

Łukasz Mazur

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The Hidden God: The Paradox of the Symbol as a Vehicle of Religious Imagination

Summary:

The dissertation presents the issue of the symbol, religious imagination and the paradox associated with thinking about them. The research was based on the works of religious thinkers and artists such as: William Blake, Ernst Jünger, Hakim Bey, Northrop Frye, Henry Corbin. Contrast and background for the considerations of the above-mentioned authors is the philosophical thought that provoked and tried to embrace with its gaze the crisis of the place and role of religion at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries.

The aim of the dissertation was to present in detail the issue of the symbol and religious imagination as forgotten „tools“ for both interpretation and perception of reality. In accordance with the spirit of religious iconoclasts looking for a new, unmediated by institutions and authorities, access to the heritage of culture and its typical, traditional ideas: patterns, values and norms, the work was aimed at highlighting the still (in the assumption) existing space within which religion can be realized understood as a paradoxical, symbolic relationship between immanence and transcendence.

The dissertation uses the hermeneutic and the analytical-critical method - in relation to biblical issues, religious interpretation of art and cultural anthropology.

The dissertation consists of six chapters. The first chapter begins by outlining the difference between the *sacrum* and its numerous representations, touching at the same time the opposing theme of the paradoxical (perhaps seemingly) relationship between the visible and the invisible side of reality.

The entire second chapter tries to reflect the specificity of the religious imaginarium in order to consider the causes and consequences of the anchoring of religion in the universe of images, understood as the basic landmarks for a religious man, enabling both his positioning

in relation to the absolute reality and his everyday settling among the „pictures“ of the world. The introductory symbol criteria presented in this chapter help to explain the symbol's relationship with a broader imaginary unit, which is a mythological narrative or simply a myth. The issue of obstacles that must be encountered by the thought demanding the explication of unambiguous distinctions between concepts such as myth, archetype, symbol, figure, type, topos, model, etc. is also raised here. These considerations are guided by an attempt to determine the ontological status of religious imaginary content. And the formulation of a provisional conclusion concerning the principles of the structuring of the basic religious imaginary content, which occurs as a result of the contact of the religious imagination with the external sensual world.

The third chapter, apart from presenting the concept of the world as a symbolic "metaphor of another world", tries to highlight the problem of distinguishing between symbol, metaphor and allegory, which interpretation has been struggling with since ancient times, usually obscuring the understanding of the symbol itself. This stage of the dissertation ends with an attempt to present the concept of „poetic metaphysics“ by Giambattista Vico, derived from *The New Science*, as a general model of symbolization, significantly different from the assumptions of Platonic or Aristotelian metaphysics, which, however, influenced the spiritual and intellectual formation of the developing Christianity.

The middle of the dissertation is interspersed with an attempt to reconstruct the alleged translation of Heidegger's early thought inspired by the Bible, especially St. Paweł, into the language of the philosophy of being (both before and after the turn towards Being itself). This reconstruction is accompanied by an examination of the subcutaneous relationships between the early and late Heidegger's philosophy and a set of symbols that we could call canonical, but referring only to the chthonic nature of the sacred: the womb of the Great Mother, the mystical darkness of the *nihil originarium*, the full-emptiness, etc.

In the fifth chapter, all reinterpretable tendencies regarding symbols and religious imaginative content are traced, up to the observations of a radical change in the understanding of the nature of source and excess filling it - unpredictability at the heart of what is each time understood as transcendent: empty or chaotic unpredictability of the source excess of being, its the general arche-fact that weakening all typo- and topology, and, so to speak, the „formal“ origin of the „the forest passages“ (Jünger), where - hidden in the veils of the senses – glitters

a higher order of things, *Mundus Archetypus* full of definite forms, from which culture draws its figures, types and topoi.

The background for these considerations is the theme of two concepts of creation: one recurring in Heidegger's writings - especially in the texts of the series *What is metaphysics?* – the concept of *creatio ex nihilo* and the paradoxical - because it lacks the characteristics of gnostic dualism - concept of creation „from the fullness“ understood as a kind of degradation in the womb of being (cosmic catastrophe) and a salvific attempt to save the disintegrating spiritual universe. The first of these concepts is complemented by e.g. reflections on the metaphysical foundations of religion and philosophy of the Far East and Kabbalah (especially the idea of *tzimtzum* according to Isaac Luria). The second, revolves around the author's myth revived by William Blake, based on Christian and pre-Christian sources, the main axis of which is the image of four living beings (Zoa) and the throne or God's Chariot from Ezekiel's vision, and the extended vision from Revelation of saint John.

The fifth chapter additionally deals with the (largely artificial) distinction between synchronic mythology and the typological diachrony of a symbol moving in time. The first of these theoretical models is usually used in the description of animistic religions associated with the myth of eternal return: death and rebirth enchanted in endless cycles of ever-renewing nature. The second one explains the internal „movement“ of specific types or figures - with time discovering their fuller and fuller sense - within the historically „open“ religions such as Judaism, Christianity or Islam. In both of these models, we find a kind of symbolic transmission of a higher order - of what is real, what is considered to be really existing - to the existing relatively, ontologically diminished world, which is kept in its being only thanks to this transmission of what is „in above“ to what is „below“.

The last chapter tries to present a possible synthesis of both of these models - a paradoxical accumulation in the form of hierophany of a special rank: theophany, in which the *sacrum* was revealed in the closest and best known to us, human form, illuminating the hidden sense of both the world-nature and as well as the world-history. This possibility is presented on the basis of the tradition of the Judeo-Christian „myth“; here we observe a paradoxical coexistence of the fullness of vertical revelation - which is revealed in the „figure“ of an authentic, par excellence symbolic, incarnation - with the horizontal, eschatological incompleteness of the historical dimension of this revelation. Everything else is to be based

on - as detailed as possible - explication of this paradoxical accumulation of all elements essential for the symbol (the world, man, the *sacrum* and their mutual relationship), which in the case of Christianity turns out to be particularly radical and, unfortunately, largely forgotten.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Doe', written in a cursive style.