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## POLISH ROMANTIC MESSIANISM

**Abstract.** This paper aims at presenting the circumstances in which Polish Romantic messianism emerged as well as outlining major messianic doctrines created by Polish thinkers during the Romantic period. These will comprise: Andrzej Towiański's mystical messianism, Adam Mickiewicz's revolutionary and nationalist messianism, August Cieszkowski's evolutionary messianism, and Józef Maria Hoene-Wroński's rationalist messianism.

**Keywords:** Polish Romanticism, messianism, mystical messianism, revolutionary messianism, evolutionary messianism, rationalist messianism, Andrzej Towiański, Adam Mickiewicz, August Cieszkowski, Józef Maria Hoene-Wroński.

The 1830s and 1840s comprised a unique epoch in the history of Polish culture. This uniqueness rested on two phenomena: the emergence of the so-called *national philosophy (the philosophy of action)* and the remarkable development of messianic doctrines. In order to understand the notion of Polish Romantic messianism, its emergence and development, it is necessary to outline the historical context in which it was formulated. The Third Partition of Poland (the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth) by Russia, Prussia and Austria in 1795<sup>1</sup> resulted in the ultimate loss of state sovereignty. Hopes that had been placed for some time on the international policy of post-Revolutionary France and Napoleon's activities gradually waned. These two factors underpinned the changes in and reformulation of Poles' national awareness. The awakening of Polish national identity occurred in specific circumstances that embraced the loss of statehood (an actual foundation of identity) and the disappearance of any hope for the improvement of the

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<sup>1</sup> The First Partition of Poland took place in 1772. The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth lost 211 thousand km<sup>2</sup> of its territory and 4.5 million people were taken over by the partitioning powers: Russia, Austria and Prussia. In 1793 the Second Partition of Poland occurred and resulted in the loss of 307 thousand km<sup>2</sup>. The Third Partition (1795) meant the ultimate disappearance of the Polish state. Between 1807 and 1815, pursuant to the Peace Treaties of Tilsit (1807), Napoleon I of France and Tsar Alexander I of Russia established the Duchy of Warsaw, a substitute for the formerly sovereign state.

situation. During the Enlightenment period, political hopes were briefly enlivened and transferred from Napoleon to Tsar Alexander I of Russia. The illusory facets of these hopes (following Tsar Alexander's death, the reign was inherited by his brother Nicholas who violently suppressed the Decembrist revolt) radically transformed the individual and collective attitudes of Poles: *This did not mean the immediate end of existing, real political calculations in the Polish patriotic thought of that period; however, from that moment on a broader worldview horizon clearly emerged from behind that perspective, and it gradually counterpointed the previous mindset.*<sup>1</sup> The defeat of the November Uprising (1830)<sup>2</sup> finally put an end to all political calculations. Such were replaced with messianism, a phenomenon that was to become the measure of evaluation and a key to the interpretation of Polish reality with respect to its individual and political dimensions, as well as universal and cultural ones<sup>3</sup>. The expansion of Polish messianism in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century would not have been so rapid if not for the conviction (one that appeared concurrently with messianism, largely due to the same reasons, but independently of them) that each nation constitutes a separate individuality. The uniformity of the Enlightenment (eradication of all differences in the name of one universal norm of the enlightened reason) was substituted with a belief that glorified the diversity of national cultures. Following J. G. Herder, it was emphasized that each nation had its own culture, and a specific form of existence and manner of feeling. These distinct features of a particular nation aroused aspirations to fulfil specific historical missions that frequently expanded into messianic missions. The sense of distinctiveness and national individuality is strongest amongst nations deprived of a sovereign statehood, consequently messianic ideas flourished mostly in such nations. When national individuality constituted the only form of independent existence, the entire energy and activity were not focused on the present and the real world, but on the world of ideas and dreams:

*The very existence of a nation that perceived itself to be a nation while not being a state seemed to be a nonmaterial existence, possible only thanks to specific moral strengths that ensured immortality. And because messianic hope promised such strengths an imminent triumph on earth, it comes as no surprise that messianism easily evolved into a faith of such a nation, that striving to realize such a hope began to present itself as the nation's proper raison*

<sup>1</sup> A. Wawrzynowicz, *Wstęp*, pp. VI–VII.

<sup>2</sup> In 1815 the Congress of Vienna established the Kingdom of Poland (Congress Poland) connected by the personal union with the Russian Empire. In November 1830, an uprising against the partitioning powers broke out on the territory of Congress Poland, and was totally defeated in 1831. Thousands of insurgents, as well as representatives of culture, emigrated to avoid repressions (the Great Emigration). Until 1918 the Kingdom of Poland was part of the Russian Empire.

<sup>3</sup> A. Wawrzynowicz, *Wstęp*, p. VII.

*d'être along with temporary suffering, and then ultimately as its exceptional historical mission.*<sup>1</sup>

The emergence of Polish messianism is rooted in the specific situation of a nation deprived of sovereign statehood. Thus, the reasons for its development include not only the historical circumstances and political factors leading to this situation, but also their results, i.e. a specific condition of the collective psyche (psyche of the nation). The phenomenon of Polish Romantic messianism can be also explained from a different perspective if it is regarded as an integral part of *the Romantic style of philosophizing*. In such terms, messianism *transpires to be the answer to the search for Romantic awareness and its dilemmas; it is the consequence of this awareness and its culmination*<sup>2</sup>. It was the culmination because it appeared when the Romantic worldview had already been fully shaped and the antinomies of its ideological currents had become visible, while the desire to change that status quo thrived. The homogenous and synthetic vision of a world that unified the thought, feelings and action, offered by messianism, was to serve as a cure for the ever more powerful dilemmas of Romantic worldviews<sup>3</sup>.

Messianic doctrines flourished at the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries in many countries, inter alia, in England and Russia, but their major centre was France. French thought profoundly influenced Polish émigré writers who had direct access to it. Many ideas inherent in French messianic utopias and messianic history of philosophy penetrated into that of Polish Romantic messianism. A belief in the expiatory, purifying and soteriological power of suffering was taken from messianism as understood by Saint–Martin, J. de Maistre, P. S. Ballanche; the idea of *new revelation* was adopted from the works of de Maistre, Fourier and followers of Saint–Simonianism. For Polish writers and thinkers the suppression of the November Uprising (similarly to the victory of the French Revolution for de Maistre) equated the loss of everything that was ever precious: the remains of independence, homeland, and family. Analogically to French messianists, what they derived from this defeat was the

*unswerving conviction in their own righteousness, contempt for the victors, and the desperate refusal to accept the imposed status quo. The total negation of the present combined with helplessness and, at the same time, the indestructibility of hope, made them prone to believe that the existing state of affairs could not long endure, that some great, radical change was approaching, that the time of greatest misfortunes was in fact a prologue to collective redemption.*<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> J. Ujejski, *Dzieje polskiego mesjanizmu*, pp. 22–23.

<sup>2</sup> A. Sikora, *Towiański i rozterki romantyzmu*, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> See A. Sikora, *Towiański i rozterki romantyzmu*, p. 8.

<sup>4</sup> A. Walicki, *Filozofia polskiego romantyzmu*, p. 100.

As in Saint-Simonianism, the *new revelation* was interpreted as the necessity to renew earthly life, abolish psycho-physical dualism and transfer Christian ethics to both social and political life. Fourier's and de Saint-Simon's *new liberation* (Christ effected the spiritual liberation of man, now it was time for social and material liberation), combined with a belief in the purifying power of suffering, the idea of sacrifice and redemption, led to the conclusion that there existed a parallel between Christ's Crucifixion and the nation's suffering whose martyrdom serves towards the redemption (social or political) of the entire humanity (Poland as the Christ of nations)<sup>1</sup>. Fourier, Saint-Simonianism, Pierre Leraux and Ballanche provided the notion, characteristic of French social messianism, of combining the idea of progress with the idea of reincarnation: *the convergence of the idea of historical progress with that of individual improvement through a series of consecutive incarnations showed the way to individual redemption in the real world rather than in the nether world*<sup>2</sup>.

Although the fundamental ideas of Polish Romantic messianism were borrowed from French thought, this does not mean, as Andrzej Walicki, a distinguished historian of ideas specialist in Polish Romanticism and author of comparative studies concerning Polish and French messianism quoted here, claims, that Polish Romantic messianism was merely a reflection of French utopians' ideas. Walicki's intention (as he himself admits) was to demonstrate that Polish Romantic messianism was by no means some *Polish oddity*, nor an expression of national megalomania, but a phenomenon typical of European thought at that time. Awaiting a *universal regeneration* of mankind was, after all, one of the stock ideas of Romanticism. The fact that Polish messianism additionally stressed the tragedy of the Polish nation *did not diminish its significance but increased it, the Polish cause – especially in the awareness of progressive people – was then a European affair. Hence Mickiewicz's Paris Lectures were described by Victor Hugo as a genuine awakening reaching each corner of the world*.<sup>3</sup> In none of the European countries, however, did messianism find such *fertile ground* as in Poland where specific circumstances contributing to its development occurred. Polish messianism was then not an epigone of the French one; it was neither its copy nor a faithful reflection. Despite borrowed elements, Polish Romantic messianism was an original phenomenon, because only in Poland did it obtain *a distinct clarity and a crystallized form of the doctrine*.

The major variants of Polish Romantic messianism emerged in the period between uprisings, i.e. between the November Uprising (1830) and the January Uprising (1863). That span was preceded by the pre-messianic phase comprising the first three decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The most important person as regards this developmental phase of Polish messianism was Józef Maria Hoene-Wroński (1776–1853), who was the first to have employed the

<sup>1</sup> See A. Walicki, *Filozofia polskiego romantyzmu*, p. 101.

<sup>2</sup> A. Walicki, *Filozofia polskiego romantyzmu*, pp. 104–105.

<sup>3</sup> A. Walicki, *Filozofia polskiego romantyzmu*, p. 105.

term *messianism* in Poland. Conceptions developed in the 1830s and 1840s by Andrzej Towiański (1799–1878), Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1855), count August Cieszkowski (1814–1894), Juliusz Słowacki (1809–1849) and count Zygmunt Krasiński (1812–1859) as well as the messianic doctrine formulated earlier by J. M. Hoene–Wroński form the core of Polish Romantic messianism. It developed most intensively in the 1830s and 1840s amongst the Polish émigré community in France. Messianic conceptions that emerged then and there deeply permeated both social and political thought, literature, and philosophy and gained status as the primary guide with respect to the spiritual life of the nation. Canonical works of Polish messianism were thus created: Adam Mickiewicz's *Księgi narodu i pielgrzymstwa* [*The Books and The Pilgrimage of the Polish Nation*], August Cieszkowski's *Ojciec nasz* [*Our Father*], Zygmunt Krasiński's *Przedświt* [*The Dawn*] and Juliusz Słowacki's *Król Duch* [*King Spirit*].

The popularity of messianic ideas amongst Polish Romantic writers generated different variants and variations of messianism. Already in the Romantic period, a Polish philosopher Karol Libelt divided Polish messianism into mystical and philosophical. In this paper, following Libelt's line of reasoning, two conceptions of mystical messianism are presented first (A. Towiański, A. Mickiewicz), and then conceptions referring to philosophical messianism are discussed (A. Cieszkowski, J. M. Hoene–Wroński). Such a typology is based on the common basis formed by aversion to rational philosophy and turning to mysticism in the case of mystical messianism, and an attempt to rationalize it in the case of philosophical messianism. In order to emphasize specific features of a given type of messianism, apart from allocating it to a more general category, additional appellations are introduced (revolutionary, evolutionary, and rationalist). Mystical messianism assuming that a complete renewal (transformation) of the world depended on moral and religious readiness of the elites to accept the Word of God was represented by Andrzej Towiański. In 1828, in the Bernadine church in Vilnius Andrzej Towiański, a District Court clerk then, experienced a vision during which his mission was revealed. This was a spiritual breakthrough for him. He broke with his past life and began to fulfil his mission. He gathered supporters and in 1840 left the country. In 1841 he appeared in Paris where he met Adam Mickiewicz. On 27 September of that year, in the Notre Dame cathedral, he announced the establishment of *the Circle of God's Cause*. A group of Towiański's supporters from Vilnius (Ferdynand and Anna Gutt, Walenty Wańkiewicz, Ksawera Deybel) was joined by several Polish émigré activists, including Mickiewicz and Słowacki. With his charismatic personality, Towiański became an object of cult worship and fascination, a respected Master, paid homage to with the almost slave-like subservience<sup>1</sup>. His teaching offered the confirmation of an imminent transformation of the world and the situation of the Polish nation. Towiański professed the dawn of the *resurrection* of Poland, liberation from servitude and the beginning of a new

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<sup>1</sup> See A. Sikora, *Towiański i rozterki romantyzmu*, p. 26.

Christian revolution. Salvation was to come through a Polish nation that more ardently than other nations abided in Christian faith<sup>1</sup>. He himself was chosen by God to initiate an era of profound reconstruction in the world and to also establish a New Christianity. The initial fascination with Towiański's teaching was soon followed by despondency and impatience because the announced change had not materialized. Some supporters (including Mickiewicz) left *the Circle of God's Cause* because they no longer wanted to wait passively for this great change to arrive. They desired actions that would speed up fulfilment of the prophecy. Towiański and his supporters differed in their perception of historical time. The Master claimed that the time of changes had already begun (*God's Cause and the higher Christian epoch have begun*, he announced<sup>2</sup>), the ultimate fulfilment would come at any moment. Interpreting Towiański's utterance literally, people impatiently watched for those events that would change the world and bring the rebirth of Poland. In Towiański's teaching, however, time did not run chronologically. As in all prophetic visions, time was suspended:

*By disclosing the future, the prophet transforms it into the present. In his vision the future is directly accessible [...] the prophecy is accompanied not only by absolute certainty that it will be finally fulfilled, but also by a profound belief that this future has been initiated by the prophecy itself [...].*<sup>3</sup>

Towiański's ideas, despite the differences as to how to understand time, appeared attractive to many followers. He pronounced programmatic irrationalism perceived then as a form of resistance against rationalism that insisted on accepting the existing order of things. Rationalism was to be curbed, because it was responsible for the evil in the world. The world suffered owing to reason: reason is the source of moral evil and intellectual confusion, the cause of internal dilemmas and spiritual uncertainty. Reason allows one to see things, but *it does not give one the strength to accept, and even more so, to fulfil what one can see*<sup>4</sup>. Reason does not grasp the truth, it does not discover the absolute; it offers only partial, relative truths. Rational knowledge does not reach feelings and the heart, thus it prevents an authentic internal life: *knowledge and theory alone, as earthly phenomena, do not possess Christian strength and do not bear Christian fruit, they reach the head, the reason, but they do not reach the soul, the heart*<sup>5</sup>. Consequently, reason did not fulfil those expectations invested in it. Those who had put their faith in it fell into intellectual stagnation and moral numbness or even spiritual death. This could only be changed when man returned to the genuine source of truth, that is to feeling. Man needs mysticism to reach God. Towiański proclaimed

<sup>1</sup> See T. Canonico, *Andrzej Towiański*, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> A. Towiański, *Pisma*, vol. 1, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> A. Sikora, *Towiański i rozterki romantyzmu*, p. 34.

<sup>4</sup> A. Towiański, *Pisma*, p. 64.

<sup>5</sup> T. Canonico, *Andrzej Towiański*, p. 137.

the need for man to return to his inner life, to unite the spirit disintegrated by reason, to act so that the prophesied Kingdom of God would materialize. Internal spiritual work cannot be successful until the soul merges with the body. In Towiański's teaching, *the affirmation of the deed* coexisted with *the rehabilitation of the body*. He appreciated and commended a life that made this balance possible. The total manifestation of spirit may only be completed through *the sanctification of the body*. The fulfilment of man's mission (its end is the Kingdom of God on earth) is a holistic process, encompassing both the body and the soul. Deeds, as a mediating element, are between them<sup>1</sup>. Man, as *an incarnated spirit* fulfils his mission on earth, but simultaneously transcends it. This act of man's spiritualization corresponds with a *spiritualization of history – spiritualization and at the same time its sacralization*<sup>2</sup>. Providence is the creator, director and controller of *the world's history*. It is Providence that sends down prophets who destroy old epochs and initiate new ones. The first one was Christ who revealed Divine Truths to people, but did not disclose all mysteries. This will be the task for future prophets and revelators. The process involving the realization of God's Kingdom is divided into seven epochs. Christ revealed himself in the first epoch; Towiański initiates the second one. Five more prophets will appear after him and each will initiate a new epoch. In the seventh epoch history will end and the Kingdom of God on earth will be established.

Towiański desired his teaching to permeate various spheres of life and become the germ of social reform, and part of the national worldview. According to him, history is not only realized through consecutive prophets, but also by chosen nations, each having a specific mission. A nation becomes activated when its mission revealed by the prophet is realized in the spiritual sphere and the sphere of earthly relationships. A nation as a whole is incapable of receiving revelation. Only an inspired prophet, genius, spiritually powerful being is capable of such. Towiański's messianism is then both of an individual and collective nature. In this collective effort it is, however, the individual who plays the role of the revelator; a nation is only *a secondary instrument in the hands of God*. Nations frequently compromise their missions and do not listen to their revelators. Consequently they fall into the sin of selfishness. Antagonisms appear in social life, while evil and intellectual chaos proliferate. The betrayal of the mission (*internal homeland*) may lead to the fall of statehood (*external homeland*). Evil, however, can be defeated and nations can be reborn. A nation *ennobled* by suffering *returns [...] to itself, to its own spirit, its own mission, ready to realize it in action*<sup>3</sup>. Nation's misfortunes and calamities are inscribed into the course of history; they are *a necessary link in the chain of progress*. Suffering is ennobling; nations are reborn, strengthened both morally and spiritually. Rebirth is necessary for nations to fulfil their missions. Christ already fulfilled his mission, bringing redemption to indivi-

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<sup>1</sup> See A. Sikora, *Towiański, czyli mesjanizm ekspresji*, p. 203.

<sup>2</sup> A. Sikora, *Towiański, czyli mesjanizm ekspresji*, p. 206.

<sup>3</sup> A. Sikora, *Towiański, czyli mesjanizm ekspresji*, p. 209. See also T. Zawajska, *Mesjanizm*, p. 104.

duals. Now it was time for Poland to redeem the entire world. But first the Polish nation must be reborn morally. Thus the fulfilment of the mission is conditioned by internal (spiritual) transformation. It cannot be militant action, because only a continuous moral improvement can quicken the realization of God's Kingdom on earth. It is this idea that Mickiewicz – a proponent of militant action – disagreed with. This caused the rift between Mickiewicz and Towiański and was the direct reason why the poet left *the Circle of God's Cause*.

Mickiewicz formulated his own conception of revolutionary messianism, largely based on Towiański's teaching. Additional adjectives are attached to Mickiewicz's messianism: *revolutionary* because it included a moral imperative for a revolution understood as the destruction of old forms and (or) *national* because it was the Polish nation that was endowed with the function of being a collective messiah. Mickiewicz, like Towiański, was hostile towards philosophy that for him was identical to rationalism. In his view, rationalism and all abstractions should be condemned because they dissuade people from action and from real work. European philosophy believes in ... philosophy; it believes that progress of knowledge or dissemination of new doctrines will effectuate changes and initiate a new, happier era in the history of humankind. Nothing like that had thus far taken place (different philosophies appeared and disappeared). History cannot provide an example of a positive reform that originated from the progress of knowledge<sup>1</sup>. Philosophical abstractions are dispensable; they do not lead to any changes, but only introduce confusion. Mickiewicz criticized Hegel's rationalism, and Polish philosopher August Cieszkowski for thinking in line with Hegel, and another Polish philosopher Bronisław Trentowski for forming a philosophy in *German fashion*. Philosophy, Mickiewicz wrote in his *Lectures on Slavic Literature*,

*or rather what is accepted to be termed philosophy, that is the work of reason that breaks away from all rules, that refuses to submit itself to any condition imposed by Providence, that believes that it is sufficient to think and discuss to find the truth, philosophy – let us repeat – from such a perspective is merely an imitation, or rather a fake revelation. Sages reveal great truths [...] saints reveal great things; philosophers, however, pretend that they discover them.*<sup>2</sup>

Stealing fire from heaven, Prometheus *embodies the genuine revelation*, Epimetheus who *embodies philosophy created only a monkey*<sup>3</sup>. Messianism is a *set of revelations* that are made available to mankind through the chosen individuals (*higher spirits*). These *higher spirits*, the chosen ones capable of receiving divine inspiration, have *intrinsically a duty to lead spirits placed at*

<sup>1</sup> See A. Mickiewicz, *Dziela, t. IX, Literatura słowiańska. Kurs drugi*, pp. 425–426.

<sup>2</sup> A. Mickiewicz, *Dziela, t. XI, Literatura słowiańska. Kurs trzeci i czwarty*, p. 19.

<sup>3</sup> A. Mickiewicz, *Dziela, t. XI, Literatura słowiańska. Kurs trzeci i czwarty*, p. 19.

lower levels. This is the main dogma of messianism.<sup>1</sup> The chosen individual (*the higher spirit*) becomes an *instrument* in the hands of God. Only thus can he speak to the people. The spirit, constantly searching for God, receives *higher light* – the word. The man who has received the *word* becomes a *revelator*. The *word*, and not the *system*, is revealed to *the higher spirit*. That is why the greatest revelation, the revelation of Christ, was termed *the Word*<sup>2</sup>. One man is sufficient for the word (the divine light) to effect the revelation. Then, because it is *the living word*, it develops into systems, schools, but most of all, into deeds: it bears witness to itself; it does not discuss, it does not lecture extensively on its systems, it does not announce in advance what it is to realize; it speaks and realizes itself simultaneously<sup>3</sup>. Analogically to this primary revelation (original revelation and Christ's revelation), partial revelations have been shaped. These partial, separate revelations are the germs of national revelations: *Each of the great nations was established by one man, was created from one thought, and lived only to realize that thought*.<sup>4</sup> Presently, everyone awaits great changes; another *great turning point* is approaching. In the political lives of nations there appear *inspired* people, who know national history and traditions. They lead the nations in their *march towards the future*. *Inspired people*, those *higher spirits*, appear in important, critical moments. We have the right to believe, Mickiewicz wrote, that

*Christian peoples will pursue more ardently [than others] the course to realize the Gospel and that one day these higher spirits, capable of receiving divine inspiration, will be summoned to play a role that today would not yet correspond to the present condition of society*<sup>5</sup>.

The Polish nation, due to its sufferings, is best prepared to receive such revelation. This type of mystical and revolutionary messianism was also proclaimed, apart from Adam Mickiewicz, by another outstanding Romantic poet Juliusz Słowacki.

In opposition to revolutionary messianism, evolutionary messianism was formulated. If the former called for a militant revolution, evolutionary messianism emerged from the conviction that the regeneration of humankind should involve slow changes encompassing all spheres of life. Everyone should be engaged in this evolutionary process (not only the chosen individuals). Progress cannot be based on destruction and killing but on day-to-day, persistent work (deed, creative work). The path to the Kingdom of God on earth involves a systematic and continuous introduction of changes into each aspect of life, into politics, state, social relations, economy, education, art and private life. Only such slow communal effort will enable the

<sup>1</sup> A. Mickiewicz, *Dziela*, t. XI, *Literatura słowiańska. Kurs trzeci i czwarty*, p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> A. Mickiewicz, *Dziela*, t. XI, *Literatura słowiańska. Kurs trzeci i czwarty*, p. 18.

<sup>3</sup> A. Mickiewicz, *Dziela*, t. XI, *Literatura słowiańska. Kurs trzeci i czwarty*, pp. 18–19.

<sup>4</sup> A. Mickiewicz, *Dziela*, t. XI, *Literatura słowiańska. Kurs trzeci i czwarty*, p. 19.

<sup>5</sup> A. Mickiewicz, *Dziela*, t. XI, *Literatura słowiańska. Kurs trzeci i czwarty*, p. 21.

achievement of the ultimate aim, i.e. a total transformation of the world. Evolutionary messianism recognized the purport of history in activities leading to social integration. The process of evolution should be a synthesis of civilizational progress and spiritual culture.

Evolutionary messianism was propagated most strongly by Count August Cieszkowski. He radically opposed all revolutionary ideologies, including revolutionary messianism. He was convinced that revolutionary social upheavals led to misfortunes, and as such were barbarous. In his views, any terror, including the revolutionary one, instils horror. Transforming the world by means of revolution is nothing more than a civilizational regression. Revolutionary action is heretical; revolutionaries are heretics because they do not believe in a course of history governed by Providence. Revolutionary mentality is suffused with a lack of respect for history and an aversion to everyday, often tedious work towards reform and progress. Cieszkowski's fundamentally antirevolutionary attitude stemmed from a belief that *the Kingdom of God comes via the evolutionary process, it is realized by means of powers already at work in religion and history, and human effort is a necessary condition for it to be realized*<sup>1</sup>. The will of some momentary centre of power employing the ideology of God's Kingdom is not sufficient. *Improvement of all people is essential: a slow rationalization of actions identical with sacralisation of social relationships*.<sup>2</sup> Today – Cieszkowski wrote – it is not revolution that is needed, but evolution – *a great construction*. The times of vandalism, of *destruction or axe* are gone<sup>3</sup>. Similar to the majority of the representatives of Polish *national philosophy (philosophy of action, philosophy of deed)*, Cieszkowski desired to reconcile philosophy and religion. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the relationship of philosophy and religion was influenced by German philosophy, mainly as represented by Hegel and Schelling. Hegel attempted to unite philosophy and religion. This attempt was, however, unsuccessful because in effect he reduced religion to philosophy. In Hegel's system, philosophy was elevated and revalued. Cieszkowski desired to diminish this excessive elevation of philosophy and strengthen the value of religion. He first attempted to revise Hegel's philosophy at the plane of the philosophy of history. In his *Prolegomena zu Historiosophie [A Prologue to Historiosophie]* he rejected Hegel's famous thesis arguing the end of philosophy. For him the announcement of the end of philosophy was a misconception because philosophy *was consolidating its reign over the world and seemed only now to thrive*<sup>4</sup>. Accordingly, *philosophy has already discovered itself, thus it is presently undergoing a crisis, but philosophy will still discover a great deal*<sup>5</sup>. Another correction concerned Hegelian periodization of history. In his scheme, Hegel differentiated four epochs: the Oriental,

<sup>1</sup> P. Bartula, *August Cieszkowski redivivus*, p. 56.

<sup>2</sup> W. Sajdek, *Postęp bez rozboju*, p. 82.

<sup>3</sup> A. Cieszkowski, *Ojciec nasz*, pp. 273–274.

<sup>4</sup> A. Cieszkowski, *Prolegomena do historiozofii*, p. 88.

<sup>5</sup> A. Cieszkowski, *Prolegomena do historiozofii*, p. 88.

the Greek, the Roman, and the Christian–Germanic worlds. Cieszkowski was convinced that Hegel had erred in not applying the laws of dialectics that would have required a trichotomous division. Thus in the Hegelian system the course of history finished in the present. In Cieszkowski's view, the totality of history cannot consist in the past and the present, but must also account for the future. Hence the author of *Prolegomena* divided history into three epochs: ancient (the past, termed also the world of feeling, or the world of art), Christian (the present, or the world of thought), and future (the future, the world of action). Hegel's philosophy ends the second epoch (the epoch of thought). Only in the last phase (in the future) will history be completed, i.e. all aims of humanity will materialize. *Philosophy as such* achieved its final completion in Hegel's system. Now it needs to *come to life*:

*so must philosophy descend from the height of theory into the field of praxis. The future fate of philosophy in general is to be practical philosophy or, to put it better, the philosophy of praxis, whose most concrete effect on life and social relations is the development of truth in concrete activity.*<sup>1</sup>

This transition will occur in the third epoch, that is in the world of action. Hegel elevated the thought and placed material being at a disadvantage, thus making it impossible for the philosophy of praxis to develop. The correction introduced by Cieszkowski was not only formal. He believed that the knowledge of the past allows one to deduce and foresee the future. Dialectics of history cannot be limited only to deliberations over the past; it must also refer to the future. The destiny of philosophy, that is transition into life, is realized in action because the deed is *the truly substantial identity of thought and being*<sup>2</sup>. The deed is such a form action which, *by creating social reality, at the same time fulfils God's will, which [...] means the fulfilment of the teleology of history*<sup>3</sup>. In the future (the last epoch) that is presently approaching, human self-development will end. By creating its own social world, mankind will achieve its fulfilment as *real spirit*, that is the ideal and material being whose essence is will. The philosophy of history presented by Cieszkowski in *Prolegomena zu Historiosophie*, in the poem *Our Father* became part of his conception of messianism. The aim of humankind is then the Kingdom of God on earth.

An original conception of rationalist messianism, based on his own idea of the so-called *philosophy of the absolute*, was devised by Józef Maria Hoene-Wroński. Wroński claimed messianism to be a doctrine that served to materialize absolute values included in his philosophy of the absolute. He termed his philosophy *the absolute philosophy* in order to emphasize its eternal, unconditional foundation. He also termed it messianism to stress its ultimate aim. The absolute philosophy is speculative. As such, it *should reveal*

<sup>1</sup> A. Cieszkowski, *Prolegomena do historiozofii*, p. 87.

<sup>2</sup> A. Cieszkowski, *Prolegomena do historiozofii*, p. 33.

<sup>3</sup> M. N. Jakubowski, *Ciągłość historii i historia ciągłości*, p. 144.

*creative principles of all existing realities constituting the world*<sup>1</sup>, that is basic laws of physical and moral sciences. Philosophy is then a *lawgiver* of sciences in the sense that it establishes laws universal for all sciences, including mathematics, history, religion, pedagogy, and politics. The discovery of these laws by the absolute philosophy fulfils its theoretical function. Its second obligation is the practical function, that is revealing the ultimate directions that man as a reasoning being should create to achieve the *fulfilment of the world*<sup>2</sup>. As the *lawgiver* of sciences, the absolute philosophy is speculative, whereas as the *lawgiver* of human will it is practical. The speculative (theoretical) and practical aspects of the absolute philosophy give rise to its third branch: teleological philosophy whose subject is the harmony between *the inertia of nature and the spontaneity of reason, that is to say between fatality and freedom in the world*<sup>3</sup>. The dividing principle of the absolute philosophy is that of *philosophical trichotomy*, being *the emblem of messianism*. All sciences, and also philosophy, are governed by three primary laws (the supreme law, the universal law, the teleological law). In its teleological function, philosophy defines everything that refers to the harmony in the universe *depending on the ultimate reasons in imitation of predetermined plans or aims*<sup>4</sup>. Wroński differentiates two rules of messianism. The first of these rules is that *all reality that effectively exists, is necessarily based on absolute principles*. This rule is speculative, that is to say, proper to lead us to the discovery or to the creation of truth. The second of these rules, which is the opposite of the first, consists in that *all reality that is necessarily based on absolute principles, must or at least may effectively exist*. This rule is practical, that is to say, proper to lead us, in our moral knowledge, to the discovery or to the creation of good. These two laws of messianism serve to reveal the great problems of humanity. Wroński terms them *the postulated rules of messianism*. The first one contains a speculative or intellectual necessity, based on the certainty of knowledge, the second one – a practical or moral necessity, based on the requirement (imperative) of duty. The two messianic rules, in order to determine the great problems of humanity, require knowledge of the different realities that form the sphere of the activity of human reason. These include: 1. Philosophy; 2. Religion; 3. Mysticism; 4. the Church; 5. the State; 6. the Union or directive association of humanity; 7. Sciences and Arts. According to Wroński:

*It is therefore sufficient now to apply, to these seven fundamental realities of the world, the two aforementioned rules postulated in Messianism, to be able to direct us, at first regressively, with the aid of the first of these rules, to the origin or the absolute principles of these realities, and later progressively, with the aid*

<sup>1</sup> J. Wroński, *Prolegomena do mesjanizmu*, p. 42.

<sup>2</sup> J. Wroński, *Prolegomena do mesjanizmu*, p. 43.

<sup>3</sup> J. Wroński, *Prolegomena do mesjanizmu*, p. 44.

<sup>4</sup> J. Wroński, *Prolegomena do mesjanizmu*, p. 47.

*of the second of these rules, toward the accomplishment or the absolute consequences of these same positive realities of human reason.*<sup>1</sup>

The aim of the absolute philosophy (messianism) is to establish an *unconditional certainty* in man (without which there can be no absolute truth) and to discover the absolute principle, which is the origin of all reality. Messianism should reveal *the creation of the universe, in its origin, in its progress, and its ends*, and positively demonstrate the creation of God and the absolute principle which *under the sacred name of the WORD, is in God the source of his unconditional reality*<sup>2</sup>. Messianism should also establish the absolute religion. It must reveal the origin of good and evil and demonstrate that the creation of good is *the spontaneous work of the Creator*, whereas the creation of evil is *a work of free creatures endowed with the creative power of reason*. The absolute religion should free man from the responsibility for evil (moral fall), because he was unable to understand the problem of his destiny. By solving this problem mankind can return to its primitive state of moral purity. After this accomplishment of *the relative destinies*, messianism should *tear the veil that covers the final goal in the creation of reasonable beings, that is to say, the Absolute Destiny of mankind*<sup>3</sup>, i.e. truth and immortality. This is the absolute destiny of humanity, a literal and spontaneous work of man. A spontaneous creation of the truth by man, that is to say, the discovery of the absolute, is *the act of man's OWN CREATION; the only act for which the universe exists, and thus forms the FUNDAMENTAL DOGMA of MESSIANISM*. This is the direction that humanity must follow. Any other is wrong. The aim of messianism is to reveal all obstacles (*abyss*), especially the existence of the absolute evil. Messianism should demonstrate that not only all true philosophy, but also all positive religion, especially the Christian religion, are *in consistent with the majestic end of creation*. The final union of philosophy with religion (the absolute philosophy with the absolute religion) constitutes messianism.

The starting point for Hoene–Wroński's philosophy of the absolute was the critique of Kant's philosophy. He accused Kantianism of placing the thing-in-itself (noumenon) beyond the reach of human reason. The impossibility of comprehending the absolute reality by reason, the impossibility to grasp the absolute by man was for Hoene–Wroński the major weakness and imperfection of Kant's philosophy<sup>4</sup>. In his view, metaphysics is not only possible, but also indispensable. Its foundation is the absolute, the union of reason and being. Hoene–Wroński supposedly discovered the absolute in a flash of intuition, in an act of sudden illumination that knowledge (thought) and being include a special type of the universal principle from which the world originates and develops. This was accompanied with a conviction that *it*

<sup>1</sup> J. Wroński, *Prolegomena do mesjanizmu*, pp. 61–62.

<sup>2</sup> J. Wroński, *Prolegomena do mesjanizmu*, p. 63.

<sup>3</sup> J. Wroński, *Prolegomena do mesjanizmu*, p. 65.

<sup>4</sup> J. Wroński, *Geneza filozofii absolutnej*, p. 251.

was an act of being chosen, of receiving some mission of being the providential man, revelator or Pracelet who [...] does not create the truth himself, but transmits it, becoming a mediator between God and mankind<sup>1</sup>. Knowledge and being are united in the absolute by its capability for creative action. Due to this feature of the absolute, knowledge and being, although different, interpenetrate. The absolute perceived as the synthesis of knowledge and being constitutes reality. The *law of creation* follows from the essence of the absolute. The absolute gives this law to itself. The *law of creation* directs the process of *auto-creation* as a set of dispositions directed to the world and to humanity. As regards humanity, these *dispositions* are a set of values and aims, primarily the so-called *final aims*. Values and final aims should be recognized (the moment of self-knowledge) and realized. This effort is necessary for the achievement of the condition termed *auto-creation* (gathering and overcoming of creative experiences until the state of absolute spiritual perfection) or, in religious terms, immortality. Immortality can be achieved in three ways: through children, works of culture and the ultimate fulfilment of one's destiny. Immortality of the last type is messianic. Self-knowledge opens the way to a new reality, *the age of absolute aims*. The purposeful development of humanity must end; otherwise it would be *a mere plaything, without purpose, unable to be a means towards anything, because it would be contradictory to our reason that is an end in itself*<sup>2</sup>. The supreme aim of mankind must be the work of man, in other words the autonomous work of reason, independent of any external influences. This period is preceded by the period of relative aims (the past) and the period of transitional aims (the present). In the period of relative aims (material aims), humanity *develops physically*, submitting to the laws of nature. In the transitional period special aims must be established: aims that will enable a transition from relative to absolute aims. This is the critical time in the development of humanity. This development depends on universal aims, that is aims established by human reason, but preceded by individual aims. The period when individual (particular) aims dominated was the age of *the reign of patriarchs* and the time of tradition. The times when universal aims dominate create *the reign of nations* and, according to Hoene-Wroński, this is *the proper time* of history. History begins when universal aims appear. *The law of creation* is also applied to history. This is the historiosophical *law of progress* that shows the march of humanity from the earliest times, through the antinomic present, until the condition congruous with reason (the period of final aims). The most significant task of contemporary leaders, according to Hoene-Wroński, was to reconcile these various contradictions, to curb radical attitudes in politics and social life, to base politics on moral foundations and to introduce the principles of messianism (his own philosophy of the absolute). The third period of history (the period of final aims) is the future. This is a time of man's own creation, the epoch of the victory of absolute good and absolute truth.

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<sup>1</sup> A. Sikora, *Hoene-Wroński, czyli mesjanizm systemu*, p. 168.

<sup>2</sup> J. M. Hoene-Wroński, *Prodrom mesjanizmu albo filozofii absolutnej*, p. 103.

Humanity liberated from the pressure of the necessary laws of nature and empirical reality will conquer time, will transcend the world of phenomena and history, will establish a union with God and will gain immortality. In the third period *New Jerusalem, the Kingdom of God on earth* will be realized. This state of peaceful coexistence, the overcoming of antinomies will be achieved by Slavic peoples. Due to a profound premonition of *great destinies of the world*, they are particularly predisposed to *lead mankind in its march of progress towards its final and autonomous destination*<sup>1</sup>. So far, Slavic nations have only used the achievements of other nations, without much contribution to European culture on their part. They have participated in history, demonstrating exceptional heroism, but have not exhibited *any special destiny*<sup>2</sup>. Other nations have already fulfilled their missions: Germans (Germanic nations) renewed religion (reformation) and philosophy; the French renewed social life and statehood. Slavic nations have their mission: to develop and complement the existing achievements of civilization. In particular, they must effectuate a synthesis of German *speculative mission* with French *practical mission*. By developing knowledge, they will achieve the absolute truth; by developing morality, they will reach the absolute good. Slavic nations constitute the ultimate synthesis of history – its end.

Hoene–Wroński initially believed that only *chosen men*, he himself or other exceptionally gifted geniuses are capable of fulfilling the messianic mission (discovering the absolute knowledge). He actually established the Absolute Union, a cosmopolitan, transnational organization, gathering outstanding individuals capable of executing the final reform of humanity. At first, he perceived a nation representing particular and individual interests as antinomic to reason and universalism, and even to human dignity<sup>3</sup>. Later he changed his attitude concerning the notion of nationality and noticed *real historical power* in it. The Slavic nations' mission is to discover the absolute truth and the absolute good and to execute reforms realizing the ideal of statehood created by the French and the ideal of Church created by Germans. In order to fulfil their mission, Slavic nations must unite themselves (at that time Poland was conflicted with Russia, one of the partitioning powers). Hoene–Wroński placed his hopes as regards the union of Slavs on Tsar Alexander I, who allowed for Poles under Russian rule sufficient conditions for developing education and culture. It was the suppression of the November Uprising, persecutions and repressions that Poles experienced from Russians that weakened Hoene–Wroński's faith in Russia's wish to create a federation of free nations. The rejection of the messianic path by Russia was the reason why the philosopher finally bestowed the mission to lead Slavic nations towards the achievement of God's Kingdom on earth on Poles.

Hoene–Wroński, in opposition to Kant, emphasized the creative and inventive aspects of human reason (according to Kant, reason is active but not

<sup>1</sup> J. M. Hoene–Wroński, *Odezwa do narodów słowiańskich*, p. 30.

<sup>2</sup> J. M. Hoene–Wroński, *Odezwa do narodów słowiańskich*, p. 20.

<sup>3</sup> See J. Wroński, *Kodeks prawodawstwa społeczeństwa absolutnego*, p. 45.

creative). His conception of rationalist messianism rested on the creative abilities of human reason. The messianic formula as devised by Wroński, was, to quote A. Sikora, *that of Paracletism. His philosophy constituted an apologia of reason*<sup>1</sup>. Presenting man as a being who by means of reason can grasp the absolute, devise a holistic system of knowledge, recognize and determine his own aims and the aims of humanity, establish the absolute religion (religion compatible with reason and acknowledged by reason identified with God's wisdom), is regarded as the most original element of Wroński's messianism<sup>2</sup>. *Auto-creation* through intellectual effort equates man with God, enables the empirical existence to transcend into a new form of existence and to achieve immortality. The process of auto-creation changes a human being internally, preparing him for a new life. The active aspect (effort, activity, creation, deed) links Wroński not only with other representatives of Polish Romantic messianism, but also with Polish philosophy of that period. What he also shares with messianism as devised by Polish poets is the belief in the superiority of the spiritual world and nonmaterial values constituting man's personality over hedonistic values, as well as a postulate concerning the unity of matter with spirit and of tradition with progress. Wroński and representatives of literary messianism see the solution of this antinomic postulate in *heroism that dictates one to live not only for oneself, but for one's nation, and the entire humanity*<sup>3</sup>. The future fate of humanity, the fulfilment of the history, and the realization of God's Kingdom on earth ultimately depend on the cognitive activity (reason) of man and his heroism.

Hoene-Wroński's messianism in terms of its metaphysical, epistemological, anthropological and social assumptions differs from other theories termed *Polish Romantic messianism*. Thus some researchers treat Hoene-Wroński's messianism and that of the outstanding poets as completely different types, whereas the identical name leads to misunderstandings<sup>4</sup>. What these conceptions share is only the same name that poets-messianists adopted from Wroński, whereas the very name *messianism* embraces different contents. The dispute over the status of Wroński's messianism confirms that messianism (not only in Poland) was not a homogenous phenomenon, and that one name can refer to various ideas. Apart from emphasizing the differences, one should remember the similarities, common ideas, or as Wroński would have put it, common or similar *final aims*. Wroński's messianism was rationalist. It was an apotheosis of reason that was attributed by him with the ability to discover the absolute and achieve the final aims of humanity, i.e. to establish the Kingdom of God on earth. The very name *rationalist messianism* may be objectionable since it juxtaposes two *apparently* contradictory terms. Messianism is associated with mysticism characteristic of literary variations of Polish Romantic messianism and Towiański's messianism, and not with

<sup>1</sup> A. Sikora, *Hoene-Wroński, czyli mesjanizm systemu*, p. 186.

<sup>2</sup> A. Sikora, *Hoene-Wroński, czyli mesjanizm systemu*, p. 186.

<sup>3</sup> L. Wiśniewska-Rutkowska, *Mesjanizm Jerzego Brauna*, p. 67.

<sup>4</sup> See L. Łukomski, *Twórca filozofii absolutnej*, p. 282.

rationalism. Yet Polish Romantic messianism had different facets. Hoene-Wroński's rationalist messianism, although different in many important aspects from other versions, belongs to the tradition of Polish Romanticism within which various theories collectively termed *messianism* emerged. These constitute both positive and negative points of reference for later messianic theories. A *negative point of reference* does not mean a negation and rejection of messianism; it involves a critical attitude towards some ideas characteristic of Romantic messianism, rather than its utter contestation. A *positive one* consists in the creation of conceptions that referred to some of the Romantic types of messianism.

Messianism has never again achieved such status as during the Romanticism, but it has never disappeared completely from Polish culture either. Although not in such a spectacular fashion as during the Romantic period, often in opposition to dominant cultural paradigms and in isolation, messianic ideas have survived in Polish culture until present times. Neo-messianic conceptions that appeared later employed the tradition of Romantic messianism to a different extent, but all of them shared the belief (relating to the universal character of Polish Romantic messianism) that it was significant both to general culture and national culture and awareness. They also shared the conviction of the creative power of messianism. Romantic messianism reemerged in Poland at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, most strongly within historiosophy (historiosophical reflection concerning the nation). Thus the neo-messianism of the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century or modernist neo-messianism was born. The potent presence of messianic ideas, in their neo-messianic version, in Polish culture of that period is evidenced by a variety of conceptions that appeared then and a large number of their followers<sup>1</sup>. In the inter-war period the internal reception of messianism (of a Romantic type) was weaker, but there appeared thinkers who offered its new versions<sup>2</sup>. Messianists, although few of them, were also active on the margins of dominating worldviews (or actually one worldview – Marxism) after the Second World War.

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<sup>1</sup> In Modernism, messianism was mostly rejuvenated in historiosophical concepts that attempted to apply the Romantic idea of the nation's special mission to the historical circumstances of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Within this general tendency, different versions of neo-messianism appeared. Stefan Buszczyński pronounced the idea of mankind's rebirth under the leadership of Poles, Wojciech Dziędużycki proclaimed neo-messianism consistent with Catholic Orthodoxy, Stanisław Szczepanowski, Józef Jankowski, and Antoni Choloniewski propagated neo-messianism that constituted a synthesis of a Romantic belief in a historical mission of chosen nations with a positivist program of organic work, Wincenty Lutosławski claimed that the Polish nation possessed the revelation identical with the moral ideal capable of achieving the rebirth of humanity. He bestowed on Poles the mission to restore the balance between the rational sphere and the sphere of feelings and emotions in European culture.

<sup>2</sup> Wincenty Lutosławski continued his activities in the inter-war period. A new version of Romantic messianism (one referring to Hoene-Wroński's concepts) was proposed by Jerzy Braun, who published his works until the 1970s.

Recently, a revived interest in messianism can also be observed<sup>1</sup>. Political and economic changes after 1989 as well as a neoliberal *modernization* of social life and culture have not turned messianism into some obsolete idea, inadequate for modern paradigms far removed from messianic thought (religious or national), but have actually contributed to its revival. This is not only evidenced in a significant increase of publications devoted to messianism, but concerns the revival of the messianic idea as such. The claim that messianism has been constantly present in Polish culture is even more strongly confirmed by the fact that the existence of various forms of messianic awareness in Polish culture can be traced back to the pre-Romantic period. As compared to messianism, the internal reception of Romantic philosophy, including mainly Polish *national philosophy* that emerged at the same time as messianism, was much weaker. The increased interest in messianism that can be observed in Poland presently is interpreted in terms of striving to reclaim a significant element of national intellectual heritage, and also as a *general conviction that the language of Polish messianism has to some extent a universal value that can be also effectively applied to describe contemporary reality*<sup>2</sup>, or as searching for an idea (its absence is the result of a years-long indoctrination) *providing a sense of moral and political unity*<sup>3</sup>.

Apart from its creators, followers and propagators, Polish messianism has had also its numerous critics and even enemies who appeared as early as its prime, in the Romantic period. Bronisław Ferdynand Trentowski, an outstanding representative of Polish philosophy at that time, in the period of 1843–1845 waged a war against messianism. He felt profound aversion, antipathy and intellectual objection towards Towiański's and Mickiewicz's messianism. He criticized them for a one-sided *deviation* towards mysticism. *I hate mystics*, he wrote in a letter to Mickiewicz<sup>4</sup>. *Mysticism is the insanity of the soul*, and messianists are separated from it *only by a wall made of weak spider web*, they are *lunatics and the possessed*, they are *insane people*<sup>5</sup>. According to him, messiahs and inspired prophets, being *insane*, should be isolated so that they would not poison the minds of those who still resist mad ideas. It is the philosopher, rather than the messiah or prophet, who must undertake the spiritual leadership of a nation. Mystical messianism is dangerous, false and damaging. Trentowski was far more favourable with respect to Wroński's messianism, valued for its rationalism and absence of mysticism. This dichotomous reception (criticism of Towiański's and Mickiewicz's messianism and a favourable attitude towards Wroński's messianism) reveals Polish Romantic messianism as a complex and heterogeneous phenomenon. Yet, for

<sup>1</sup> Apart from works devoted to messianism, recently there have appeared thinkers who declare themselves to be the followers of messianism. These are mostly authors cooperating with such journals as *44/Czterdzieści i Cztery* and *Pressje* (M. Rymkiewicz, W. Wencel, P. Rojek, R. Tichy – the author of *Neo-messianic Manifesto*).

<sup>2</sup> A. Wawrzynowicz, *Religia w refleksji filozoficznej mesjanistów polskich XIX i XX wieku*, p. 141.

<sup>3</sup> J. Skoczyński, *Młodzi i mesjanizm*, p. 258.

<sup>4</sup> *Listy Bronisława Trentowskiego (1836–1869)*, p. 20.

<sup>5</sup> B. Trentowski, *Demonomania, czyli nauka nadziemskiej mądrości w najnowszej postaci*, p. 243.

all its heterogeneity (one also needs to mention messianism as professed by two outstanding Romantic poets – J. Słowacki and Z. Krasiński), Polish Romantic messianism in its varieties shared common ideas. These include: universalism (the rebirth of Poland will redeem not only Poles but also mankind), heterodoxal religiousness (the greatest heterodoxy is *the terrestrialization* of the notion of redemption) and associations with religious millenarianism, historiosophy focused on the future while emphasising the connection with tradition, apotheosis of the deed, a tendency towards *millenarianism of politics, transferring politics to the level of chialistically understood holy history*<sup>1</sup> and search for a charismatic leader. The notion of a national mission remains debatable. Some scholars (J. Ujejski, Bolesław J. Gawecki, Wiktor Wąsik) deemed the idea of the national mission as a generic feature of Polish Romantic messianism. A. Walicki argues, however, that this is no more than *differentia specifica*, a characteristic, but not a generic feature of messianism. The two formulas of messianism (mystical and rationalist) initiated the dispute, provoked by Trentowski<sup>2</sup>, later termed as *a dispute over Polish messianism*. He began the discussion concerning the status of Romantic messianism in Polish culture – one that continues to last, triggering extreme emotions and controversies. Apart from opponents and proponents of messianism, scholars and researchers are also involved in this dispute.

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<sup>1</sup> A. Walicki, *Między filozofią, religią i polityką*, pp. 22–23.

<sup>2</sup> After 1846, Trentowski – the defender of rationalist philosophy and critic of mysticism – drew nearer to messianism, and his works underwent *messianisation*.

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