. Berdyaev, *Światopogląd Dostojewskiego...*, p. 11.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

is not, however, the rule of mind over the impulses of soul, freedom itself is irrational and insane, and it leads to breaking the lines set forth for man. That type of endless freedom tires man, and leads to his ruin. Yet man values that torment and that ruin... which leads man to the final limits of bifurcation."<sup>32</sup> That applies to the bifurcation into the zone of necessities which reality demands to be respected, and the anti-worldly wilfulness. The analysis of *Notes from Underground* led Miłosz to the conclusion that the order of totalitarian captivity is entrenched when it deprives an individual of the ability to choose the chaos of wilfulness. That condition changes man into a cog within a machine regulated through violence. Miłosz assumed Berdyaev's reading based on which "Dostoevsky recognised the polarity of the divine and devilish principles, the violent clash of light and darkness within the depths of being." He knew that "God and the devil fight deep inside the human spirit. Evil has a spiritual nature. The battlefield between God and the devil remains deep inside human nature."<sup>33</sup> The social system which considers the demise of freedom into wilfulness respects the ontic foundation of the world, i.e. the fact of "a violent clash of light and darkness within the depths of being."<sup>34</sup> He gives man the right to choose: "Man's path leads either to God-man and within that path man finds his ruin, or to Man-God and within that path finds his redemption and the final development of his personality"<sup>35</sup> through the freedom of experience, "in which upon immersing in darkness, new light appears"<sup>36</sup> as "The experience of evil can enrich human personality. However, it should be understood in the following manner. The enriching factor is not as much evil itself as that spiritual power which awakes to overcome evil."<sup>37</sup> Miłosz, who wrote "What comes from my evil – that only is true,"<sup>38</sup> agreeing with Ryszard Przybylski, stressed that the possibility of choosing between good and evil is according to Dostoevsky the limit of Christian freedom. Since God and the devil fight within man's soul, that means that the pre-fabric of human existence is psychomachia. Psychomachia permits the victory of the devil, the demise of freedom into wilfulness. A system which excludes the fallen is totalitarian because it does not permit psychomachia, because without permitting psychomachia *ex definitione* it destroys freedom. Berdyaev and Miłosz read in Dostoevsky that "Man ought to pass through freedom"<sup>39</sup> though "its path runs through darkness, through void, through bifurcation, and through tragedy. (...) That is where man errs being tempted by

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>37</sup> M. Berdyaev, *Rosyjska idea...*, p. 132.

<sup>38</sup> Cz. Miłosz, "The Master", in idem, *Selected Poems*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Krakow 1996, p. 148.

<sup>39</sup> M. Berdyaev, *Światopogląd Dostojewskiego...*, p. 11.

illusionary promises, false light which leads to even greater darkness. (...) That is the path of experience, a fiery path, a path of experimental cognition of good and evil.<sup>40</sup> Of course, leaving space for wilfulness did not mean lawlessness in Dostoevsky or Miłosz. Lawlessness which destroys responsibility is the enemy of freedom. Man has the right to experience demise, but not without consequences.

Miłosz argued that man will achieve through his development *coniunctio oppositorum*, will become as *opus contra naturam: pro naturam*, his freedom will be saved.

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 40.

Zbigniew Kaźmierczyk

**Totalitarianisms as systems of lawlessness (Miłosz's remarks)**

(Summary)

The article accounts for the gnostic individualism in Miłosz's records. It shows that its essence is not freedom, but self-will. It argues that its premises are existential. Among them we can find the fundamental data of existence: the passage of time, death, growing old of the body, the decomposition of matter, experiencing biological drives as violence and the laws of nature and history as necessity. If existence is experienced that way it bears self-will. The author argues that Miłosz fell into a crisis of gnostic self-will as he realized it leads to the inner split between the evil world and the ideal super-world. He was also aware that this duality implies the aversion to the earthly life and nihilism.

The author shows that the experience of self-will served as a tool in the Nobel laureate's writings to study totalitarianisms. From this perspective Nazism seems to be the self-will inspired by Darwinism, while Communism – the quintessence of Enlightenment idealism. As a result of the deviation of freedom the Nazi Germany and the Bolshevik Russia became the mine of genocide.

Keywords: humanism, Darwinism, freedom and necessity, self-will, totalitarianism, genocide