

Dissertation title: **The Issue of Evil in Czesław Miłosz's Essays**

Czesław Miłosz is a writer who poses fundamental questions about the reasons, forms and consequences of evil. This issue is omnipresent in poetry and is the focal point of his essays. Long and fruitful life of this author is filled with the question: *Unde malum?* He is looking for the answer referring to mystics, historians of ideas, theologians but above all philosophers. The experience of various forms of evil had a great influence on the writer's biography and determined his future writing. Being a witness of almost the whole 20th century and the beginning of a new millennium, Miłosz perceives evil as an experience not only of some countries and nations but also a particular generation. He is a philosopher himself, although he did not create his own coherent system, like Hegel or Kant. Miłosz moves around philosophical traditions with great ease, choosing the elements that become an inspiration for him. He does not always state clearly his standpoint, instead, he makes references to others' viewpoints not judging them. He conceals his views on purpose using texts and statements of other authors. To make it even more difficult for readers and researchers, Miłosz refers only to some of the mystics and philosophers while deliberately omitting others.

The first chapter is devoted to a selection of people who influenced Miłosz and his views. There are ones who experienced transcendence, like Swedenborg, Boehme or Blake. The chapter describes also thinkers like Szestow or Bierdiajew who philosophize not in an academic manner but with their whole self. There is also Simone Weil whose philosophy of the power of Chance and Necessity had such great influence on Miłosz. Another figure present in this chapter is the author's distant cousin, a poet Oskar Miłosz.

In his philosophical search Miłosz takes a closer look at lives and works of christian mystics, especially those who are on the verge of heresy but share a common gnostic background.

The second chapter describes the issue of Nature in Miłosz's essays. The writer observes it with distrust. He is aware that its beauty hides never-ending devouring of each other. This insensate fighting in nature resembles the world of humans that is founded on constant wars and conflicts, which bring about nothing but death and suffering. The writer's world is cracked as Nature is both, beautiful and worth ecstatic admiration and at the same time it evokes disgust and objections. Miłosz opposes a romantic way of perceiving Nature, which is seen as the force causing nothing but good, it is human's shelter or is God's book of secret signs. He thinks that such approach leads to dangerous idealization. The beauty of nature hides bitter truth about the world.

The third chapter describes a human being and its condition from a philosophical point of view of the Polish essayist. Miłosz stresses some kind of guilt, which he has to cope with, and which applies to his existence. However, he purposefully celebrates his life, which is a protest against the necessity of the unavoidable - death. Awareness of his finiteness becomes an inspiration for the writer. He also refers to the phenomenon of art which tries to capture and depict human existence facing inevitability of death. Miłosz shows a human's condition after its Fall, which is subject to a biological necessity. Humans need the feeling of self-awareness of their existence, otherwise they would not be humans and could be compared to the world of nature, which cannot celebrate the moment and appreciate the beauty. In his essays Miłosz shows that a human being is torn between faith and mind, between good and evil.

The last chapter concerns Miłosz's historiosophy which shows the presence of evil in politics and history. *Hegel Sting*, as he calls it, has a great influence on his perception of History and its laws. However, Miłosz does not justify any forms of totalitarianism, wars or other historical catastrophies using past logic. The key issue of reconstituted vision of the world and its history is for him its cosmic Fall. The Nobel winner does not fall for fair political systems, societies living in harmony or other myths. The whole human world, also the one in historical, social and political context, becomes reality after the Fall. The meaningfulness or pointlessness of history come from the question of the origins of all evil. However, the writer's reflexions are always connected with the hope for Salvartion.

In his essays Miłosz deals with the issue of the mystery of evil, which can take different forms. His philosophical thought is generally coherent and appears in writer's works from fifferent periods of time, repeating the same question – what is the essence of being? Evil in its power is almost abosolute, and its strength shows humans' helplessness and amazement. This dissertation is an attempt to show some aspects of the issue of evil in Czesław Miłosz's works.

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