

## DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

### **Motifs of weakness, distress, and distance in the poetry of priest Jan Twardowski in relation to post-secular thought (especially John D. Caputo) and the philosophy of Simone Weil**

My dissertation is an attempt to reinterpret the poetry of Jan Twardowski in a post-secular perspective, which has not been used in research on this poetry so far. It is also an extension of the scope of research undertaken years ago in my master's thesis. The trace discovered then, related to the poet's inspiration of the Simone Weil's thought and, above all, her concept of distress as distance, led me to the writings of the contemporary American philosopher and theologian John D. Caputo. The context of this dissertation is primarily Caputo's two books: *The Weakness of God* and *The Theology of the Event* and *Against Ethics...* as well as the selected Simone Weil's writings. The convergence of the thoughts contained in the poetry of Jan Twardowski, who belongs to the older generation, with the Caputo's speculations is surprising, especially since the poet probably did not know Caputo's works. Some statements used by the thinker are identical to the words from the poet's poems, for example the term "possible impossible". In my opinion, this confirms Gadamer's theory about the life of a literary work and its dialogue with successive generations of recipients and about the unlimited possibilities of interpretation. During the research, it turned out that Twardowski's poetic work coincides with the postulates of post-secularism. Few researchers have mentioned the issue of distress and drama in this poetry, these are primarily Ryszard Przybylski, Jacek Trznadel, Wojciech Gutowski and Alicja Mazan-Mazurkiewicz. Only Piotr Matywiecki indicated the connection between Twardowski's poems and Simone Weil's philosophy.

The dissertation consists of four chapters, which are an analysis of the connections between this poetry and post-secularism in general, the concept of a weak God in the context of the Caputo's writings, the approach to the physical and mental weakness of God, man and all of nature, and the connection with Simone Weil's concept of love, distance and misfortune.

In the first chapter, I presented selected issues of post-secularism and reviewed those motifs in Twardowski's poetry that are not developed in a further part of the dissertation but indicate a connection with the indicated direction. This part of my dissertation is in the form of short analyses of the poet's selected poems. The indicated and discussed motifs are flow, road,

and shoes (motifs related to movement), then motifs consistent with the postulate of opening, including doors and windows, as well as selected issues illustrating the Caputo's views on the kingdom of God, the principles of which are contrary to the human concept of justice, the scale of values and the logic of a temporal world. The kingdom of God is based on the economy of the heart.

The second chapter is the most extensive, containing a detailed discussion of the issues related to the Caputo's concept of the weak God. This chapter begins with a reflection on the changing attitude to weakness in culture and philosophy, and on the fact that weakness is beginning to be treated as a value. This is evidenced by changes in everyday language – talking about people with disabilities rather than disabled people. These changes are related to the appearance of weak thought, among other things, in philosophy (Noica, Vattimo), which indicates the weakness and indeterminacy of being. The Caputo's theology of weakness emerged from such an understanding. Its basic assumption is the claim that God does not belong to the order of beings and does not have the power of a being. He is a dynamic and weak event calling from outside of being. This part of the comparative analysis with the Caputo's thought begins with a presentation of Twardowski's poems, in which God is presented as an event absent from being, and therefore impossible to express in a name (only beings can be named). Then I analyzed works revealing the poet's critical attitude towards traditional theology, which Caputo calls strong. This is a critique of theology as a science that is too self-confident and based on the concepts that cannot capture the essence of God. Twardowski rejects the understanding of God's omnipotence as unlimited strength and a guarantee of human authority. Next, I discussed the motifs related to the occurrence of a weak God: the pulsation of the God's presence and absence, the spaces "between", "despite", "next to" and "beyond", in which God can happen because they are existentially weakened, the motif of the God's coming, invisibility and transparency, and the God's occurrence through someone. In the next part, I analyzed the presence of the motifs of light, "suddenly", wind, breath and inhalation, music and dance in the Twardowski's poems. It was interesting to discover in this poetry motifs referring to the Caputo's imagination, but also to physics: a wave, a string, and trembling and tuning in to the delicate vibrations of the string of the God's love. The second chapter also contains discussions of the following motifs: sounds and hearing, organs (through which faith in the power of God is often expressed), rain and snow, the call of God's love (God as a shy lover), the duration of the act of creation, and the duration of the act of creation and the risk contained in it, which became a source of pain and weakness in the world and God's incompatibility with the hierarchy of power.

Chapter three begins with a reflection on the perception of pain in culture and literature (referring, among others, to the epistolary dialogue between Julia Kristeva and Jean Vanier). I discussed such motifs as the God's physical pain, His corporeality (belonging to the food chain), the motif of undressing related to the Crucifixion, as well as the God's tiredness and crying). I interpreted a poem about the distancing of the understanding of a miracle as a display of God's power. Then I presented the theme of a human physical and mental weakness present in the Twardowski's poems in reference to the concept of "flesh" created by Caputo – the suffering body. The poet, like the philosopher, considers the most important moral challenge to be the reaction to the pain of the Other, being with them in suffering and co-experiencing pain. This part of the dissertation also discusses the motifs of the importance of what is commonly understood as unimportant and unsuccessful, the importance of small objects, as well as holes and sewing, related to repairing what is weak. The chapter ends with a part on the suffering of the nature (which also has "flesh") and a concept of the salvation of animals and plants, consistent with the Caputo's thought.

In the last, fourth chapter, I analyzed the Twardowski's poems that speak of unhappy love and contain the motif of distance, the cycle of meetings and separations, and the motif of hands, expressing overcoming distance and loneliness. These are works in which the poet refers to the concept of Simone Weil. The main interpretative context in this part of the dissertation is the philosopher's essay entitled "God's Love and Misfortune". Twardowski illustrates with his poetry the concept of Creation as separation in God. According to Weil, by creating the world out of love, God thereby marked a painful distance between himself and creation, and through the Incarnation and death on Golgotha he covered the greatest distance - between infinity and pain and death. At that moment, he experienced God's abandonment by God. In the Twardowski's poems about love, the motif of distance is very often present, which always includes the distance determined by God's love. That is why, according to the poet, unhappy love is happy. Love without distance and pain, is impossible. This part of the dissertation also includes analyses of the poems in which the poet clearly talks about personal experiences of unfulfilled love, separations, and loneliness.

The topics taken up in this dissertation have not been taken up or discussed before in other aspects. They open new research perspectives - further reinterpretation of Jan Twardowski's poetry. They also indicate a still interesting postsecular perspective, which is worth using in research on the works of other Polish poets.