„Analiza i Egzystencja” 62 (2023), 163–179
ISSN (print): 1734-9923
ISSN (online): 2300-7621
DOI: 10.18276/aie.2023.62-09

ARTYKUŁY

JAN KRASICKI
ORCID 0000-0003-2700-7715
University of Wrocław
email: jan.krasicki@uwr.edu.pl

In the Land of *Metaxú*

Keywords: metaxu, image, icon, symbol, myth, Socrates, Plato
Słowa kluczowe: metaxu, obraz, ikona, symbol, mit, Sokrates, Platon

Abstract

The article poses the question of the role of symbolic cognition in philosophical cognition. The starting point is the analysis of Diotima’s famous speech quoted by Socrates in Plato’s Symposium. The issue is presented in a panoramic approach from ancient to modern times.

Inhabitants of the Metaxú Realm

When Plato talks about the most difficult issues, he does not use conceptual language but resorts to images, metaphors, and symbols, such as in the well-known myth of the Cave. Similarly, he employs images, metaphors and symbols when addressing philosophers’ work, instead of giving clear definitions and arguments, by resorting to the myth of the Feast of the gods and the birth of the strange god Eros. Through the image of Socrates and the depiction of Diotima the prophetess, we are invited to partake in the secrets of what it means to be a philosopher and a pursuer of philosophy. Furthermore, we see Diotima of the *Symposium* explaining to Socrates

that we as philosophers and human beings, unlike gods or immortals, are inhabitants of the realm between the divine world and the human world. Plato refers to this sphere as "in between"—this is *metaxú* (Greek: μεταξύ).

In the world of "our modern postmodernity" (Wolfgang Welsch), we followers of god (as the myth suggests), who are the products of prosperity and poverty, who are the intermediaries between the worlds of gods and people, fail to grasp Diotima's notion of the sphere of the "in between." Consequently, we live in a way that ignores her reflections concerning the philosophers' lot, which the Polish Nobel Laureate in Literature refers to as "the land of Metaxú" (Tokarczuk, 2020).

According to Eric Voegelin, the notion of *Metaxú* appears only once in the Feast, as a preposition. He maintains that Plato discovers the basic structure of philosophical existence as the space between human and divine existence that is captured by the notion of "in between," *metaxú*. To paraphrase the *Symposium*, Voegelin writes, "The entire dimension of the spirit (daimonion) is halfway between (*metaxú*) god and man" (Plato, 2002, p. 67). And he draws a further conclusion, stating that "in between—*metaxú*—is not an empty space, but a 'dimension of spirit'; it is reality, man's conversations with gods" (Plato, 2002, p. 67), the sphere of "mutual participation (*methexis, metalepsis*) of human reality in the divine and divine reality in the human" (Voegelin, 2000, p. 259).[1]

The above-discussed idea of the "in-between" sphere constitutes valuable insight for our consideration. As we know from Socrates' account, Diotima informs us that the god of this intermediate space is Eros. He is truly strange and unlike any other gods, for he is simultaneously a god and a non-god. So who is he? What is this strange divine being that seems to be an in-between divinity? When we inquire about him, the god who is celebrated in the *Symposium*, we find Socrates, the last to enter the stage of the dialogue as a restrained participant, reminiscing about his youth when the priestess Diotima instructs him that Eros is a "Great spirit, my Socrates. The whole sphere of spirits is something between God and what is mortal" (Plato, 2002, p. 67).

[1] This excerpt is part of the second chapter of the book *Science, Politics, Gnosticism: Two Essays*, which is the fourth part of the above-mentioned book (Voegelin, 2000, p. 103).

As Diotima says, Eros, the god of philosophy, is not a god but an intermediate deity. He "does not get with man"; and if he does so, he does it indirectly. He is a strange god who is not only from the divine realm, but also from the mortal realm. Like Hermes, who is the father of hermeneutics, he is a resident of the "in-between"[2] sphere.

"God Does Not Get Involved with Man"

Socrates (Krasicki & Kijaczko, 2008, pp. 7–8), the archetypal European philosopher,[3] represents the epitome between the divine and human realms. We should remember that he, an adept of sophistry, is more than a philosopher in the sophistic sense of a "wise man" (*sophos*). He is a sage; and in order not to perish in the light of the sophistic and deceptive rhetoric, his soul finds a place between what is divine and what is human, which lends Socrates to be misunderstood by the *demos*. For *demos* fears and hates the undefined and undemocratic attitudes and their aloofness. Hence, Socrates finds himself removed from *polis* and consequently is condemned to death (Plato, *Defense of Socrates*).

Socrates is deeply aware of the complexities and peculiarities of his position; but despite his awareness, he does not know where he actually is. This place that he occupies is not a place in the common understanding of the

[2] As Diotima says, "The Son of Prosperity and Poverty at the Feast of the gods,"—he is the interpreter between the gods and men. He offers sacrifices and prayers from people to gods, and from the gods he brings orders and favors to people; and being in the middle between both worlds, he bridges the gap between them and makes it all stick together somehow. Through him, all the art of divination goes to heaven. What priests do, the respective sacrifices and ceremonies—because gods do not interfere with people—but through him all intercourse, all conversation between gods and people takes place, both in dreams and in reality. Whoever understands these things is a spiritual person; and whoever understands himself in something else, in some art or some craft, is a simple worker. There are many different spirits of this kind, one of which is Eros (Plato, 2008, p. 203); Plato (2008), p. 68 (distinction—J.K.)

[3] As L. Kołakowski wrote, "For centuries, philosophy has confirmed its legitimacy by posing and answering questions inherited from the Socratic and pre-Socratic legacy: how to distinguish real from unreal, truth from false, good from evil. There is one man with whom all European philosophers identify, even if they reject his ideas in their entirety. This is Socrates—a philosopher incapable of identifying himself with this archetypal figure does not belong to this civilization" (Kołakowski, 1990, p. 7).

word *topos*; instead, it is a domain of spirits and thoughts. From a demiurgical *majeure* perspective, he is "in," i.e., in a specific place represented by the Athenian public square, the *agora*; but he is also "beyond" any place, "beyond" all *topos*. Simply put, for Socrates, it is a mystery where exactly he finds himself "in."

We can clearly see this idea of philosophy finding itself in the "in-between" space expressed by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who states that philosophy is never "completely in the world" and yet "is never outside the world" (Hadot, 2000, pp. 64–67). Pierre Hadot employs a similar idea, quoting the words of the author of *The Phenomenology of Perception* when he observes that the same happens in the case of Socrates, who is not easily categorized. He is neither "in the world nor outside the world." As a philosopher, Socrates is "in between" and confronts his greatest mystery of residing "in between."

Socratic dialectical art is much more than just sophistic verbal craftsmanship. He not only practices dialectics, but also "proclaims" (Hadot, 2000, pp. 64–65). By expressing himself in the *agora*, he gives voice to what comes from the *chôra*, that is, from beyond the "market," and knows that without "proclamation" there is no true philosophy (Hadot, 2000, pp. 64–65).

Let us observe that in dialogues such as the *Phaedros* (*The Second Speech of Lysias*), the *Hippias Major*, and the *Ion*, Plato discloses the fundamental truth about man, the same truth that applies to philosophy: that man is a being without measure—this is the same idea that tragedy writers like Sophocles and Aeschylus and Euripides try to convey to the *demos*.

The same can be said about philosophy, for it too remains without measure; and by closing itself to what is different, it closes the mystery of what, though frightening, is most essential to its "birth."[4] It is in philosophy and through philosophy that man appears as amazing (*deinos*)—powerful and repulsive. Like man himself, philosophy is not free from falling into a "lack of measure" in its physis and logos, open and secret, human and superhuman, rational and Irrational (Dodds , 2014). Apollonian and Dionysian, heavenly and earthly, uranic and chthonic. The choir, which in the Greek tragedy reveals the will and knowledge of the gods and which, as such, can't be wrong (Romilly, 1994). In the first stasimon of *Antigone*, the playwright (Antigone, 332) pens:

[4] This issue was brilliantly highlighted by Giorgio Colli in the books *The Birth of Philosophy* and *After Nietzsche*.

The strength is of wonders, but it reaches above all
A strange man's power.

When reflecting on living in the "land of *Metaxú*," we need to be aware of the profound consequences of such an existence. *Metaxú*, as Voegelin observes, flows directly from what is referred to as a sickness that affects the totality of existence. A man who is aware of *metaxú* and lives in it while exploring its sickness, simultaneously desires to leave it behind forever. Thus he discovers a strange longing (*zetezis*) and the call (*helkein*) to what is true and wise (*sophon*); he discovers in himself a desire (*eros*) for what is perfect, good (*agathon*), and beautiful (*kalon*) (Voegelin, 2000, p. 259). Simply put, the man who lives in the "land of *metaxú*" and seeks these things is a philosopher. But unlike other people, he does not live in it; nor does he want to live forever.

"Everything that Separates and Connects at the Same Time"

In the understanding of Simone Weil, the term *metaxú* means the sum of phenomena that lead to something else and that only "mediate" (Weil, 1986, p. 273) humanity's path to eternal life. Paradoxically a human is there to be able to live without them. "This world," writes Weil, "is a closed door. It is an obstacle on the way to the goal. And at the same time—a transition" (Weil, 1986, p. 273). Unlike Weil, the inhabitants of this world forget this truth so much that they treat it as an end in itself. However, its meaning lies in something else; and as such it is always a sign and symbol of something other than itself. Again, as Weil points out, a "wall" that separates two prisoners living in adjacent cells also functions as a medium that they use to communicate with each other by "knocking" on that "wall" (Weil, 1986, p. 273). "The wall," Weil continues, "is what separates them but also enables them to connect. Everything that separates and connects at the same time" (Weil, 1986, p. 273).

Furthermore, what Weil labels as *metaxú* are relative values without which human life is impossible. But when humans elevate them to being the most important by absolutizing them, then they obscure what is most important in human existence; for as Różewicz writes:

sometimes "life" covers up
This
which is greater than life. (Różewicz, 2002, p. 59)

Philosophically speaking, the values of the *metaxú* realm are not autotelic; so they cannot become the goal of human life in itself. Their value and meaning, as both Socrates and Plato perfectly understand and which the sophists do not understand, stems from something beyond them. In this sense, they are a sign and symbol of something they point to, not the content they refer to.

In other words, these values are symbols; and the perception of the *metaxú* as symbolic is the great intuition and sense of Plato's dialectic (Łosiew, 2019, Stróżewski, 1983, pp. 17–33). The genius of this great Athenian's philosophy resides in the fact that he expresses the symbolic paradigm in which the entire reality of the visible is a symbol of the invisible, which leads him to see the dialectical relationship between the finite and the infinite in every structure of being, in every detail, in William Blake's every "grain of sand" (Krasicki, p. 192).

Plato and Dante: Symbolism and Scholasticism

Plato's symbolic approach to philosophy maintains the organic connection between an image and a concept. However, in the course of the development of European philosophy, this relationship between an image and a concept is shaken in favor of pure conceptualism; and in the period of scholasticism, there is a specific hypertrophy of the concept.

The late Middle Ages are not only characterized by a period of scholastic decline, manifested by the exhaustion of the medieval scholastic intellectualism, but also propelled by the search for new formulas explaining the world and humans in it. This search for a new conceptualization of the world reveals the limitations and flaws of the scholastic approach. The rejuvenated approach to reflecting on the world and humasn in it discloses the medieval approach to be sterile and jejune when reflecting on the real world and humans here understood in their inaccessibility and hiddenness.

Consequently, it cannot be much of a surprise that the symbolism of the *Divine Comedy of Dante* and the symbolism of the New Life are moving away from the intellectualism of St. Thomas' early writings. It is not

surprising then that in order to express its "myth of life" (following Yakov E. Golosovker [2012, pp. 7–14]), Beatrice's myth, he resorts to a language other than conceptual or scholastic, which is to say, poetic language. This sophiological myth, expressed in a symbolic way, defines the overall vision of the world, humans, and God in Dante's work; and it should be understood in a symbolic way. Any other attempt to read Dante will lead to a misunderstanding of the creative path of the Italian thinker and poet and for his "myth of life." As the Polish poet puts it, we will "see" what the curious tourists saw when they came across Dante's tomb in Ravenna, that is, little, or even "nothing" (Różewicz, 1980, p. 374).

The Italian poet and thinker, with genius intuition, reveals the limits of intellectualism; and the evolution of his views tends toward a Platonic symbolic and allegorical interpretation of reality and as such heralds the philosophy of the Renaissance, whose possibilities will only be revealed by Giordano Bruno in his fictionalism and the symbolism of the Renaissance theosophists, including its representatives, such as Paracelsus and above all, Jacob Boehme.

Icon versus Image

The symbolic essence of the icon is an image but a special one, which is shown by its comparison with Western religious art. As Paul Evdokimov observes, Eastern mysticism is anti-visionist and rejects all imaginative contemplation. The icon makes Christ present but is not His "portrait" because "portrait" belongs to the realm of painting, not theology. Indeed, there is so-called religious painting; but being an artifact, the icon also occupies a different order and as such transcends beyond the imaginary sphere. In other words, the icon is theological and not only religious. Each icon is derivative, a function, as Evdokimov asserts, of that one and only one icon in the universe, the only image that is Jesus Christ (Evdokimov, 1986).

In Paweł Floreński's approach to the icon (Floreński, 1984), there is a fundamental difference, which dates back to the Renaissance, between the perspective in painting and the figurative representation of the icon. Vision painting, using perspective, creates the illusion of something that has no ontological or existential reality. It does something that the icon does

not allow, namely, creates the illusion of infinity, transcendence, and "that world," or directly, "heaven."

In this sense, Kazimierz Malevicz's abstract—and in fact iconic—painting speaks more about transcendence of the "other world" than all the so-called religious art. For instance, Malevicz's abstract painting entitled "Black Square" can be interpreted as symbolizing the absolute unknowability of God. The core of this painting is not nature, the Renaissance landscape, the world; it is humankind in relation to God and His transcendence, or as a pseudo-Dionysius Areopagite says, total "darkness" for the human mind (Pseudo-Dionizy Areopagita, 1997).

Hence, an icon is a symbol, the symbol that not only shows but also existentially presents what it indicates. Although it is difficult to imagine, when we look at the image of the God-human, the God-human gazes at us. As Irina Jazykowa writes, "[M]an tries to look into God's Face through the icon, but at the same time God looks back at us through the Image" (Dobieszewski, 2012, pp. 208–209). Moreover, we ourselves become Him; we transform into the One we look at while He looks at us. The teleology of the human being is not some uncertainty, rather, the ontological certainty of the image. "We all stare at the brightness of the Lord as if in a mirror, with our faces unveiled," writes St. Paul, "by the Spirit of the Lord, we become more and more shining like His image" (2 Cor 3.18), (Krasicki, 2002, p. 81).

Symbolism in the East and West and the Unity of the Christian World

Right up to the time of late Scholasticism, the iconic image of humankind is a living theology, is vivid and recognizable throughout the centuries of theological culture as a symbolic culture. As Evdokimov points out, however, this tradition is losing its pull in modern times. "From the fifteenth century on, the idea of the image of God," Evdokimov maintains, loses its role in philosophy. Moral consciousness still has a faint memory of this distant voice, but Kant's "pure will" deprives him of transcendence. Surveying many dictionaries of theology, we encounter no image but its loss. Only in the articles on the subject of original sin, we see the discussion of the topic; but it is as though, instead of a kingdom that marks the course of history, we are talking about a paradise lost (Evdokimov, 1986, p. 99).

A different story concerning the place of the image appears within the Eastern tradition because, in the Christian East, the symbolic tradition is always more vivid. The cult of icons, the Platonic and neo-Platonic traditions in philosophy and theology, (Dobieszewski, 2012) and the unique role of the symbol in the Orthodox tradition create a fertile ground for the persistence of the image. Therefore, until the Great Schism (1054), before which Christianity exhibits a unified theology, the image enjoys its place within the Christian tradition due not only to the universal language of liturgy and theology, which is in Latin, but also to symbolism and Christian Platonism (Beierwaltes, 2003). Hence, until the time of the ecumenical Council of Florence (1439), the tradition of the Christian world was one and still understood by the Christian West and the Christian East.

There is of course the place of doctrinal disagreements between the East and the West. For example, the dispute with the Orthodox of the "light of Tabor" from Mount Athos over the nature of the "energies of God" advocated by the passionate Calabrian monk Barlaam—the defender, and at the same time corrector, of the teachings of St. Thomas—does not harm Christian unity. As the contemporary Anglican theologian Eric L. Mascall observes, "Palamism and Thomism are not oppositional doctrines to each other" (Mascall, 1988, p. 261); and if not for the inquisitive zeal of such figures of the Latin world as Barlaam of Calabria, St. Thomas could find a common language not only with St. Gregory Palamas, but also with other Byzantine theologians (Meyendorff, 1984).

Modern and Metaxú. Two Reformers

As indicated, the iconic and symbolic paradigm prevailed within European philosophy from the time of Plato until the Renaissance. However, the rise of modernity—which results not only in a new understanding of philosophy, but also the world and humans in it—moves away from the aforesaid iconic and symbolic paradigm (Lewis, 1986). We can see this shift manifested in *The Discourse on the Method* by René Descartes and in Luther's theology and anthropology.

Hence, Descartes' philosophy is characterized by an autarkic, completely self-sufficient, and independent manner from the empirical world while his cognitive position is defined by the term "in between," which we

no longer recognize and which in fact consists of two separate, significant elements that can be written as “between,” *meta-xú*, but the very word “after,” “beyond,” meta. As a result of such an attitude, Descartes elevates his human cognitive condition on a par with the position of “pure minds,” which do not need any bodily and material basis to know; and his cognitive position can, after Jacques Maritain, be described as “angelism” (Maritain, 2005).

The Cartesian Angelism shown here observes and analyzes in-depth another French thinker, Rémi Brague, who notes that “with modernity, the question of humankind’s place among other creatures becomes topical again. (...) The Greek philosophers rank humans in second place after the heavenly bodies, and the Bible—after the angels. He differs from animals in reason, and from angels, purely spiritual beings, in their carnal nature. Along with modern times, a large-scale movement begins, leading to the removal of both heavenly bodies and angels from the worldview. Their existence is not denied, but both are as if neutralized” (Brague, 2020, pp. 145–146).

To follow Brague’s thinking, the Platonic element “in between,” *metaxú*, vanishes from the modern “kingdom of man.” The “disappearance of angels” (Krasicki, 1992, p. 39) is associated with the loss of understanding of the role of the language of “mediation,” or symbolic language, in fact the only language in which “the other world” communicates with “our world” and through which communication between them is possible (Krasicki, 1992, p. 39). This process coincides with the modern Pascal’s cosmic and existential “void discovery” (Krasicki, 1992, p. 39). Interestingly, Gregory Palamas, the Byzantine theologian and mystic, warned: “And if you erase everything that is between what cannot be participated in and the participants—oh—what a void!—you will separate us from God, destroying the bond and creating a great and impassable gulf” (Spiteris, 2006).

Nonetheless, everything comes at a price because, as the Old Testament asserts, angels always mediate between the transcendence of God and the immanence of the world and humans (Krasicki, 2002, p. 200). As Brague writes, in the Cartesian modern cognitive and anthropological paradigm: “an attempt to remodel human thought according to the example of angelic thought” (Brague, 2020, p. 146) takes place without any mediation and ignores the *metaxú* sphere, as well as the world and humankind in it, resulting in what Pascal notices as being deprived of any epiphany and filled with emptiness.

The emergence of the post-Copernican "place of man in nature," (Pascal, 1983, p. 47) i.e., the displacement of the old geocentric understanding of the universe, Pascal expressed in a moving and profound way by reflecting:

> When I consider the shortness of my life absorbed into the eternity before and after him, when I consider the little space that I occupy and even see, drowned in the infinite vastness of spaces that I do not know and do not know me, I am frightened and surprised that I am rather here than there, for there is no reason why here rather than elsewhere, why rather now than then… Who put me here? On whose command and by whose will were this place and this time assigned to me? (Pascal, 1983, p. 56)

He further captures the de-anthropomorphizing of the universe by eloquently writing: "The eternal silence of these infinite spaces terrifies me" (Pascal, 1983, p. 56). In other words, the centrality of humankind's phenomenon in the universe is profoundly undermined by the rise of the modern mathematical-physical reason of Descartes.

Unlike Descartes' philosophy, we see in Pascal's thought the awareness of being "in between," *metaxú*. We are, Pascal writes, always "in the middle."[5] In his thinking, the beginning and the end of things are always hidden from us, mythical to us. What is most important to us is concealed under a veil of mystery and reveals only a myth. The knowledge of "first things" and "last things" is denied to us because "reason," adds Pascal, "always falls prey to appearances" (Pascal, 1983, p. 51).

In the asymbolic model presented in the Cartesian philosophy, the "human body" is not a living organism—as, for example, for the theosophists and philosophers of the Renaissance—but a dead mechanism. The Cartesian philosophy propagates a break between the empirical, the material, and the human mind that plays the role of beings like angels that have a direct view of ideas without empirical resources. The "human body" (Descartes, 1989), deprived of all the enormity of vivid symbolic references, becomes an object among other objects; it is not, as Edmund Husserl would later say, "my own living body" (*Leib*, *Leiblichkeir* [Husserl, 1982, pp. 141–142],

[5] "We are limited in every direction: This state, which is always in the middle of the two extremes, is manifested in all our faculties" (Pascal, 1983, p. 51).

[Franck, 2017]), felt and lived, but a physical body, a corpuscular block (*der Körper*) that is solely the object of an objectified scientific description.

Speaking from the biblical perspective of the Temptation in Paradise scene in Genesis, ("you shall be like God"—Genesis 3.5), what Descartes is doing in his epistemological approach is to succumb to the devil's temptation of elevating humans' status. He is attempting to cross, or rather jump over, the status of a human being as a spiritual and corporeal being in favor of a disembodied, bodiless being. Furthermore, Descartes seeks to equate one's cognitive status with the cognitive status of incorporeal beings, "pure substances" (St. Thomas, 1984). In this context, he confronts the Angelic Doctor who is stating that "man is not only a soul, but something composed of soul and body" (S. Th. I, q. 75, a. 4), by suggesting that ultimately human essence is not one's embodiment and one's soul; rather, it is solely one's soul, thus challenging the idea that the soul and angel don't belong to the same species (St. Thomas, 2000).

Luther's theological iconoclasm resonates with the philosophy of Descartes because he translates the whole sense of the Christian faith into an existential relationship of human beings to the Word of God. Luther's contribution to theology and anthropology is colossal, but the price of his reform is the elimination of this sphere we call the *metaxú*. Figuratively speaking, we can say that Luther—forgetting that God always reveals Himself in two ways: through His Word and through His creation— "opened His mouth" to scripture but at the same time "closed His mouth" to creation. Consequently, being subject to the watchful eye of various ecclesiastical censors, Luther's ideas speak not through philosophers and theologians but through "heretics," theosophists, poets, and mystics (Krasicki, 2011).

Hence, we can say that just as Luther takes the speech from the cosmos, so Descartes takes the living symbolic speech from nature and the human body. Thanks to the father of modern philosophy, nature, which plays the central role in the treatises of French materialists such as La Mettrie and Holbach, soon becomes "nature" (*La Nature*); and everything that we can say about humankind gets synthesized through modern materialism (Miodoński, 2001).

The loss of a symbol is always more than a loss of meaning, for it is an inability to participate in realities that modern philosophers "never dreamed of." Therefore, the reform initiated by the author of *The Discourse on the Method* is only the God of Deism of the Enlightenment, a god tailored

to the human autonomous thought and will. This god is not the living "God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" (Exodus 3.6), who reveals Himself to Pascal; He is not Pascal's Mystery. Rather, he is a demiurge; an excellent mathematician and engineer; and as Etienne Gilson ironically puts it, he is God consulting "his creative act with Isaac Newton" (Gilson, 1961, p. 95).

Consequently, Plato's will is broken and buried once and for all; and the early modern reform shows the exit door to the angels, banning them from serious philosophical considerations. And then both the Enlightenment and the "masters of suspicion," such as Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud, demote God from being a symbol to merely becoming a sign, as the poet says, at most a "sign without meaning" (Friedrich Hoelderlin).

Not surprisingly, it is in line with the logic of modern times that man not only wants to be content with no intermediary and no "in between," no *metaxú*, but also has no use for a "foreign director," [6] as Kant puts it in his famous manifesto on "What Is Enlightenment?", there is room only for autonomous will, and as such, reason.

Although it is a joy for those of a less-than-noble spirit, as a consolation, Descartes is burdened with a kind of irrational fate. His rationalism bears another, less known, "dark," oneiric side. As eloquently observed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, "Even Descartes has a dream" (Deleuze & Guattari, 2000, p. 50) to which he owes everything that is most important in his philosophy.

Metaxú and "Lords of Images" (Ending)

Our human and philosophical condition is determined by the fact that we live, as Olga Tokarczuk writes, in the "land of *Metaxú*" (Tokarczuk, 2020) and have no access to what is divine; for the opposite of *metaxú*, as the Polish Nobel Laureate writes, is deadly "literalism" (Tokarczuk, 2020, p. 252). This is why "the letter kills us and the spirit gives life" ("the letter kills, and the Spirit gives life"—2 Cor 3.6). As Alexei Losev eloquently observes, we live in the realm of myths and symbols and die in the realm of concepts that are

[6] "Enlightenment is what we mean when a man comes out of his minor age, into which he fell through his own fault. Underage is the inability of a man to use his own mind, without a foreign manager" (Kuderowicz, 2000, p. 194).

"nothing" by themselves (as Nicolai Hartmann writes, "Begriffe (...) sind für sich überhaupt nichts" [Świeżawski, 1966, p. 350]). Thus deprived of life-giving imagination, we remain hostage to Urizen, the god of the north, the cruel Blakeian god of the "Land of Ulro" (Miłosz, 1994).

Consequently, the symbolic paradigm of truth we are analyzing—transmitted by myth; poetry; art; and even, as in the case of the author of Meditation, dreams—is by no means secondary to scientific truth. On the contrary, it is equally valuable, although its truths hail from a different order.

At the same time, the dichotomy of the dispute between what is "rhetorical" and what is "logical," already outlined in Aristotle's Rhetoric, and which actually runs throughout the history of European culture, loses its power in a way. This dichotomy, which is a kind of feature of European culture, known to the romantics like Schelling, Dilthey, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Derrida, proves to be not only one of the most established illusions of our culture, but also one of the most difficult to overcome.

Let us add that, unlike a number of inveterate scientists, many are unaware of the falsehood of this dichotomy, of which Ludwig Wittgenstein scornfully notes in his book *Culture and Value*, that nowadays, "people think that scientists exist to instruct them; poets, musicians to please them. The idea that they can teach them something—doesn't come to their mind" (https://teologiapolityczna.pl/teologia-polityczna-co-tydzien).

As noted by a contemporary Polish philosopher who spent many years in the United States, the modern "saviors of humanity" such as Bill Gates or Steve Jobs are not so much the inhabitants of the "land of *metaxú*," but the rulers of "The Land of Ulro"—this is not so much an impulse for reflection as a reason to rub your hands together in business (https://teologiapolityczna.pl/teologia-polityczna-co-tydzien).

After all, this should not engender defeatism in us, the inhabitants of the "land of *Metaxú*." On the contrary, let us try to put together the whole of our Image that is broken into pieces; perhaps they will form a mosaic, or even an Icon, in our "lost paradigm of man" (Krasicki, 2011) in our Image.

References

Beierwaltes, W. (2003). *Platonizm w chrześcijaństwie* (P. Domański, Trans.). Antyk.

Brague, R. (2020). *Królestwo człowieka. Geneza i klęska projektu nowożytnego* (W. Dłuski, Trans.). Teologia Polityczna.

Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (2000). *Co to jest filozofia*? (P. Pieniążek, Trans.). słowo/obraz terytoria.

Descartes, R. (1989). *Człowiek. Opis ciała ludzkiego* (A. Bednarczyk, Trans.). PWN.

Dobieszewski, J. (2012). *Absolut i historia. W kręgu myśli rosyjskiej*. Universitas.

Dodds, E. R. (2014). *Grecy i irracjonalność* (J. Partyka, Trans.). Homini.

Durand, G. (1986). *Wyobraźnia symboliczna* (C. Rowiński, Trans.). PWN.

Evdokimov, P. (1986). *Prawosławie* (J. Klinger, Trans.). PAX.

Floreński, P. (1984). *Ikonostas* (Z. Podgórzec, Trans.). PAX.

Franck, D. (2017). *Dwa ciała. Wokół fenomenologii Husserla* (J. Migasiński, & A. Dwulit, Trans.). Scholar.

Gilson, E. (1961). *Bóg i filozofia* (M. Kochanowska, Trans.). PAX.

Golosovker, Y. E (2012). *Imaginatiwnyj absolut*. Academic Project.

Hadot, P. (2000). *Czym jest filozofia starożytna?* (P. Domański, Trans.). Aletheia.

Husserl, E. (1982). *Medytacje kartezjańskie* (A. Wajs, Trans.). PWN.

Kołakowski, L. (1990). *Horror methapisicus*. Res Publica.

Krasicki, J. (1992). Odkrycie pustki, czyli dlaczego zniknęli Aniołowie. *Opole*, *1*, 245.

Krasicki, J. (2002). *Przeciw nicości. Eseje*. Księgarnia Akademicka.

Krasicki, J. (2011). *Po „śmierci Boga". Eseje eschatologiczne*. Homini.

Krasicki, J. (2011). Wyobraźnia i wiedza. W poszukiwaniu zagubionego paradygmatu człowieka. In B. Płonka-Syroka, & A. Kaźmierczak (Eds.), *Nauka w kontekście wzorców kultury* (pp. 7–14). DiG.

Krasicki, J., & Kijaczko, S. (2008). Wstęp. In S. Kijaczko, & J. Krasicki (Eds.), *Chôra i agora. U filozoficznych korzeni kultury europejskiej* (pp. 7–14). Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Opolskiego.

Kuderowicz, Z. (2000). *Kant*. Wiedza Powszechna.

Lewis, C. S. (1986). *Odrzucony obraz. Wprowadzenie do literatury średniowiecznej i renesansowej* (W. Ostrowski, Trans.). Znak.

Łosiew, A. (2019). *Dialektyka mitu* (R. Sapeńko, Trans.). Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN.

Maritain, J. (2005). *Trzej reformatorzy* (K. Michalski, Trans.). Fronda.

Mascall, E. L. (1988). *Otwartość bytu. Teologia naturalna dzisiaj* (S. Zalewski, Trans.). PAX.

Meyendorff, J. (1984). *Teologia bizantyjska. Historia i doktryna* (J. Prokopiuk, Trans.). PAX.

Miłosz, C. (1994). *Ziemia Ulro*. Znak.

Miodoński, L. (2001). *Całość jako paradygmat rozumienia świata w myśli niemieckiej przełomu romantycznego*. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego.

Pascal, B. (1983). *Myśli* (T. Boy-Żeleński, Trans.). Księgarnia św. Wojciecha.

Plato (2008). *Symposium* (B. Jowett, Trans.). Project Gutenberg. https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1600/1600-h/1600-h.htm.

Plato (2002). *Uczta* (W. Witwicki, Trans.). Antyk.

Poulet, G. (1977). Sen Kartezjusza (D. Eska, Trans.). In *Metamorfozy czasu*. *Szkice krytyczne*. PIW.

Pseudo-Dionizy Areopagita. (1997). *Pisma teologiczne. Imiona boskie. Teologia mistyczna. Listy* (M. Zielska, Trans.). Znak.

Romilly, J. (1994). *Tragedia grecka* (I. Sławińska, Trans.). PWN.

Różewicz, T. (2002). *Szara strefa*. Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie.

Różewicz, T. (1980). *Niepokój*. Ossolineum.

Spiteris, Y. (2006). *Ostatni ojcowie Kościoła*. *Kabasilas, Palamas* (B. Widła, Trans.). Wydawnictwo Księży Marianów.

Stróżewski, W. (1983). *Dialektyka twórczości*. Znak.

Shestov, L. (1975). *In Job's balances* (C. Coventry, & C. A. Macartney, Trans.). Ohio University Press.

Swieżawski, S. (1996). *Zagadnienie historii filozofii*. PWN.

Thomas, S. (2000). Kwestia 75: O człowieku złożonym z substancji duchowej i cielesnej—i to najpierw o istocie jego duszy. In *Traktat o człowieku. Summa teologii*, *1*, 75–89 (S. Swieżawski, Trans.). Antyk.

Thomas, S. (1984). *Dzieła wybrane* (J. Salij, Trans.). W Drodze.

Tokarczuk, O. (2020). *Czuły narrator*. Wydawnictwo Literackie.

Voegelin, E. (2000). *Modernity without restraint*. University of Missouri Press.

Weil, S. (1986). *Świadomość nadprzyrodzona. Wybór myśli* (A. Olędzka-Frybesowa, Trans.). PAX.

Author Note

Professor Jan Krasicki works in the Department of Philosophical Anthropology at the Institute of Philosophy of the University of Wrocław (Poland). His main academic interests and research areas include Russian, Polish and German philosophy from 1800 onwards, with a special focus on philosophical anthropology, the philosophy of religion and the philosophy of culture. He is the author of many critical studies, including *Bóg, człowiek i zło. Studium filozofii Włodzimierza Sołowjowa* (*God, Man and Evil. The Study of Philosophy of Vladimir Solovyov*), 2003, Wrocław, (translated into Russian as *Бог, человек и зло. Исследование философии Владимира Соловьева*, 2009, Москва); *Człowiek i Bóg w tradycji rosyjskiej* (*Man and God in the Russian Tradition*), 2012, Kraków; *Bierdiajew i inni. W kręgu myślicieli rosyjskiego renesansu religijno-filozoficznego* (*Berdyaev and Others. In a Circle of the Thinkers of the Russian Religious and Philosophical Renaissance*), 2012, Warszawa; *Разум и Другой. Опыты по русской и европрейской мысли* (*Mind and the Other. Studies on Russian and European Thought*), 2015, St Petersburg; *Porwanie Europy. Studia heterologiczne* (*Abduction of Europe. Heterological studies*), 2002, Kraków. He has lectured in many European countries, mainly in Germany and Russia.

Address for correspondence: Institute of Philosophy, University of Wrocław, ul. Koszarowa 3/20, 51-149 Wrocław, Poland.

Citation

Krasicki, J. (2023). In the Land of *Metaxú*. *Analiza i Egzystencja*, *62* (2), 147–179. DOI: 10.18276/aie.2023.62-09.