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## The Poet Discovers Sources (of the Self). Adam Zagajewski and Charles Taylor

**Abstract:** The article shows Adam Zagajewski's relationship with Charles Taylor's thought. The author argues that the poet's dialogue with the philosopher is not limited to quotations and direct references but is also revealed at a deeper level. Based on Zagajewski's essays and interviews, the author concludes that the poet studied *Sources of the Self* and *The Ethics of Authenticity*, and probably also drew on later works dealing with the condition of religion in a disenchanted world ("A Catholic Modernity?" and *A Secular Age*). Zagajewski borrowed from Taylor's historical argument about the genealogy of modern identity. He also alluded to the philosopher's diagnoses of the Enlightenment-Romantic lineage of modern Europeans and his conviction that the struggle for more demanding forms of spiritual life is preserved. The most direct traces of the conversation with Taylor can be found in the essays from *The Defense of Ardor*. The author suggests that Zagajewski also alludes to Taylor's diagnoses in poems (e.g., "Terra del Fuego", "Senza flash", and "The Kingfisher"), in which the motifs of spiritual lobotomy and the epiphanic power of poetry appear.

**Keywords:** Adam Zagajewski, Charles Taylor, poetry, philosophy, disenchantment

This text will look at Adam Zagajewski's dialogue with the thought of Charles Taylor. If one were to suggest the frequency with which the Canadian philosopher's name appears in the poet's essays and interviews, one might consider my intention to be hazardous. Fortunately though, there is no cause for alarm, as Zagajewski occasionally referred to living philosophers, and in this group, it is probably only Taylor and Kołakowski who have received less perfunctory, approving comments. I would like to single out Taylor, however, because I see in Zagajewski's work clear traces of a conversation with the Canadian. Significantly, this dialogue is not limited to quotations or direct references. What is most interesting takes place deeper – Zagajewski assimilates the insights of Taylor, runs them through the filter of his imagination, and then articulates them in his way in essays and poems. It would thus be a case of poetry meeting philosophy and subordinating it to itself. Someone skeptical might argue that the kinship between

Zagajewski's and Taylor's thoughts is merely the result of shared reading, similar worldview sympathies or aesthetic tastes. Still, I believe the philosopher influenced the poet's worldview.

## The poet reads the philosopher

Let us first note the undeniable facts. Zagajewski read Taylor and made it clear that he greatly respected his thought. In his essay, the philosopher Ian Marcus Corbin described a lunch with Zagajewski (2011? – he mentions that it was shortly after the release of *Unseen Hand*), during which they agreed they shared an admiration for Charles Taylor.<sup>1</sup> I witnessed the same when, on 25 May 2019, Adam Zagajewski turned up at Taylor's lecture in Kraków and arranged to meet him the following day. As far as I know, this was their first and, unfortunately, last conversation. I do not know the details of it, but they both spoke of the meeting with great enthusiasm.

It is difficult to say when Zagajewski started reading Taylor. From an interview Zagajewski gave with Paolo Gambi, one could conclude that it happened while he was a student. Still, this interview probably needed to be authorized, as there were some rather obvious errors.<sup>2</sup> The poet's period of interest in Taylor was in the 1990s when the book, later referred to by Zagajewski, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (1989), gained prominence. If I am correct, the first mention of Taylor in the poet's work appears in the title essay of *A Defense of Ardor* (2002). Zagajewski notes that in the 20th century, conservative writers (Ernst Jünger, T.S. Eliot) often accurately recognised the malaise of the present but made fateful political decisions that revealed their confusion in the vicissitudes of history and compromised them as credible thinkers. It is in this context that Zagajewski invokes the Canadian philosopher:

Perhaps this is linked to Charles Taylor's brilliant observation in *Sources of the Self*: in our age, Enlightenment values have triumphed in public institutions, at least in the West, whereas in our private lives, we abandon ourselves to Romantic insatiability. We go along with rationalism whenever public or social issues are at stake, but at home,

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<sup>1</sup> I.M. Corbin, "Rooted Cosmopolitan: Wrestling with the Poetry of Adam Zagajewski", *First Things*, December 2019.

<sup>2</sup> P. Gambi, "I am a failed Catholic, but still a Catholic': An interview with poet Adam Zagajewski", *Catholic Herald*, January 9, 2020. Here is the puzzling sentence: "I was raised in the Catholic tradition and as a young student of philosophy I read some Thomas Aquinas and Catholic philosophers like Gabriel Marcel, Paul Ricoeur, Charles Taylor and others". Zagajewski certainly knew that Ricoeur was a Protestant, and it is also unlikely that he had read Taylor's texts before the 1970s, as at the time the philosopher was the author of his only, rather specialized book, *The Explanation of Behaviour* (1964). These missteps make one doubt that the interview was authorized.

in private, we search ceaselessly for the absolute and aren't content with the decisions we accept in the public sphere.

The antimetaphysical but politically dependable liberal left (or perhaps rather "centre") and the potentially menacing but spiritually engaged right: one might summarize our peculiar bifurcation like this.<sup>3</sup>

Zagajewski does not make a direct reference here but tacitly seems to invoke the argument from the finale of *Sources of the Self*, which states that potentially destructive worldviews (because a record of historical crimes burdens them) can still foster the highest human aspirations. What is at stake here is a prudent apologia for religion.

The diagnosis of a kind of Romantic-Enlightenment schizophrenia of modern man (and the loyal explanation that it comes from Taylor) will, therefore, later run through essays and interviews in various permutations. Zagajewski would reiterate it in a text published in 2016, "Zamykanie otwartego społeczeństwa" ("Closing the Open Society"),<sup>4</sup> and he would recall it in 2018 in a conversation with Jacek Żakowski.<sup>5</sup> In passing, Taylor is one of the most convincing contemporary thinkers to show that the liberal left can go hand in hand with an openness to the metaphysical dimension.

Another pretext that prompts Zagajewski to refer to Taylor is the slogan *lotta continua*. This Red Brigades slogan, which means 'the fight goes on', was used by Taylor for his purposes in *The Ethics of Authenticity* (1991). In the philosopher's terms, it referred to the belief that we are witnessing a tension between the most trivial forms of narcissistic culture and the pursuit of an ideal of authenticity that makes significant demands and allows us to "live (potentially) fuller and more differentiated lives".<sup>6</sup> In his interpretation, the battle cry 'the fight goes on' reminds us that nothing is lost and encourages the recovery of more authentic, more obliging forms of intellectual-spiritual life that allow one to break through to extra-subjective reality – to the sources that give individual identity meaning. It is to this understanding of the *lotta continua* slogan that Zagajewski alludes. First, in a discussion published in the monthly *Znak* (2002), in which he objected to speaking of contemporary times as a 'post-metaphysical' era and added:

<sup>3</sup> A. Zagajewski, *Defense of Ardor*, trans. C. Cavanagh, New York 2004, p. 18.

<sup>4</sup> A. Zagajewski, "Zamykanie otwartego społeczeństwa", *Zeszyty Literackie* 2016, vol. 34, no. 1.

<sup>5</sup> "Co jest dobre? Z Adamem Zagajewskim rozmawia Jacek Żakowski", *Inteligenta Niezbędnik Współczesny* (supplement to *Polityka*), no. 3/2018; A. Zagajewski: "Do you remember what Charles Taylor, the Canadian philosopher, said? That in modern societies, in their institutions, Enlightenment reigns, and in the evening, in theatres and concert halls, and also in our personal lives, Romanticism. If that were the case, it would be a good thing" (pp. 101–102).

<sup>6</sup> Ch. Taylor, *Ethics of Authenticity*, Cambridge 2003, p. 74.

I rather naively prefer to say: we are living as we always have. I also have the impression that the struggle continues. I once saw in Italy inscriptions painted by supporters of the Red Brigades: “*Lotta continua*”. (Also, Charles Taylor, in one of his essays, referred to this slogan!) Of course, neither then nor now did I favour the terrorists, but the slogan can be taken away from them: “the fight goes on”, but in a different sense. The fullness of life is probably still achievable, and we do not have to give up, resign ourselves, succumbing to the expansion of the ‘post-’ that so strongly marks the spiritual climate today.<sup>7</sup>

He elaborated on this idea in a 2008 essay. The slogan of the Red Brigades even appears in its title: “Lotta Continua – or Where Are the Muses Now?”<sup>8</sup> This time, its meaning is related by Zagajewski to the situation of art, to the idea of inspiration sent by the muses, although the battle is again about saving a certain surplus, “something else”, which is not simply a subjective creation of the artist’s imagination, but a trace of dialogue, of contact with what is felt as objectively “real”, unknown and mysterious. Zagajewski concludes his essay with praise of anxiety as a disposition that triggers the ability to contemplate the world:

Tradition is not enough; living art thrives on memory but also on creative anxiety, which is the first response in the face of the mystery of the world. This anxiety can also be joyful: oxymoron is no stranger to art. If we had to choose (fortunately, we don’t need to) between the end of the Great Tradition and the expiration of the Great Anxiety – the latter might also be called Imagination – I’d prefer the demise of tradition. It’s better to know less than to imagine less.<sup>9</sup>

Let us summarise the findings so far. Zagajewski had been reading Taylor’s texts since at least the 1990s. He certainly studied *Sources of the Self* and the *Ethics of Authenticity*, which consists of Taylor’s lectures popularizing the basic ideas of *Sources of the Self*. There is no strong evidence that he read perhaps the Canadian’s most important book, *A Secular Age* (2007), but I am sure he did leaf through it. On the other hand, I do not doubt that he had read the December 2003 issue of *Znak* with the Polish translation of Taylor’s essay “A Catholic Modernity?” (he had been in closer contact with the editors of *Znak* since his return to Kraków and regularly appeared as the author and protagonist of texts published in the monthly). I mention “A Catholic Modernity?” because it was Taylor’s first text that outlined the spiritual-religious diagnoses he later developed in *A Secular Age*.

<sup>7</sup> K. Kwaśniewska, Ł. Tischner, “Walka trwa. Z Tadeuszem Sobolewskim, Martą Tarabulą, Mieczysławem Tomaszewskim, Teresą Walas i Adamem Zagajewskim rozmawiają Krystyna Kwaśniewska i Łukasz Tischner”, *Znak* 2002, nr 12, pp. 28–29.

<sup>8</sup> A. Zagajewski, “Lotta Continua – or Where Are the Muses Now?”, *Salmagundi*, Fall 2008 – Winter 2009, no. 160/161, pp. 177–189.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 189.

## The poet talks to the philosopher

The size of my text does not allow me to present a more detailed analysis to show exactly how the poet's implicit dialogue with the philosopher evolved. Of necessity, I will limit myself to a few more general observations.

Firstly, I suppose that in addition to the already mentioned diagnosis of the Enlightenment-Romantic lineage of the modern European and his peculiar schizophrenia, as well as the conviction that the struggle for more demanding forms of spiritual life is by no means lost, Zagajewski borrowed from Taylor a historical argument about the genealogy of modern identity. He was probably particularly persuaded by Taylor's remarks on the expressivist turn, which occurred in connection with questioning the immutable and universally accessible image of the universe. Romantic and post-Romantic expressivism grew out of a sense that we remain part of some larger order but that this recognition is not available *a priori*, as it manifests itself individually through insight into one's interiority. Expressivism valued art and its 'subtler language'. It is through individual experience and its linguistic articulation that contact is made with some larger, extra-subjective order, which can take on various names (e.g., nature, God, the will to power). Taylor introduced a specifically defined notion of epiphany, considering not so much the aesthetic dimension of dazzle or rapture but rather the individual experience of opening up to some reality previously hidden from the subject.<sup>10</sup> In Taylor's dictionary, the term epiphany belongs to the language of moral philosophy, but the Canadian reaches precisely to poetry to show its examples and transformations. In his argument, the language of poetry becomes a privileged medium with performative power to break through towards a reality conceived as a source.

I briefly recapitulate some of the themes of *Sources of the Self* and *Ethics of Authenticity* to move on to Zagajewski's texts that signal Taylorian influences. Perhaps my guess is too intuitive, but Zagajewski conducted the most interesting dialogue with the philosopher in *Defence of Ardor* and individual poems written in the last three decades. For myself, the most intriguing aspect is the hidden presence of Taylor's thoughts in the poetry of the author of *Asymmetry*.

Let us, therefore, elaborate on which essays from *Defence of Ardor* refer to Taylor. In the aforementioned *Defence of Ardor* (which gave the title to the whole book), in "The Shabby and the Sublime" and "Against Poetry". In the first essay, Taylor is invoked in connection with the Enlightenment-Romantic part of the argument, but he undoubtedly also patronises Zagajewski's comments on Miłosz's epiphany. "The Shabby and the Sublime" seems to be distant from Taylor's thought. Still, I have the impression that the references to the power of inspiration (the influence of the Muses) may echo the arguments of the Canadian, who, about the tradition of German Romanticism, mentioned the constitutive-performative

<sup>10</sup> Ch. Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*, Cambridge 1989, p. 420.

power of the word of poetry.<sup>11</sup> I would additionally venture the hypothesis that the defence speech in “Against Poetry” owes some of its arguments to Taylor, as evidenced by the quotation whose punchline gained development in the beautiful poem:

*The spiritual life doesn't need to hide* beneath a Cistercian's habit, though; it's often simply close observation of the things of this world with the imagination's eye. It may also be a way station on a religious quest, but how much of this this remains in contemporary poetry is difficult: isn't poetry rather mysticism for beginners?<sup>12</sup>

These words resonate surprisingly with Taylor's comments, who invoked poetry as a medium that “actually can put us in contact with the sources in taps. It can realize the contact” in the finale of *Sources of the Self*.<sup>13</sup> He goes on to explain his thought a little further with a specific example:

To read, for instance, Rilke is to get an articulation of our farther, stronger intuitions, of the way the world is not simply an ensemble of objects for our use but makes a further claim on us. Rilke expresses this claim in images of “praising” and “making inward”, which seem to lay a demand of attention, of careful scrutiny, of respect for what is there.<sup>14</sup>

To conclude, I refer to a few poems that bring intimate and artistically distilled traces of a conversation with Taylor. My hypotheses will probably sound bold, but I have the impression that the poet drew from the philosopher above all elements of his rebellion against the naturalistic reduction of the world picture, that is, the indirect defence of religious experience and the two interconnected metaphors of ‘spiritual lobotomy’ and ‘mutilation’ that appears in the conclusion of *Sources of the Self*. Let us quote the most intimate parts of Taylor's confession:

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<sup>11</sup> As Taylor explains: “...on the new [Romantic and post-Romantic – E.T.] understanding, art is not imitation, but the expression in the sense discussed here. It makes something manifest while at the same time realizing it, completing it” (idem, *Sources of the Self*..., op. cit., p. 377).

<sup>12</sup> A. Zagajewski, *Defense of Ardor*, op. cit., p. 137.

<sup>13</sup> Ibidem, p. 512. Let us add in passing that the Canadian philosopher indirectly encouraged poets (and artists, in general) to support his efforts to recover the sources (of the self), as evidenced by the following confession: “We are now in an age in which a publicly accessible cosmic order of meanings is impossibility. The only way we can explore the order in which we are set with an aim to defining moral sources is through this part of personal resonance. This is true not only of epiphanic art but of other efforts, in philosophy, in criticism, which attempt the same search. This work, though it obviously fails of any epiphanic quality, falls into the same category. I have throughout sought language to clarify the issues, and I have found this in images of profound personal resonance like ‘epiphany’, ‘moral sources’, ‘disengagement’, ‘empowering’, and others. These are the images which enable me to see more clearly than I did before. They could, I believe, be the animating ideas of an epiphanic work, but that would require another kind of capacity” (Ibidem, p. 512). It is quite likely that Zagajewski took the above remark to heart.

<sup>14</sup> Ch. Taylor, *Sources of the Self*..., op. cit., p. 513.

[...] Adopting a stripped-down secular outlook, without any religious dimension or radical hope in history, is not a way of *avoiding* the dilemma [the dilemma associated with the ambivalence of moral ideals – Ł.T.], although it may be a good way to live with it. It doesn't avoid it because this too involves its 'mutilation'. It involves stifling the response in us to some of the deepest and most powerful spiritual aspirations that humans have conceived. This, too, is a heavy price to pay.

This is not to say, though, that if we have to pay some price, this may not be the safest. Prudence constantly advises us to scale down our hopes and circumscribe our visions. But we deceive ourselves if we pretend that nothing is denied thereby in our humanity.

[...] Does something have to be denied? Do we have to choose between various kinds of spiritual lobotomy and self-inflicted wounds? Perhaps. Certainly, most of the outlooks which promise us that we will be spared these choices are based on selective blindness. This is perhaps the major point elaborated in this book.<sup>15</sup>

And now let us recall the moving final stanza of “Ziemia ognista” (“Tierra del Fuego”):

Bezimienny, niewidzialny, milczący,  
**wybaw mnie od anestezji**, [emphasis mine – Ł.T.]  
 zabierz mnie na ziemię ognistą,  
 weź mnie tam, gdzie rzeki  
 płyną pionowo, pionowo płyną  
 rzeki poziome.

Nameless, unseen, silent  
**save me from anaesthesia** [emphasis mine – Ł.T.]  
 take me to Tierra del Fuego,  
 take me where the rivers  
 flow straight up, horizontal rivers  
 flowing up and down (trans. C. Cavanagh)<sup>16</sup>

Is the anaesthesia in this work not close to a spiritual lobotomy? Two metaphors of amnesia and anaesthesia appear in this enigmatic poem-prayer to a God absent from experience (though intensely felt in yearning).<sup>17</sup> The former speaks

<sup>15</sup> Ibidem, p. 520.

<sup>16</sup> A. Zagajewski, *Trzej aniołowie / Three Angels*, trans. C. Cavanagh, R. Górczyńska, B. Ivry, C.K. Williams, Kraków 1998, p. 157.

<sup>17</sup> Wojciech Ligęza comments very aptly on the basic idea of this poem in his sketch “Bezimienny, niewidzialny, milczący. O kilku wizerunkach Boga w polskiej poezji współczesnej”, *Znak* 2006, no. 12, pp. 34–47.

of falling into a dream that invalidates the reality of sensations of the world. To awaken, the subject needs indications of life: the intensity of multiple sensual impressions, the light of lanterns and the warmth of blood. He appeals to his Interlocutor for a surge of these real-life signals. But awakening is not enough; one must regain full sensation in the body regions subjected to anaesthesia. Why do I insist on considering anaesthesia in this poem as akin to lobotomy, which, medically speaking, is radically different from anaesthesia because it presupposes irreversible damage to nerve connections? I am led in such a direction by the verb 'save [me]'; which suggests that anaesthesia is something permanent, almost organic, which will not cease with the waning of pain-relieving agents. The metaphor of anaesthesia may be associated with the idea of the culture of analgesics, pictured by Kołakowski in his influential book *The Presence of Myth*.<sup>18</sup> Still, this fatalistic dimension of the permanent inability to feel certain spiritual sensations resembles Taylor's lobotomy.

Let us now think of the startling *Senza flash*. In the sentences from Taylor's *Sources of the Self* quoted above, do we not recognise the seed from which this poem germinated? Let us recall its beginning:

Bez płomienia, bez nocy bezsennych, bez żaru,  
bez łez, bez wielkiej namiętności, bez przekonania,  
tak będziemy żyli; senza flash.

No flame, no sleepless nights, no heat,  
no tears, no mighty passions, no convictions,  
and so we live on; senza flash. (transl. C. Cavanagh)<sup>19</sup>

The very initial concept of this poem – the juxtaposition of life without “mighty passions” with sudden and disturbing surges of ardor – may bring to mind Taylor's diagnosis of the split of modern man, who in public life approves of the power of enlightened reason, but in the privacy of the home, in contact with art, succumbs to a romantic fluid.

However, I have the impression that the Taylorian motif of spiritual lobotomy recurs in “Senza flash”. I am persuaded by the particularity of Zagajewski's perspective. Note that the juxtaposition of apathy (a distant echo of the Stoic *apatheia*?) and rapture only seemingly unequivocally favours the inclination towards passion. After all, “sleepless nights” and “tears” are not something to be desired, and

<sup>18</sup> Let us recall the author's explanation of this idea: “When I say that we live in a culture of analgesics, I have principally in mind those organs of civilisations, those customs, and those models of communal existence, thanks to which we are able to conceal from ourselves sources of suffering without attempting either to remove them or to face them” (L. Kołakowski, *The Presence of Myth*, trans. A. Czerniawski, Chicago 1989, p. 91).

<sup>19</sup> A. Zagajewski, *Without End: New and Selected Poems*, trans. C. Cavanagh, R. Gorczyńska, B. Ivry, C.K. Williams, New York 2002, p. 9.



a life free of these sensations seems happier. Zagajewski's finesse lies in the fact that in the description of the "senza flash" world, contrasting epithets stand side by side – a life that is safe and measured (positively valorised, healthy) is juxtaposed with an obedient and sleepy existence (negatively valorised – dull and inauthentic). This ambivalence is discreetly set in motion by the poet in the next stanza when we read about the smiling faces of tourists in "very" clean shirts. This "very" hints at some kind of ostentation, perhaps even an obsession, which seems to be a mechanism for suppressing repressed impulses and premonitions. The effect of ambiguity is sharpened by Zagajewski in the poem's climax, in which the risen Christ from Piero della Francesca's painting appears. It is here that perhaps the sharpest contamination of contrasting meanings occurs. For Christ is simultaneously "nearly mad" and "free". And if so, the stirring of the heart ("hidden in smooth cotton") and the "flash" do not at all become synonymous with joy and tranquillity; on the contrary, they release fear and trembling, the Great Anxiety.

Why do I suggest that Zagajewski alludes to Taylor's motif of spiritual lobotomy in this poem? Firstly, it was the Canadian who pointed to the therapeutic aspects of suppressing "the most powerful spiritual aspirations", which are potentially destructive.<sup>20</sup> Secondly, also in this poem, the moment of the flash, of the stirring of the heart, seems close to an experience of grace, of deliverance, a state that the tourists in the Museo Civico cannot induce of themselves.

Finally, I will mention that Taylorian inspiration is probably also noticeable in "The Kingfisher", in which the flight of a bird – an "iridescent bullet" – liberates "from indifference, from the lukewarm observation of a lazy afternoon".<sup>21</sup> Here again, the contrast between indifference and the stirring of the heart that we know from "Tierra del Fuego" and "Senza flash" appears. In the case of this poem, however, another element is striking. The sensation of epiphany, of transformation, occurs as much through the observation of the flight of the kingfisher as through the phrases of the sonnet(s?) of Gerard Manley Hopkins.<sup>22</sup> "The

<sup>20</sup> Taylor wrote most emphatically about this in the following passages from *Sources of the Self*: "the highest spiritual ideals and aspirations also threaten to lay the most crushing burdens on humankind. The great spiritual visions of human history have also been poisoned chalices, the causes of untold misery and even savagery. From the very beginning of human story religion, our link with the highest, has been recurrently associated with sacrifices, even mutilation, as though something had to be torn away or immolated if we are to please the gods. [...] Well, then, one might say, the danger attends religion, or else millenarist ideologies [...]. What we need is a sober, scientific-minded, secular humanism. But [...] this still seems to me too simple" (idem, *Sources of the Self...*, op. cit., p. 519).

<sup>21</sup> A. Zagajewski, *Asymmetry*, trans. C. Cavanagh, New York 2018, p. 14. I do not know why, but the English version doesn't include the verse: "from the lukewarm observation of a lazy afternoon". I suppose that Zagajewski himself suggested this omission.

<sup>22</sup> As Anna Czabanowska-Wróbel put it: "this poetic image came as much from experience as from the words of another poet, from 'someone else's beauty' – it was preceded by what is literary, as well as by what happens in the visible world, captured in actual visual experience" (A. Czabanowska-Wróbel, "Wiedza poetów (Preface)" [in:] A. Zagajewski, „*Śpiewa to, co milczy*”. *Tam, gdzie oddech*.

Kingfisher” seems to testify to the fact that Zagajewski has managed to read *A Secular Age*, or at least the chapter on conversions, which deals with the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins.<sup>23</sup> What leads me to make this assumption? By somehow equating the experience of reading Hopkins’ poetry with the experience of being dazzled by the beauty of a bird’s flight, Zagajewski points to the ability of (other people’s) poetry to re-enchant the world, and “The Kingfisher” may illustrate Taylor’s argument from *A Secular Age*:

Through language in its constitutive use (let’s call it Poetry), we open up contact with something higher or deeper (be it God, or depths of human nature, desire, the Will to Power, or whatever) through language. Poetry can be seen as an event with performative force, words which open up contact, make something manifest for the first time.<sup>24</sup>

Perhaps the convergence I’m pointing out is fortuitous, but even if “The Kingfisher” doesn’t directly testify to Zagajewski’s dialogue with Taylor, it certainly traces their co-thinking. Taylor’s recent research on the full capacity of language, and especially on the mysteriousness of poetic language, basically verbalises the elementary impetus of Zagajewski’s lyrical quest. For, after all, his poetry is a ritual of reconnection with the world,<sup>25</sup> a journey to the *tierra del fuego*.

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*Wiersze*, Kraków 2020, pp. 13–14). See also Anna Czabanowska’s very informed interpretation of “The Kingfisher” (“Poetry and Existence: The Kingfishers of Adam Zagajewski and Gerard Manley Hopkins”) published in this issue of *Konteksty Kultury*, pp. 31–41.

<sup>23</sup> I wrote more extensively about this poem in the text: “Zimorodek’ – nieomal sonet, nie całkiem teologia” [“The Kingfisher’ – almost a sonnet, not quite a theology”] [in:] *Literatura i religia: antologia tekstów*, ed. A. Głąb, Warszawa 2022, pp. 144–156. In it, I referred, among other things, to the chapter from *A Secular Age*, in which Taylor analyses the unprecedented nature of Gerard Manley Hopkins’s poetic vision and draws attention to its conversion/transformational potential.

<sup>24</sup> Ch. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, Cambridge and London 2007, p. 758.

<sup>25</sup> It is the phrase coined by Taylor to describe the expressive-constitutive power of the language of poetry; see Ch. Taylor, *The Language Animal: The Full Shape of the Human Linguistic Capacity*, Cambridge 2016, p. 344. I commented on his theory of poetry as the ritual of reconnection here: Ł. Tischner, “Epifaniczna moc literatury. O badaniach Charlesa Taylora” [in:] *Literatura a religia – wyzwanie epoki świeckiej*, vol. 1: *Teorie i metody*, eds. Ł. Tischner, T. Garbol, Kraków 2020.

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