

Philosophy of Rhythm: Grotowski reads Eliot

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Abstract: The paper discusses the well-known Grotowski's work *Apocalypsis cum figuris* from two overlapping perspectives. It interprets the first dimension of the work of Laboratory Theatre as embodying the poetic words of T. S. Eliot (neglected in the interpretations of *Apocalypsis*) within the dynamic process of performance – within the rhythm of body, emotions and lived experiences of the theatre artists (Grotowski, Cieślak). The second dimension is universal and closer to human existence: it concerns perfecting transformation of the subject. Adopting in subsequent stages of performing *Apocalypsis* Eliot's assumption about dynamic and rhythmic character of human life and accepting (Biblical and Eckhart's) thesis about inner and outer man in the work of Laboratory Theatre leads to soteriological potency rhythmically performing different dimensions of human being to her perfection. Finally, the paper proposes to look at *Apocalypsis* as work of "practical soteriology" (with open content of this notion).

Keywords: rhythm, performance, soteriology, Thomas S. Eliot, Jerzy Grotowski

INTRODUCTION: PERFORMED QUALITY OF HUMAN BEING

The current rate of technical and cultural transformation, the multiplicity of media publicized events, discoveries, and research "turns" give rise to a sense of increasing dissatisfaction over the low quality of human life.

Theatre has become a distinctive upholder of human beings in the increasing process of alienation within technicized reality (see Weber 2004). A few theatre trainers have simultaneously evoked, and offered, an equitable program of work on self-improvement. Against this background "Grotowski is unique. Why? Because no-one else in the world ... has investigated ... the nature and science of its mental-

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physical-emotional processes as deeply and completely as Grotowski”-claimed Peter Brook (1968, 13). Similarly, a few culture creators still uphold the belief that there is, even in a rudimentary form, the phenomenon of human subjectivity. According to Jerzy Grotowski, however, it is this belief, which exclusively makes the creation of theatre possible.¹ For theatre, it is created primarily in the dialogue of the subject with itself (Grotowski’s “inner man”), and only immediately by external circumstances (“outer man”).

The theatre, in order to be capable to reveal the natural richness of human beings, must itself be ascetic, “poor.”² The theatre must resign from the opulence of means and methods accumulated over twenty five ages in the area of the Mediterranean culture, especially those imposed by contemporary culture. As the creation of theatre needs primarily to focus on the subject, “[T]o cross our frontiers, exceed our limitations, fill our emptiness - fulfil ourselves.” (Grotowski 2002, 21)

The quality of life is performed and apprehended by a human being in terms of the ordinary and extraordinary experiences. The performed and performing dynamism of life manifests itself in both kinds of experiences, in how they associate, and disassociate, inward (acting) and outward (action) aspects of human activities. In order to answer the question concerning the quality of these experiences and actions of the subject it is necessary to identify the origins of person’s beliefs, the principles governing her cognition and action, her conception of herself as human being.

¹ The category of subjectivity Grotowski identifies with the notions of “essence,” “self-self,” and “internal man” (esp. “the Performer”). The cultural contexts for understanding of the notion of “essence” in Grotowski’s works have been studied by the researcher, who accompanied Grotowski’s theatre work almost since its inception, namely by Leszek Kolankiewicz’s in his “*Grotowski w poszukiwaniu esencji*” [“*Grotowski in search of an essence*”], *Pamiętnik Teatralny* 1–4 (2000, 37–116) and its revised version in his *Wielki mały wóz* (2002, 249–339). In between the cultural and philosophical-religious interpretations of Performer is Mirosław Kocur’s “Epilog osobisty. Performer jako mnich” [“Personal epilogue. Performer as a monk”], in *Drugie narodziny teatru. Performanse mnichów anglosaskich* (2010, 190–193). Metaphysical contexts of Grotowski’s theatrical categories are discussed by Julian M. Olf (1981, 42–44). The philosophical approach to the interpretation of Grotowski’s category of essence in the context of anti-essentialist performance studies is discussed by Anna Kawalec (2013, 117–131).

² In opposition to “Rich Theatre . . . [which] depended on artistic kleptomania” (see Grotowski 2002, 19).

APOCALYPSIS CUM FIGURIS AS EXPRESSION OF GROTOWSKI'S RHYTHM OF LIFE

Jerzy Grotowski's artistic activities are commonly divided into the period of the Laboratorium Theatre (officially till 1982) and the - "final" - period of Action in Pontedera (between Resource Theatre and Objective Theatre).

Not surprisingly, it is the latter period of Grotowski's - Performer's - activity that is the object of particular interest, given the changes in art, and world culture (the performative turn), but also in politics, technology, and economy.

However, the Work Centre in Vallicelle would not have been brought into existence (since 1984) without Jerzy Grotowski's earlier works and his earlier European, Indian, Haitian, and many other experiences, but foremost Polish.

It was not in Pontedera that Grotowski was born. Grotowski (2002, 24) wrote: "I do not claim that everything we do is entirely new. We are bound, consciously or unconsciously, to be influenced by the traditions, science and art, even by the superstitions and presentiments peculiar to the civilization which has molded us, just as we breathe the air of the particular continent which has given us life. All this influences our undertaking, though sometimes we may deny it. Even when we arrive at certain theoretic formulas and compare our ideas with those of our predecessors which I have already mentioned, we are forced to resort to certain retrospective corrections which themselves enable us to see more clearly the possibilities opened up before us."

A survey of the abundant literature on his works reveals that it is mostly the intercultural and technical aspect of his work that predominantly attracts attention.³ Some studies—by his former cooperators or participants of his workshops—highlight fragments of Grotowski's biography, or the specificity of his artistic "way".

My approach is to consider a holistic phenomenon of Grotowski's. So, I focus on - what supposedly is - the climax of his work and person, "the air he breathed", "the land that bore him". They constituted the formal base and the original resources for the subtle construction of beliefs, convictions and actions of Jerzy Grotowski, although they are readily delimited as "non-religious." (see Taviani

³ See the research works and projects of The Grotowski Institute (www.grotowski-institute.art.pl) and of the section within the research network *Performance Philosophy* under its auspices, namely *Theatre and Philosophical Principles*.

1988; also, Kosiński 2009, 249; Guszpit 1976, 106–113) However, Grotowski himself surely had some religious beliefs and experiences (Attisani 2008). Moreover, for him, they had a primacy over theatre. He discloses: “Could theatre be an aim? - Obviously, such possibility exists, but to seek it would perhaps be absurd . . . the real question one should ask is: how to redeem oneself.” (Grotowski 1972, 53)⁴

Following Dariusz Kosiński, one could evoke a significant scene from the *Laboratorium* artist’s biography: “I remember the words and gesture the originator used to describe the aim of his work. ‘The point is to get there’—he said and simultaneously making a gesture depicting a rising flight trajectory” (Kosiński 2009, 354).

In the context of the lived experience of transcendence Peter Brook’s words, explaining Grotowski’s hatred to beauty, reveal the nontrivial significance: “Nowadays beauty has replaced holiness. Holiness is not beautiful, it is located outside of beauty. Demotion of holiness in many cultures and civilizations has led to establish aesthetic forms, which are derivatives of the subtle manifestation of the human spirit” (Brook 2009, 55). In Judeo-Christianity to be a saint means to be as perfect as God himself (Leviticus 19:2).

In order to subsume Grotowski’s conception under one of these types of soteriology I will examine his *Apocalypsis cum figuris* for the following reasons. Firstly, this work is situated at the central stage of Grotowski’s artistic pursuit (it is the climax of the *Laboratorium* works, but it also is the core of *Action*⁵). Secondly, it had been started since 1968, which was a significant historical date in Poland as well as for *The Theatre Laboratory*. Thirdly, it touches the most profound themes in Polish beliefs, convictions and traditions, but also Christian and humane. Fourthly, it is Grotowski’s “first step past its [theatre] boundaries.” (Attisani 2008, 93)

PERFECTION THROUGH RHYTHM OF EFFORT AND FAITH

On the 15th of October 1968 in the Centre de l’Académie Polonaise des Sciences in Paris Grotowski repeated - following Ludwik Flaszen⁶ - the common human domains of beliefs and convictions: The first - “the traditional faith, with which you might have broken, but which is still

⁴ If not acknowledged otherwise, the quotations from Polish are translated by the author of the paper.

⁵ The *Action* leads to “individual structure”, to several physical actions (Richard’s “run of horse”), as described by (Richards 2004, 49–70).

⁶ Grotowski’s co-operator since the theatre in Opole.

alive in the deepest layers of your personality; it articulates the language of imagination;” the second - “the faith to which you consciously aspire;” the third - “half-beliefs for the sake of family, colleagues and other groups in which you participate;” the fourth - “in the depths of your being lies a secret compartment where worm aspirations, authentic beliefs, abandoned faith ... This is the tower of Babel ... because none of you wants to come to terms with your own essence.” (Grotowski 1990, 71)

The first layer, of the abandoned traditional faith, and the fourth one, of the authentic belief and faith, abandoned faith, constitute the identity of human being. Grotowski (ibid) referred to it as “the inner man”—following the master Eckhart, and earlier St. Paul (The second letter to Corinthians 4, 16.). The second layer, of the intellectual and emotional aspirations, and the third one, of half-beliefs for social use, constitute “the external human being,” (Grotowski 1990, 71) determined by historical, economic, and political factors.

The relevant early Grotowski’s readings were P. Brunton’s *A search in secret India* and Renan’s *Life of Jesus*. The former taught the artist to perceive the nature, the latter—to perceive the human dimension of the person of Christ (Grotowski 1987, 102–104). However, Grotowski’s first contemplative experience was a solitary reading—at the pigsty attic—reading of the Gospel, which was a secret gift during the war from a curate in the village of Nienadówka:

I entered the attic, pulled up the ladder, so that no one finds me. All the time I heard the grunting of pigs underneath. This happened in the spring—the sun was strong then. I opened the book and began to read the story of Jesus. For me it was the story of a human being. He was my friend. I knew I would have taken my side in the conflict with my religion teacher (who was beating me for questions about the Gospel), and in many other conflicts.

All I could see from the pigsty was the landscape of that story. First, there was a hill planted with trees—it was the hill of crucifixion. In the neighborhood lived a peasant who tortured his horse. The horse had one eye. The one-eyed horse was a martyred friend of Jesus. (Grotowski 1980, 119)

So what remnants of the initial child’s religious experience (he was about 10 years old) are in the Dark-Christ (Simpleton⁷) figure in

⁷ In a very important and influential translation by Jennifer Kumiega (1985) and the remaining English translations the Polish word “Ciemny” - a noun formed from an

*Apocalypsis cum figuris*⁸ (the first and the fourth layers of beliefs)? Is it more the Christ from his childhood, or more a constructed figure - as a result of Grotowski's many experiences and intellectual aspirations, or a result of his half-beliefs for the sake of the art or socio-political roles (the second and third layer of beliefs)?

My projected answers focus on the following points. First, Christ in *Apocalypsis* is a human (the "Dark" character). Second, he is rejected by others, at the social margin. He is called "Dark" (originally it was also manifested by his clothing, which contrasted with the white clothing of other characters. It symbolizes dirt, "worldliness", "humanity" in spite of other characters claiming to be better, "Dark" is also the "unenlightened", uneducated, not fully rational, but also the one capable to experience reality in some other ways than purely rational). Third, he does not talk a lot, he is modest. He reluctantly accepts the role imposed upon him by "Peter" and "Judas". He spends a long time⁹ to get to know himself, to examine his identity and potential. He twice attempts to join the group. Initially he is not fully convinced to act as the returning Christ. Fourth, he utters the verses of Thomas Stearns Eliot (*Ash Wednesday*, 1963, 85):

Dark repeated twice:

Because I do not hope to turn again
Because I do not hope
Because I do not hope to turn
Desiring this man's gift and that man's scope
I no longer strive to strive towards such things.

adjective - is interpreted as "Simpleton." Originally, however, it means "dark." Metaphorically in the Polish culture "Ciemny" is a property of uneducated people, while a derivative form "ociemniały" means a person with a damaged sight. Therefore "Ciemny" may refer to a person, who does not celebrate the cult of reason, and thus, refrains from purely rationalistic explanation of the world, allowing for a possibility of a different, equally legitimate way of experiencing reality, including all the remaining senses, especially through the inner cognition, following Maurice Maeterlinck's *Les aveugles* (1891). The widespread English translation "Simpleton" does not cover all semantic fields of the original word. Hence, in this paper I use the literal translation as "Dark" (of Christ). The stage meaning of the color emphasis was confirmed by the original color of the character's costume, significantly darker than costumes of the other characters.

⁸ The character was co-created by Ryszard Cieślak; Grotowski was not used to significantly interfere with the realization itself, rather, he focused on the preparatory phases.

⁹ It takes Dark-Christ approximately 30 minutes (almost a half) of the performance to acquire self-awareness of his role in the world.

The poem *Ash Wednesday* was interpreted as “the celebration of death as a form of life” (Moody 1994, 154). *Ash Wednesday* is the celebration in the Catholic Church¹⁰, which marks out the moment of entering the path to preparations for the mystery of Easter. Eliot¹¹ appointed the way along the form and stages of Dante’s wandering through the areas of Hell, Purgatory and Heaven. Being only the beginning of the existence in the mystery, *Ash Wednesday* leads to a growing awareness of salvation. In Eliot’s work, and then in the creation of Dark-Christ, the hope, which was born with the worldly love, was strengthened by the fulfillment of the act of suffering and death. In fact, the wandering is about to begin only then: as a reborn Human proclaiming the Word.

Dark-Christ in *Apocalypsis cum figuris* traverses this route. His expulsion from the group is a form of social death, within the horizontal dimension. The death becomes for him, paradoxically, an opportunity to begin a new life, which would be free from the worldly entanglements, enslavements, and intellectual speculations. It would be a liberated life, which may only be developed through love, and fulfilled by professing love, in the sense of the vertical dimension. For the entangled in the worldly dependencies and entangled in them, existence in love appears as madness and stupidity. Dark-Christ, nonetheless, is felicitous. The reward for the winner is not in the hands of himself or another person. Similarly, the love he bestowed was not addressed to himself, but, successively, to: Mary Magdalene, a social group, to the One who gives suffering its meaning, to the Originator of liberation and salvation. Dark-Christ does not represent the attitude of humanistic heroism in a world without Person (God). It is the attitude of the heroism of faith in a world without Person-purpose experienced in the Word and loved.¹² In Eliot’s poem the change of the direction of love and aspirations of human being from horizontal to vertical is primarily illustrated by the conception of Word (initially as the word of a community rejecting Dark, the community throwing words around in

¹⁰ In 1927 Eliot joined the Anglican Catholic Church, which is institutionally independent from the roman-catholic church, but which shares with the latter many rituals and doctrinal theses.

¹¹ Eliot proposed an integrated concept of the ancient category (see Wilson 2015).

¹² It seems highly problematic to determine Grotowski’s attitude as pantheistic, panentheistic or theistic. See Schechner and Hoffman (1997, 40); Salata (2013, 71).

an unrestrained manner) and the character of the Lady (in white, of Gardens, Mary).

PERFORMING THE STAGE OF LOVE

Dark-Christ's climax recognition of himself occurs during the ecstatic experience of love with "Mary Magdalene," who was similarly ignored and rejected, despised and used (a radically different picture of closer acquaintance than the earlier act of a prostitute with John!).

According to John, woman is the embodiment of the apocalyptic Zion "great harlot." She is thrown to Dark with sneer, but this very moment is a turning point for the Dark-Christ, who perceives her as a symbol of the Virgin - of purity and hope. He looks at her with the eyes of his "inner man".

Theatrically, the change in the direction from horizontal to vertical fulfilment is expressed by gestures. Dark's gestures come from the inside outwards just like the energy springs out from its source. It's an image, which John of the Cross described in his *Spiritual canticle* as follows: "Turn them away, O my Beloved! I am on the wing," (Saint John of the Cross) what in the context of the interpretation of St. John means: I come out of my existence. He explained this verse as follows:

Thus the Apostle, St. Paul, speaking of his own ecstasy, says, "Whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell." (2 Cor 12:2). But we are not to suppose that the soul abandons the body, and that the natural life is destroyed, but only that its actions have then ceased . . . They who have not arrived at perfection are liable to these visitations, for they happen to those who are walking in the way of proficients. They who are already perfect receive these visitations in peace and in the sweetness of love: ecstasies cease, for they were only graces to prepare them for this greater grace. (Ibid.)

Thus, the path of Eliot's character, as well as Dark-Christ, is the path of human soul to perfection, the way of full and abrupt feeling of the loving unification. The wandering may occur in the body, and outside the body, the soul may consciously, or unconsciously, engage the body, or abandon it.

Dark-Christ asserted:¹³

Lady, three white leopards sat under a juniper-tree
In the cool of the day, having fed to satiety

¹³ Selections from Eliot's poem by Ryszard Cieślak.

On my legs my heart my liver and that which had been
contained
In the hollow round of my skull. And God said
Shall these bones live? Shall these
Bones live? And that which had been contained
In the bones (which were already dry) said chirping:
...
There is no life in them . . .
. . . And God said
Prophecy to the wind, to the wind only for only
The wind will listen . . .
Lady of silences
Calm and distressed
Torn and most whole
Rose of memory
Rose of forgetfulness
...
Where all loves end
Terminate torment
Of love unsatisfied
The greater torment
Of love satisfied
End of the endless
Journey to no end.

(Eliot, *Ash Wednesday*, 87–88)

From that moment onwards Dark-Christ snorts with the energy of the apocalyptic horses—the figures through which the judgment over the world is made and of the “white horse” upon which arrives the “Faithful and True” winning Rider (Revelation 19:11). From that moment on Dark recognizes its own bodily and spiritual nature. It is an act of love that fulfils the human eternal quest for the possession of good. Plato’s metaphor of “insemination”¹⁴ applied to the Dark’s act of love with Maria Magdalena means that Dark gains immortal bodily and spiritual energy. From that moment onwards Dark becomes the Christ, accepts the fate of whipped, ridiculed and crucified, the one

¹⁴ “‘Now if love is always for this,’ she proceeded, ‘what is the method of those who pursue it, and what is the behavior whose eagerness and straining are to be termed love? What actually is this effort? Can you tell me?’ ‘Ah, Diotima,’ I said; ‘in that case I should hardly be admiring you and your wisdom, and sitting at your feet to be enlightened on just these questions.’ ‘Well, I will tell you,’ said she; ‘it is begetting on a beautiful thing by means of both the body and the soul.’” (Plato, *Symposium* 206 b).

mourning the fate of the Earth's destruction. After this moment he accounts for his love of Peter, who confesses to Christ: "We are not with you, but with someone else." Peter is marked by Dark-Christ (instead of Judas) to become the traitor-Satan. After this moment John confesses his disappointment with love and hope related to the person of Christ.

Dark-Christ prays three times, asking for "the power of testimony the Word unheard and unspoken on the Earth." After the third time, however, he states that it will not be given to those who "toss up between power and power." He knows the fate of the lonely and those in need.

PERFORMING THE STAGE OF SUFFERING

From the moment, when in Dirk-Christ explodes the love to Mary Magdalene, the character more consciously directs the self-development towards the vertical direction, in spiritual-religious dimension. The climax of the experience is expressed by suffering. Ecstatic picture of Dark-Christ' suffering juxtaposed to the suffering of Christ described in the Gospels. As expressed by Eliot in words, and transformed by Cieślak through his living experience of the suffering of Christ's prayer: "'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing'." (Luke 23:34). Cieślak, following Eliot, responds:

If the lost word is lost, if the spent word is spent
If the unheard, unspoken
Word is unspoken, unheard;
Still is the unspoken word, the Word unheard,
The Word without a word . . .
O my people, what have I done unto thee.
Where shall the word be found, where will the word
Resound? Not here . . .
The right time and the right place are not here
No place of grace for those who avoid the face
... for those who walk among noise and deny
the voice
Will the ...sister pray for
Those who walk in darkness, who chose thee ...,
Those who are torn on the horn ... between ... power and power,
those who wait
In darkness?

(Eliot, *Ash Wednesday*, 92–93)

ELIOT'S RHYTHM PERFORMED BY CIEŚLAK

The content and arrangement of Dark-Christ's utterance is closely correlated with Ryszard Cieślak's acting. The researchers focusing on the phenomenon of Grotowski's work emphasized that the texts in the theater of Grotowski "are auxiliary, as a stage prop. Grotowski scenic poem is built entirely of activities and live actors in them, just spins and plot, and performance issues" (Puzyna 1990, 167). The term "scenic poem", surprisingly, corresponds with Eliot's thesis about the function of poetry in drama. This function reflects a deeper source of the relation between the rhythm of word and the rhythm of gesture. Recall the phrase of the English poet: "I say that prose drama is merely a slight by-product of verse drama. The human soul, in intense emotion, strives to express itself in verse. It is not for me, but for the neurologists, to discover why this is so, and why and how feeling and rhythm are related." (Eliot 1932, 31–45)

Grotowski found a rhythm in the actor: impulses of his body and experience, focused on them, especially during the work on the "stimuli", i.e. the origins, sources of "physical actions" (as understood by Stanislavsky).¹⁵ These stimuli, however, were rooted in the texts "vital" for the team and for the majority of Poles, (Grotowski 1990, 73) from which they extracted "the crystals of challenge," namely the base, such as "the experience of our ancestors, as the experience of others, as the voice of the abyss, when it speaks, while we can find our own answer . . . It also says something that we cannot agree, but it makes us shudder" (Ibid., 75).

Apocalypsis cum figuris amazingly (perhaps even mystically) reconciliates the rhythm of Eliot's poem and the rhythm of Cieślak's body, and living experience. It could hardly be otherwise as this actor has been maturing to this rhythm since, at least, *The Constant Prince* and rehearsals of the Gospel. The essence of this rhythm was the pulse of exploring human vocation, which "needs to be constantly renewed - or confirmed." (Sławińska 1958, 94)

This rhythm is original, unique, harmonizing with the experiences and living experiences of the individual. Similarly, the rhythm of Eliot's poem is neither a traditional system of rhythmic units, nor the traditional verse structure. As he wrote, he never used the measures

¹⁵ Recording of the sessions of Jerzy Grotowski at the Moscow Theatre "School of Dramatic Arts" directed by Anatoly Vasiliev, edited by Zbigniew Osiński (2001, 269).

with full awareness: “I have never been able to retain the names of feet and metres, or to pay the proper respect to the accepted rules of scansion” (Eliot 1961, 18). According to Eliot, poetry lies under the robe of the language, under the semantic fields of connotations of the subsequent words. Poetry is located in the extra-word space, but is also close to ordinary language. Whereas Grotowski described Cieślak’s symbiosis of experience and the poetic rhythm as follows: “The first step toward this work was that Ryszard dominated totally the text by heart, he absorbed it in such a way that he could start in the middle of a phrase of any fragment, still respecting the syntax. And at this point, the first thing we did was to create the conditions in which he could, as literally as possible, put this flow of words on the river of the memory of the impulses of his body, of the memory of the small actions, and with the two take flight, take flight, like in his first experience. That base experience was luminous thing, put in montage with the text, with the costume which makes reference to Christ.” (see Grotowski 1990, in Richardsd 2004, 16)

The rhythm, for both, Eliot and Cieślak, was a biological, emotional, and intellectual experience of own existence and its meaning.

The experience resolves in the vertical perspective, regardless of whether another person is perceived, or one is merely faced with the experience of loneliness, or else, one identifies it with human spirituality/inwardness, or carnality. It is the experience described by Eliot’s character of *The Cocktail Party* as an alternative path to the acceptance of ordinary life. It is

. . . unknown, and so requires faith -
The kind of faith that issues from despair.
The destination cannot be described;
You will know very little until you get there;
You will journey blind. But the way leads towards possession
Of what you have sought for in the wrong place.

(Eliot, *The Cocktail Party*, 141)

To take the risk of faith and love, therefore, moves away the barrier of knowledge and experience in human life, open up a person to the vertical dimension of her existence. At the same time, it becomes the driving force of human aspirations, imposing upon it the rhythm and meaning. Cieślak in *Apocalypse*, and earlier still in *The Constant Prince*, experienced the rhythm and expressed it through the

“impulses” from the moment of the rejection by others, becoming thus a “laughing stock,” through loving initiation up to the experience and recognition of his vocation: love giving meaning to suffering. In this process Dark-Christ/Cieślak deeply and comprehensively experienced his own existence and the existence of the others: Mary Magdalene and the group. It was an experience of “the sources” of physical actions, of “the impulses,” up to their expression by gesture and word, or rather, the word as a gesture. Grotowski described Cieślak’s path as follows: “The whole role was based on a very precise time from his personal memory linked to the period in which he was an adolescent and had his first big, extraordinary amorous experience. All was linked to that experience. This referred to that kind of love which, as it can only arrive in adolescence, carries all its sensuality, all that which is carnal, but, in the same time, behind that, something totally different that is not carnal, or which is carnal in another way, and which is much more like a prayer. It’s as if, between these two sides, appears a bridge which is a carnal prayer.” (Grotowski, cited from Richards 2004, 15)

The arrangement and rhythm of Cieślak’s experiences and actions in performance correspond to the bodily-spiritual processes. This man dedicates himself to become a gift (for himself? for the art? for the master?), also to help others to bring out their personal capabilities. Thomas Richard recollected his working with Cieślak thus: “This workshop created in me an inner explosion . . . [I]t was fresh and alive, something for which I was starved.” (Richards 2004, 9)

What else is unquestionably associated with Eliot’s poetry in the work of Grotowski and Cieślak? The lesson is one of “inhuman precision and self-control,” as the work of the English artist described by Donald Davie. However, Davie drew the following conclusion from the achievement of the English poet: “. . . the poets of now have nothing to learn from Mr Eliot. There is no following him down the roads he has taken because he has been right to the end of them himself, once and for all. . . . The one lesson he might teach us . . . we shall never learn because the lesson is too hard.” (Davie 1982, 736)

In parallel, Cieślak mandated adepts actors to prepare a precise, two-column script of actions, Grotowski relentlessly created a “structure;” however, these were absolutely original works. They had the form, not an art form, but, rather—the form of a person. Such a work cannot be replicated. It is no wonder that Grotowski (1990, 163) raged on any imitators—“students” imitators, while he respected those who betrayed their master with a “high treason” betrayal, “which

comes from the fidelity to one's own way. This is not a kind of way that can be suggested to someone, one cannot reckon it. You can only discover it yourself by a huge amount of effort." The discovery of this way, and the toil in following it, is a requisite of perfection, is the factor of the quality of human/person being.

PERFORMING THE STAGE OF THE SPOKEN WORD

The final image is a two-minute *Apocalypsis* ecstatic song, which takes place between Peter and Dark-Christ, using the words of different parts of the Lamentations of Jeremiah, in Latin, which ends up with a complete darkness and silence on the stage:

Jerusalem has sinned a grievous sin. Because of this, she has become unstable. All who glorified her have spurned her, because they have looked upon her disgrace. (Lamentations 1:8.)

Her filth is on her feet, and her end has not been remembered. (Lamentations 1:9)

In the anger of his fury. (Lamentations 2:3)

The Lord has become like an enemy. He has thrown down Israel. (Lamentations 2:5)

He has shot into my kidneys the daughters of his quiver. I have become a derision to all my people, their song throughout the day. (Lamentations 3:13–14)

The crucial question of this stage is: Who the Singer becomes in performing the rhythm of lamentation? Is the Dark a social outcast? Or, is he Christ deploring the fate of Israel? Or is he Jeremiah - an angry, truthful, rightful and compassionate prophet?

Lamentations are an anonymous work, written after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC. They have the style of a dirge, atoning song - calling people to repentance - and a prophetic song. They acknowledge the fault of the nation: "We have acted sinfully, and we have provoked to wrath. About this, you are relentless" (Lamentations 3: 42). In Judaism, Lamentations function as a description of moral and political fall of Israel. In Christianity, it is the announcement of the passion and death of Christ, his abandonment by God, the image of human evil, and suffering, and the sacrifice of Christ.

Dark-Christ uses the words of "Jeremiah" (an anonymous author of *Lamentations*) and of Eliot. These words harmonize, as the main

character of *Ash Wednesday* admits: “I would forget thus devoted, concentrated in purpose.” (Eliot, *Ash Wednesday*, 87) However, the image of the end of the world in *The Hollow Men* reinforces Jeremiah’s prophecy: “This is the way the world ends . . . Not with a bang but a whimper.” (Eliot, *Ash Wednesday*, 82)

Statements of other characters perform the function of prosecution, or sarcasm. In particular, Peter’s statements (especially the passages from Dostoevsky’s *The Karamazov Brothers*) are blasphemous to the centuries-old institution of the church, but also to the Christian religion, especially catholic.

THE WAR FOR PEACE

Even though the work continuously performed itself over ten years, it nonetheless left many questions without distinctive answers. In the context of the performative dimension of corporeal life, but also the spiritual dynamism transcending the contingent nature of existence, they include e.g. the following questions: Is the rationale of the expressions in *Apocalypsis cum figuris* a search for genuine beliefs of the author? Or, was it motivated by an attempt to harmonize the “inner man” with the layers of the “external man”? Or else, was it motivated by . . . the spirit of contestation . . . triggered off by the requirements of the communist Polish government in 1968, which financially supported the Laboratorium Theater (including the almost unlimited availability of foreign passports and visas)? And which also bestowed Grotowski with long-term membership of the Communist Party ...? (see Kosiński 2009)

Or, was it motivated by the spirit to escape from the Polish political situation (political protests at many universities, government anti-Semitic provocations, and above all the invasion of Czechoslovakia, sharply contrasting with Polish libertarian ambitions) into the literary tales based on transformed Gospel?

On May 9th 1976 Stefan Wyszyński, the head of the Catholic Church in Poland, an enormous moral and patriotic authority, who was repeatedly interned by the communists, described *Apocalypsis* as the work demoralizing the nation and destroying its ethical spine on equal footing with drunkenness (Osiński 2009, 199–200). A few years later, Karol Wojtyła (a poet, philosopher, the founder of personalism based on the conception of human person as the horizontal transcendence - the sphere of intentional willings - and the vertical transcendence - the

sphere of consciousness and free will, the Pope since 1978) acknowledged the importance of the work of Jerzy Grotowski.

Indeed, *Apocalypsis* is the work concerning timeless social human attitudes: aggressive-trustworthy, caring for oneself-caring for others, taking care of the here and now-thinking about the future, unbeliever-believer in transcendence, having no hope-having hope.

However, it is - above all - a religious work, because (i) Dark-Christ is a person who recognizes the power of testimony of “Words unspoken and unheard on the Earth” (is Christ the Eternal Word - the Logos? Is he a hidden wisdom of God, or the logic of the world? Is he a prophet who reveals the Word?) , (ii) longing for the Word, and hopes for the realization of it among those who are not “between power and power,” but act according to the materializing law of love. This love allows one to see through the eyes of the “inner man”, as Dark was perceiving Mary Magdalene, and does not lead to judge the other in terms of social status, political or religious beliefs, and (iii) Dark-Jesus is the Christ (human / prophet / God), because he believed in it. Because others failed to believe – the good / holiness will not be able to be realized on the Earth.

Apocalypsis (versus anti-apocalyptic interpretations, which emphasize the contemporary dimension of the work) is the apocalypse, i.e. it has the genre concerning the struggle between good and evil, the Last Judgment and the Resurrection of the dead, it is Christocentric (unlike some of Jewish apocalyptic). It lacks, however, both the kenosis (i.e. the humiliation of God in the incorporation, it is rather deliberately formed Christ from the most miserable human) and the Second Coming. There is neither resurrection, nor eschatological vision as both are exclusive only to believers and those of hope. The only one prophesying is Dark-Christ. It is Dark who warns the people against plunging into the darkness of life of “external man” (subsumed to external determinations, enslaved, devoid of hope and love). He proclaims that there is the Word, but not yet actualized, not yet accepted on the Earth, that there is Transcendence.

Thus Christ in *Apocalypsis cum figuris* is “the inner man”, who is performing – he delineates the space for the “external man” (the phrase from the Letter of St. Paul (2 Cor. 4, 16). The inner man is constituted by the first and the fourth layer of beliefs, to which Grotowski referred (following L. Flaszen). Christ is a friend of the suffering. He is a man who suffers and dies for others, who commits evil, and will be punished. Symbolically, this attitude is presented by the canvas “Ecce

Homo,” painted by Albert Chmielowski, the character of Karol Wojtyła’s drama *Our God’s Brother*. He is a friend of Grotowski in Nienadówka.

VERTICALISM – THE VALUE WHICH PERFORMS THE QUALITY / MERIT OF HUMAN BEING

Grotowski’s statement about the purpose of life - to “be there,” (Kosiński 2009, 354) as “return of the soul-inner man - to home”¹⁶ clearly indicates the religious dimension of soteriology-verticalism, i.e. seeking salvation through improvement of the spiritual life.

Verticalism is the direction from bottom to top and from top to bottom. This verticalism in the 1980’s turns out to be the fundamental concept of Grotowski’s conception of art as a vehicle, and is symbolized by Jacob’s ladder, a primitive lift, energy movements in the shamanic practices, or falling of soul to the ground in Master Eckhart’s vision, which is recalled by Grotowski (1990, 218). However, it is primary already in *Apocalypsis cum figuris*.

Perhaps Grotowski’s soteriology could also be called “practical soteriology.” It would then be the search for methods of reconciliation-harmonizing - or the hierarchical ordering - of the four dimensions of belief in humans. The effect of this order may be a state/stage of peace in human being, reconciliation of human being “with your own essence.” (Grotowski 1990, 71)

The performed and performing (in the inner dialogue) rhythm of human life determines the dynamism of the subject’s form and his ordering. Was also the way of theatre appropriate with regard to its objective? It seems that the answer to this question depends on the first step/decision of the artist concerning the fundamental values of the subject: If “the way” of theatre would signify theatre as creation of art for its own sake, then . . . the answer will be negative. If, however, “the way” of theatre would signify of human being towards sanctification, improvement . . . then the answer will, perhaps, be affirmative. The question ultimately could only be answered . . . by Jerzy Grotowski himself. But . . . perhaps, today, we do not want to know the answer. Perhaps - like Peter in *Apocalypsis* - we affirm: Do not answer! We expect, and need, from theatre a space and ambiguous interpretations, and not an unequivocal statement.

¹⁶ Grotowski’s Notes of Master Eckhart (see Grotowski 1990, 218).

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