

Instead of a foreword, or on the gnostic alternative to metaphysical optimism

When discussing the longing for metaphysics—an element which constitutes European culture—one cannot overlook the philosophical endeavours of Aristotle (384–322). It was none other than the Stagirite who, thanks to his scholarly authority, ultimately integrated metaphysical inquiry into the nature of philosophy. However, it appears that his foremost philosophical achievement was devising intellectually stable fundamentals which, quite unequivocally, strengthened the conviction that the world is an orderly reality among the subsequent generations of thinkers. Naturally, Stagirite took advantage of the previous inquiries concerning the world – cosmos, namely those of Heraclitus (sixth/fifth century)¹ and Plato's (427–347) theory of ideas. The deliberation of the latter great Athenian already demonstrate very steadfast presumption that the process of transformation of beings, that is their emergence and extinction, is a stable one. Hence, dedicating a separate work to the phenomenon, Aristotle elucidates his teachings in the following manner:

[He] blames everybody else for having given no explanation; and then lays it down; that 'some things are Forms, others Participants in the Forms', and that 'while a thing is said to "be" in virtue of the Form, it is said to "come-to-be" qua sharing in,' to "pass-away" qua "losing", the 'Form.'²

Stagirite thus noted that Plato, opposing all possible inclinations towards chaotic perception of changes occurring in the physical world, linked the

¹ On that issue see e.g. L. Kołakowski, "O Heraklicie", *Tygodnik Powszechny*, no. 7, February 15th, 2004, p. 17; A. Jocz, *Kłęska logosu. Rozważania o racjonalnej bezradności kultury XX wieku wobec fenomenu zła*, in S. Wysłouch, B. Kaniewska, M. Brzostowicz-Klajn (eds), *Logos i mythos w kulturze XX wieku*, Poznań 2003, pp. 44–46.

² Arystoteles, *O powstawaniu i ginięciu (De generatione et corruptione II, 335b)*, transl. by L. Regner, Warszawa 1981, p. 74.

process of transformation of beings with their participation in ideas. Hence, if the Forms are an ontological foundation of reality, then their coming-to-be and passing-away of the perceptible beings which participate in the Forms cannot be random, because those are ideas that lend stability to the process. This is why it proceeds in accordance with rationally cognizable rules, which also describe the functioning of ideal reality.

Aristotle did not merely discuss Plato's cited observations, but also made the effort to elaborate and define them in greater detail. Above all, he sought to arrive at a more precise account of the phenomenon of one being transforming into another, in other words he strove to describe a process in which a particular being passes away, which directly leads to the formation of subsequent being from the prime matter, and so on. Obviously, the issue has been addressed/interpreted over the centuries on many occasions by numerous philosophers, while this book does not aim to repeat or recount their inquiries. However, having the deliberations in the chapters to follow in mind, it would be worthwhile to highlight one of the aspects of that phenomenon. Its essence is intimated in the following fragment in *On Generation and Corruption*:

For, to begin with, it is characteristic of matter to suffer action, i.e. to be moved: but to move, i.e. to act, belongs to a different 'power'. This is obvious both in the things that come-to-be by art and in those that come to-be by nature. Water does not of itself produce out of itself an animal: and it is the art, not the wood, that makes a bed.³

The reader of that paragraph is first confronted with the conclusion that the prime matter is susceptible to the form which installs itself in it. Matter never resists it in any way. Yet this does not mean that it is subjected to random formation. What Aristotle obviously had in mind was the teleological character of the assumption of successive forms by particular beings. Hence even an absolutely extraordinary "ingenuity" of a craftsman will not cause the bed to which Stagirite refers to ever again assume the original form of wood. This is because such re-formation of matter would be purely destructive, or purposeless in its nature. The philosopher is thus convinced that the changes in the world which surrounds the human are orderly and proceed in a strictly determined direction. Therefore one cannot reverse the sequence of transformation of beings which constitute reality. However, for the process of emergence and passing-away to follow

³ Ibidem, p. 75.

a correct course, the material, the formal and the final cause do not suffice. It is for this very reason that Aristotle devotes much attention to the significance of the efficient cause which operates teleologically. Its absence will prevent water from transforming spontaneously into an animal or wood into a bed. At the same time Stagirite underlines that those ontologically anchored mainstays of the transformative processes that beings undergo cannot be in any way invalidated. “[F]or it is a law of nature that the same cause, provided it remain in the same condition, always produces the same effect [...]”⁴ The words quoted here seem to attest to unshakeable certainty of the philosopher, who claims that an animal can never have the form of a bed and conversely. Thus, in Aristotle’s interpretation, changes in the perceptible world (coming-to-be and passing-away of beings) do not present any danger to human existence. They are simply rationally fathomable and predictable. The human should only become reconciled with the inevitable transience and impermanence of their own being. This is obviously difficult in the extreme, because people are instinctively unwilling to accept the finiteness of their own existence. Therefore a singular appeal to human reason is woven into the following fragment of the previously quoted work by Aristotle:

Coming-to-be and passing-away will, as we have said, always be continuous, and will never fail owing to the cause we stated. And this continuity has a sufficient reason on our theory. For in all things, as we affirm, Nature always strives after ‘the better’. Now ‘being’ (we have explained elsewhere the exact variety of meanings we recognize in this term) is better than ‘not-being’ [...].⁵

It follows that individual existence of a particular being (e.g. a human) is always a one-time occurrence. Meanwhile, the process of the emergence and vanishing of individual beings within a species never ceases. Still, the most important message which arises from the quoted reflections comes down to unconditional appreciation of any kind of existence of beings. Individual existence is thus infinitely superior to not-being. Simultaneously, Aristotle suggests that the peculiar aptitude of the sensational world for being can be aligned without any discord with the general rhythm of coming-to-be and passing-away. In such a case, the coming-to-be and passing-away of individual beings becomes a manifestation of teleologically ordered physical reality. At the same time, the stabilized assumption

⁴ Ibidem (336a), p. 76.

⁵ Ibidem (336b), p. 78.

of forms by beings—as previously noted—is also a necessary element of that process. Consequently, Stagirite unequivocally opposes any potential tendencies to perceive the world as a vortex of chaotic events. Thus, with all the import of his scholarly authority, the philosopher supports the conviction already expressed by Heraclitus regarding the incontrovertible value of the material world, which by virtue of its essence is a cosmos. He also opposes Plato's deprecatory position with respect to the perceptible reality.

Philosophical momentousness of the above issues is reflected in the fact that they have been repeatedly addressed throughout the history of European thought. In a peculiar fashion, it linked thinkers whose interests and philosophical fascinations were altogether different. This is fittingly illustrated by the reflections of St. Augustine (354–430) and Witold Gombrowicz (1904–1969), who are apparently divided not only by a substantial temporal gap, but also by their distinct intellectual temperaments and the style of philosophical deliberation. The most interesting thing, however, is that the inquiries of the early Christian philosopher are in perfect consonance with the literary visions of the Polish author, owing predominantly to the continuous struggles of the European metaphysical tradition which has wrestled with the same problems for centuries. To make the above more tangible, one should draw attention to the following passage in *Confessions*:

I took 'formless' to mean, not something entirely without form, but some shape so monstrous and grotesque that if I were to see it, my senses would recoil and my human frailty quail before it. But what I imagined was not truly formless, that is, it was not something bereft of form of any sort. [...]. Yet reason told me that if I wished to conceive of something that was formless in the true sense of the word, I should have to picture something deprived of any trace of form whatsoever, and this I was unable to do.⁶

Examining the nature of formlessness, the thinker from Hippo appears to be very radical in his observations. First of all, he presumes evident limitations of the human reason, which preclude any rational contemplation of the absence of shape/chaos. Formlessness is simply unbearable, even abhorrent to the human mind and therefore, by way of a peculiar therapy, the imagination produces warped, and yet form-endowed beings.⁷ Thus,

⁶ Św. Augustyn, *Wyznania (Confessiones XII, 6)*, transl. by Z. Kubiak, Kraków 1994, p. 285.

⁷ The issue is also discussed in A. Jocz, *Bruno Schulz, czyli o nieznośnym obcowaniu z nieupostaciowaną materią*, in B. Sienkiewicz, T. Sobieraj, *Literackość filozofii – filozoficzność literatury*, Warszawa 2009, pp. 157–167.

the human reason is protected against the confrontation with absolute otherness, or the lack of form. That otherness seems to be decidedly worse than a revolting shape. At the same time, that particular behaviour of the human reason does not derive from a conscious choice as its nature is clearly instinctive. It thus turns out that the faculty is in a way automatically activated at each instance when the human encounters the formless/chaos. Naturally, Aurelius Augustinus does not challenge Aristotle's notion of teleological order of the material reality, concluding merely that the human is to some degree physiologically incapable of perceiving that which essentially represents absence of order. A corroboration of the suggestions of the thinker from Hippo may be sought in Witold Gombrowicz's *Cosmos*:

Can nothing be ever truly expressed, rendered in its anonymous becoming, can no one ever render the babbling of the nascent moment, how is it that, born out of chaos, we can never encounter it again, no sooner do we look than order... and form... are born under our very eyes?⁸

In those reflections, particular attention should be paid to the observation concerning the instinctive human faculty to lend an order to the surrounding chaotic reality and form it into a cosmos.⁹ In fact, this is a pre-rational reflex, which is why pure chaos is never accessible to human experience. In consequence, any perception on our part is a cognition of a world put in order. The obvious difference between Gombrowicz and Aristotle and St. Augustine is that the former does not reluctantly disavow the pulsing, permanent chaos lurking beneath the thin surface of the orderly world. In his turn, the philosopher of Hippo differs from Stagirite in that he notes human, rational helplessness when confronted with the phenomenon of absence of form, without arguing unequivocally for or against its existence. Gombrowicz, on the other hand, is far more radical in his assertions. Even if he does it solely in a metaphorical fashion, he tries to associate the origins of human existence with the unresolved nature of chaos. Thus, chaos may be existentially consequential, and the previously intimated inability to know and fathom its uncontrollable essence may

⁸ W. Gombrowicz, *Kosmos*, in idem, *Dzieła* vol. 5, Kraków 1988, p. 24.

⁹ More on Gombrowicz's grappling with the immanent chaos of the world see e.g. A. Jocz, *Kosmos czy „chaos”?* *Gombrowiczowskie próby filozoficznego ogarnięcia świata*, in J. Mach, A. Zbrzezny (eds), *Gdzie wschodzi Gombrowicz i kędy zapada*, Warsaw 2004, pp. 51–58; A. Jocz, *Skąd dobro? Czy możliwe jest dobro w świecie permanentnych „wpiętkowiczów”?*, in J. Prokopiuk, A. Chudzińska-Parkosadze (eds), *Pod słońcem gnozy*, Poznań 2015, pp. 9–17.

even lead to a peculiar impoverishment of humanity. Does it mean that Gombrowicz negates the teleological, orderly and lasting nature of the amalgamation of matter and form? Clearly he does not, because it is the human who through their “gaze”-cognition imposes a form that lends order to the world permeated by chaos.

When considering the history of human thought to find the most extreme forms of defiance against Aristotle’s borderline optimistic description of the material world, gnostics need to be mentioned in the first place. In their eyes, the stable conjunction of matter and form, or body and soul, was no synonym of cosmic order, but represented an absolute, total subjugation and confinement of the pneumatic element. Wishing to illustrate the phenomenon of gnostic reluctance towards the reality described Aristotle, one should quote the following contentions in the *Gospel of Truth*:

For the place (γάρ) where there is envy and strife is deficient, but the place where (σέ) there is Unity is perfect. Since (έπειση) the deficiency came into being because the Father was not known, therefore (τστε), when the Father is known, from that moment on, the deficiency will no longer exist [...]
It is within Unity that each one will attain himself; within knowledge, he will purify himself from multiplicity into Unity, consuming matter (ϋλη) within himself like fire, and darkness by light, death by life.¹⁰

Analyzing the above fragment, Wincenty Myszor observes that, primarily, it is free of the extreme, dualistic perception of the relationships between the material and the spiritual reality.¹¹ He also believes that these realities “are opposed to one another only temporarily, until the entire spiritual element returns to unity while the material world is destroyed thereby.”¹² The physical world is therefore a transitional one, though acquiring knowledge-gnosis of the “Father”, the Perfect Being, plays a crucial

¹⁰ *Ewangelia Prawdy* (24,25–25,20), in *Teksty z Nag-Hammadi*, transl. from the Coptic by A. Dembska, W. Myszor, Warszawa 1979, p. 151.

¹¹ See W. Myszor, *Komentarz do Ewangelii prawdy* in: *Teksty z Nag-Hammadi*, p. 179.

¹² *Ibidem*.

role there. Only such knowledge may enable the human existing in that world to overcome the negative ramifications of experiencing sensuous multiplicity. The “envy”, “strife” and “deficiency” which enslave the human and cause their pain are direct outcomes of the physical multiplicity of the world and dearth of gnosis. This is why the *Gospel of Truth* very precisely outlines the path leading to the liberation of the human, none other than through the purifying power of gnosis. It will manifest itself in its fullness in the process of “absorbing” matter. Still, Myszor equates the act with the annihilation of the physical world, but is it the only viable interpretation?¹³ It may be worthwhile to note that the category describes only the dynamic trait of the perceptible reality, which by nature does not possess the stability that Aristotle emphasized so strongly. It also highlights the transitional character of the association of matter and form. Therefore individual beings are not the only ones to pass away, as the entire physical reality is to be “absorbed”. Even so, this does not have to mean total destruction. Discovering the essence of matter thanks to gnosis, the human realizes that it does not constitute the foundation on which their sense of security in the world should be built. In such a case, this lack of support that matter might afford becomes solely a source of additional suffering. Naturally, in the gnostic teaching the primary source of human anguish is found already in the daily existence in a body equipped with senses and in the physical reality. In his analysis of the reflections of the Valentinians, Wincenty Myszor underlines that the notions of the body of the Saviour (one who brings, dispenses gnosis) focus chiefly on accentuating his “impassibility”.¹⁴ Therefore, the dignity of the Perfect Being cannot involve the peculiar encumbrance of various corporal defects. Its existence cannot be fettered by any material discomfort. At the same time, it seems to follow clearly from the above observation of Myszor’s that gnostics consider the aforesaid daily ordeal of physical suffering to be the most destructive experience of human existence. If the nature of the human body manifests itself mainly through pain, then it testifies to the insurmountable flaw of matter. Serge Hutin deliberates along the same lines, observing that:

Revulsion towards the body slowly leads to finding it an alien thing one has to bear nevertheless: the body is compared to a “corpse”, “grave”, or “gaol” [...].

¹³ See *ibidem*.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 60.

Body, the instrument of humiliation and suffering, drags the spirit down, makes it sink into mortifying torpor, into gradual oblivion of its own lineage.¹⁵

In those words, the hyperboles that disparage the body make a striking impression indeed. It turns out that the body not only imprisons the spirit but represents a lethal threat to the latter. Among other things, this owes to the sensuous corporeality being capable—in a peculiar manner—of exciting the pneumatic being and diminishing its natural need to be possessed of gnosis.¹⁶ This is how the extraordinary ambivalence of the human physicality is revealed. On the one hand, it often causes the human to experience degrading pain in their life, while on the other its enticing sensuousness has always been a powerful temptation.

Naturally, the history of the previously discussed “absorption” of matter did not expire with the early Christian Gnosticism. A revival of a kind came with the neo-gnosis that emerged at the turn of the twentieth century. For a creative interpretation of that category, one should perhaps cite the following reflections by Stanisława Hausnerowa:

Namely, the worlds issuing from the bosom of pre-self begin to shape themselves, going through 7 periods of gradual transformation, proceeding from the ethereal state to an ever greater concentration through involution, or progressive materialization, and subsequently evolution, or spiritualization.¹⁷

The aim behind the above quote is—among other things—to draw reader’s attention to the prompt reception of the theosophy of Edouard Schuré’s (1841–1928) and anthroposophy of Rudolf Steiner’s (1861–1925) among the Polish seekers of gnostic spirituality. However, the crucial fragment in Hausnerowa begins with an observation the Polish theosophist makes with respect to the physical world which is merely a part of the evolution of the pneumatic reality that had lasted for many centuries. The spiritual world provides the point of departure for that process and it is also the destination towards which all sensuous beings are heading. To account for the nature of those transformations, Hausnerowa (in manner similar to

¹⁵ S. Hutin, *Gnostycy*, transl. by K. Demianiuk, *Literatura na Świecie* 1987, no. 12 (197), p. 16.

¹⁶ On that issue see e.g. A. Jocz, “Rozum Arystotelesa a gnostyczne po-‘wołanie’. Dwa różne początki poznawania istoty Absolutu”, *Poznańskie Studia Polonistyczne* 2001, Seria Literacka, vol. 8, pp. 71–86.

¹⁷ S. Hausnerowa, “Zagadnienia obecnej doby w oświeceniu nauk teozoficznych”, *Zdrój* 1918, vol. 4, p. 105.

Steiner's) refers to gradual materialization of non-sensuous beings, which she describes thus:

Falling into the matter is a necessary law of nature, it is a touchstone of purification, because only through its own labour and merit does the spirit attain the state of dematerialization, or spirituality.

The spiritual monad has to go through all levels of evolution from animal to angel, to acquire the experience that is necessary for its development at each stage whilst struggling with the matter to subjugate it and bend it to its will. It is the plan of the universe to strive ceaselessly for perfection which cannot be attained through another's help, miracle, or grace, but by virtue of one's own toil [...].¹⁸

Here, the conviction presuming a natural/naturalistic character of evolution of the spiritual world appears to play a tremendously significant role. Also, the author distances herself from the widespread inclination in European culture to associate non-material beings with the supernatural sphere. Therefore the shape of the process whereby the spiritual being becomes liberated from physical reality is predicated only on its individual effort. On the other hand, its presence in the sensational world is not a result of deliberate enslavement to which the creators of Gnosticism had referred. Still, the reflections do harbour a trace of the gnostic denouncement of matter.¹⁹ It is for this very reason that Hausnerowa very explicitly recommends striving for spiritual mastery over the physical dimension of human existence. Also, her interpretation of the category of perfection clearly and unequivocally aims to lend value to the process of dematerialization. Still, the principal conclusion one may draw from the cited fragments of *Zagadnienia obecnej doby w oświetleniu nauk teozoficznych* is that the a safe, ontologically lasting and immanently valuable material reality is a dubious conviction. In this manner, neo-gnostics (e.g. Rudolf Steiner, Stanisława Hausnerowa) challenge the superiority of a stable association of matter and form which is rooted in Aristotle's philosophy.

While reading these deliberations, one should bear in mind that they do not seek to describe the phenomenon of gnosis or attempt a detailed

¹⁸ Ibidem.

¹⁹ On a similar tendency in Rudolf Steiner's anthroposophy see e.g. A. Jocz, *Antropozofia Rudolfa Steinera (1861–1925), czyli próba stworzenia podstaw neognozy*, in E. Przybył (ed.), *Oblicza gnozy*, Kraków 2000, pp. 110–112.

reconstruction of the gnostic/neo-gnostic mythology,²⁰ because that effort has already been undertaken by numerous researchers, past and present. Here, the goal is to highlight those elements of gnostic/neo-gnostic teaching and those gnostic/neo-gnostic notional categories which may be utilized to interpret selected excerpts from the prose works and critical writings by Bruno Schulz (1892–1942).²¹ Creating his literary world, the author appears to distance himself from the Aristotelian notion of the teleological world – cosmos, but the question is whether Schulz’s departure from the ontology of Stagiritic also involves its gnostic/neo-gnostic negation? Answering this very question is the foremost aim of this book. Simultaneously, the previously intimated intention to attempt a gnostic reading of Schulz’s literary oeuvre will not endeavour to present the author as an staunch adherent of Gnosticism/neo-Gnosticism. Instead, it will focus on the phenomenon which could be described as a particular kind of gnostic sensibility of the artist. It may be noted that the presence of gnostic, theosophical and anthroposophical notional categories in the literary works from the turn of the twentieth century is beyond any scientific doubt. Evidence of their penetration into Polish literature may be found in the writings of Stanisław Przybyszewski (1868–1927), Tadeusz Miciński (1873–1918) and

²⁰ Concerning the nature of gnosis, Gnosticism and neo-gnosis, see sources quoted in footnote 39 in Chapter Two in this volume. Footnote 62 provides a bibliography relating to Rudolf Steiner and his anthroposophy.

²¹ On the possibilities of gnostic interpretation of Schulz see e.g. J. Jarzębski, *Schulz: spojrzenie w przyszłość*, in idem (ed.), *Czytanie Schulza. Materiały międzynarodowej sesji naukowej: Bruno Schulz – w stulecie urodzin i w pięćdziesięciolecie śmierci...*, Kraków 1994, p. 314; A. Jocz, “Bruno Schulz a gnostycyzm”, *Poznańskie Studia Polonistyczne* 1996, Seria Literacka, vol. 3, pp. 165–172; A. Jocz, *Bruno Schulz, czyli o gnostycznej pokusie literatury*, in M. Kitowska-Lysiak, W. Panas (eds), *W ulamkach zwierciadła... Bruno Schulz w 110 rocznicę urodzin i 60 rocznicę śmierci*, Lublin 2003, pp. 275–288; A. Kalin, *Księga heretycka – Schulzowski model kultury literackiej*, in ibidem, pp. 289–319; A. Jocz, “Bruno Schulz, czyli o gnostycznej próbie uchwycenia fenomenu cierpienia”, *Przegląd Religioznawczy* 2006, no. 1 (219), pp. 47–58; A. Jocz, *Bruno Schulz, czyli o nieznośnym obcowaniu z nieupostaciowaną materią*, in B. Sienkiewicz, T. Sobieraj (eds), *Literackość filozofii – filozoficzność literatury*, Warszawa 2009, pp. 157–167; A. Jocz, *Skąd dobro? Czy możliwe jest dobro w świecie permanentnych „wpięklówzięć”?*, in J. Prokopiuk, A. Chudzińska-Parkosadze (eds), *Pod słońcem gnozy*, Poznań 2015, pp. 9–17; A. Jocz, *Brunona Schulza poznawanie/kreowanie ezoterycznej rzeczywistości*, in I. Trzczińska, A. Świerżowska, K. M. Hess (eds), *Studia ezoteryczne. Wątki polskie*, Kraków 2015, pp. 53–64.

Jerzy Hulewicz (1886–1941).²² Gnostic fascinations can also be detected in Polish authors of the Romantic period.²³

Thus, the core concept of this volume is formulated in Chapter One. Pursuing a gnostic reading of the Schulzian prose, Chapter Two will be dedicated chiefly to an interpretation of *Spring*. This is where the reader discovers the artistic visualization of a path leading to the knowledge of the essence of reality: the attainment of complete gnosis. Following that path will enable the reader to appraise the phenomenon of literature which vacillates between mysticism and gnosis. In turn, Chapter Three attempts to give an account of the nature of beings which in the world created by Schulz no longer meet Aristotle's expectations with regard to the stable conjunction of matter and form. Thanks to its singular destabilization, the category of the animate being is redefined (in Schulz's reality) and, as it no longer requires organic nature, an affinity is established between the literary creation and the neo-gnostic conceptions. Chapter Four, on the other hand, offers reflections inspired by the images of suffering beings (human and non-human) which Schulz portrayed in his works. Here, the descriptions of the pointless misery of mannequins are particularly poignant. Examining the manner of their artistic rendering, the reader may have the impression of communing literally and directly with the gnostic sensibility of their creator. Yet it turns out that such a definite

²² On the influence of theosophical and anthroposophic concepts on selected Polish writers see e.g. T. Wróblewska, "Przed prapremierą 'Bazyliissy Teofanu'", *Dialog* 1967, no. 7, pp. 93–95; W. Gutowski, *W poszukiwaniu życia nowego. Mit a światopogląd w twórczości Tadeusza Micińskiego*, Warszawa – Poznań – Toruń 1980, pp. 35–36; W. Gutowski, "Tadeusza Micińskiego wiara widząca", *Gnosis* 1996, no. 9, pp. 44–52; W. Gutowski, *Gnostyczne światy Młodej Polski. Prolegomena*, in B. Sienkiewicz, M. Dobkowski, A. Jocz (eds), *Gnoza, gnostycyzm, literatura*, Cracow 2012, pp. 72–96; M. Stala, *Pejzaż człowieka. Młodopolskie myśli i wyobrażenia o duszy, duchu i ciele*, Kraków 1994, pp. 43, 65, 79–80; A. Jocz, *Pomiędzy Lucyferem i Arymanem – gnostyczna demonologia Tadeusza Micińskiego and Jerzy Hulewicz, czyli o neognostycznym pocieszeniu*, in idem, *Przypadek „osy rozbójniczej”*. *Rozważania o gnostycyzmie i neognozie w literaturze polskiej przełomu XIX i XX wieku*, Poznań 2009, pp. 89–192; A. Jocz, *O potrzebie gnozy, czyli jak literacko wyrazić naturę zła – cierpienia*, in B. Sienkiewicz, M. Dobkowski, A. Jocz (eds), *Gnoza...*, pp. 97–110; A. Jocz, "Opisać duchową rzeczywistość. Rozważania o statusie ezoteryki w literaturze polskiej przełomu XIX i XX wieku", *Przegląd Religioznawczy* 2014, no. 2 (252), pp. 17–25.

²³ On Zygmunt Krasiński's (1812–1859) knowledge of the rudiments of gnosis see J. Fiecko, *Krasiński o gnozie. Nota o notatkach poety*, in B. Sienkiewicz, M. Dobkowski, A. Jocz (eds), *Gnoza...*, pp. 61–71; A. Jocz, "Ezoteryka a literatura. Geneza artystycznej fascynacji", *Przegląd Religioznawczy* 2015, no. 1 (255), pp. 39–47.

taint placed on matter and body does not preclude being able to notice/experience elusive beauty and pleasure occasioned by the communion with perceptible reality. These ambiguous and multi-dimensional issues are addressed in Chapter Five.