LITERATUROZNAWSTWO

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Against the "Anthropocene Apathy" About the Rescue Potential of Postsecularism (on the Example of Works by the Romany Poetess Papusza)

Przeciw „marazmom antropocenu"
O ratunkowym potencjale postsekularyzmu
(na przykładzie twórczości romskiej poetki
Papuszy)

Против «равнодушия антропоцена».
О постсекуляризме и его способности
спасти мир (на примере творчества
цыганской поэтессы Папуши)

Abstrakt

Poczucie beznadziei wobec antropocentrycznego paradygmatu utrudnia dziś myślenie o przyszłości planety i wzmacnia pesymizm i rezygnację. Dotyczy to również ekokrytycznych nauk humanistycznych, które zwracają uwagę na potrzebę świadomościowej transformacji, mogącej ograniczyć zasięg katastrofy klimatycznej. Wymagają one dziś wsparcia w postaci narzędzi zmiany rzeczywistości, które odpowiadałyby społecznym potrzebom całości, sensu, duchowości oraz pozostawały otwarte na inne niż tylko zachodnie modele religijności. Warto ich szukać zwłaszcza w myśleniu postsekularnym, które łączy w sobie rozumowe i intuicyjne rozumienie rzeczywistości.

Абстракт

Чувство безнадежности по отношению к антропоцентрической парадигме мешает думать о будущем планеты и усиливает пессимизм и смирение. Это также касается гуманитарных наук об окружающей среде, обращающих внимание на необходимость изменения сознания, которая может помочь ограничить масштабы климатической катастрофы. Сегодня изменение человеческого сознания требует поддержки в виде эффективных инструментов для изменения реальности, которые удовлетворят потребность в целом, смысле и духовности, оставаясь при этом открытыми для иных, чем западные, моделей религиозности. Эти инструменты стоит искать в особенности в постсекулярном мышлении, сочетающем рациональное и интуитивное понимание реальности.

Anna Filipowicz

The omnipresent feeling of negativity, which is considered the basis for creat-
ing individual and community-based postmodern collectivity[1] is now taking on
a new meaning related to the impending environmental crisis. The conviction
that there is no way out as a reaction not only to the unwavering but – just
the opposite – growing in power anthropocentric paradigm[2] makes it difficult
to think about the future of the planet with hope, thus reinforcing the mood
of pessimism and resignation. This also applies to the ecocritically oriented
humanities, which have always recognized the need for universal transforma-
tion of consciousness that is to contribute to limiting the scope of climate ca-
tastrophe. Today they require support in the form of effective tools to change
reality that would meet the social needs of the whole, sense and spirituality, and
would also remain open to non-Western understanding of what is religious. It
is worth searching for them, especially in postsecular thinking which questions
hierarchical divisions and postulates a more unified approach to the world, but
also in the manner that is both global and local, "majority-" and "minority-
oriented," rational and intuitive.

This paper will attempt both to identify the key socio-cultural difficulties
faced by contemporary pro-environmental reflection and to consider the powers
of postsecularism as a remedy for postmodern negativity. Apart from diagnos-
ing the phenomena that preserve anthropocentric postulates and looking for
ways out in the dialogue between secularism and religiousness, a case study will
be given a separate place here, that is, an analysis of the works by a Romany

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[1] According to many researchers of postmodernity, what constitutes an integral element
of consumer capitalism is the fear of living in the shadow of an impending catastrophe, which
also translates into an increase in postmodern interest in apocalyptic topics (visions prophesying
the extinction of species, cosmic catastrophes, massive terrorist attacks, genocides). See Brian
Massumi, *The Politics of Everyday Fear* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993);
Zygmunt Bauman, *Płynny lęk*, trans. Janusz Margański (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie,
2008); Rosi Braidotti, "Affirmation, Pain and Empowerment," *Asian Journal of Women's Studies*,
vol. 14, no. 3 (2008) and recently also the monographic issue of *Teksty Drugie*, no. 1 (2020)
devoted to the stories of "the end times."

[2] First of all, I mean an ontological anthropocentrism assuming that man occupies a unique,
privileged position in the hierarchy of beings (he is the only one with clear judgement, reflec-
tion, self-awareness and morality) and axiological to some extent, which subordinates further
development of humanity to the interests of only one species. However, I do not deal with
cognitive (interpreting reality from a human point of view) and methodological (focusing solely
on human personal efficacy and ignoring the role of non-human factors) anthropocentrism.
Cf. Ewa Bińczyk, *Epoka człowieka. Retoryka i marazm antropocenu* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo
Naukowe PWN, 2018), 12.

poetess Papusza. Interpreted from postcolonial and ecocritical perspectives, Gypsy songs will provoke reflection on the specificity of the model of spirituality present in them that is relational, based on the interdependence with the natural environment and respecting also the non-human existence. Moreover, they will encourage a closer look at its ecological potential, which could participate in the creation of new humanistic "rescue plans" or revitalization of the existing ones. Such a reading of Papusza's works seems particularly important in the light of ethical thinking about human relations with the surrounding natural world – a view that is poorly established in Polish culture. It will allow the notions of community, solidarity and social justice, which are significant for the domestic discourse, to be extended to include a non-human aspect.

According to scientists – climatologists, geologists, representatives of Earth sciences, as well as sociologists and philosophers – it is only through revising the approach to the exploitation of the planet that may bring hope to reduce the size of the climatic disaster. This should be facilitated by striving to increase social awareness; widespread access to knowledge about the risks caused by urbanization, overuse of resources, ocean acidification, deforestation and loss of habitats for many species of animals and plants. Meanwhile, the conviction that science can become an effective remedy for the environmental crisis increasingly fails to find its confirmation in the socio-cultural reality of the West. Access to data on anthropogenic causes of the crisis does not go hand in hand with the popularity of pro-environmental attitudes, increased responsibility for the fate of the planet, and extensive involvement in climate protection. Moreover, ecology-related educational activities are sometimes completely ineffective, encountering a lack of understanding of the global scale of the catastrophe or the open resistance of climate deniers. According to Ewa Bińczyk, it is the "anthropocene apathy" that is responsible for this state of affairs – the phenomenon of widespread distancing, concealment, denial and repudiation of knowledge about the environmental collapse, which is not always the result of bad will, but it also originates in the fear of losing control over one's own future.[3] The "anthropocene apathy" is therefore accompanied by both deliberate ignorance, burying one's head in the sand, succumbing to soothing myths and illusions,[4] as well as an equally disturbing mechanism of suspending the belief that it is still possible to save the planet. This is probably why the apathy translates into states of climate mourning,[5] which is not as much a manifestation but the result of the attitudes of denial; a reaction to the lack of systemic solutions and rescue

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[3] See Bińczyk, *Epoka człowieka,* 47–77.

[4] Cf. James Gustave Speth, *The Bridge at the Edge of the World. Capitalism, the Environment, and Crossing from Crisis to Sustainability* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2009), 42. As cited in Bińczyk, *Epoka człowieka,* 53–54.

[5] See Ashlee Cunsolo Willox, "Climate Change as the Work of Mourning," *Ethic and Environment,* vol. 17, no. 12 (Fall 2012): 137–164.

plans. According to Bińczyk, these problems are nowhere near less inferior than the effects of the environmental crisis itself, as it is extremely difficult to find a quick and effective remedy to solve them.

One of the reasons for this state of affairs seems to be the crisis of confidence in the authority of science which, after the experiences of 20th-century epistemology, no longer claims to represent absolute truth or objectivity. Due to the programmatic susceptibility of knowledge to constant revision and the assumption of the constructivist nature of its distinctions, the former appearances of certainty are replaced today by "an organized analysis of available evidence."[6] This scientific scepticism, proclaiming the impossibility of access to universal cognition, also opens the field to numerous abuses that are associated with the difficulty of separating facts from opinions or axiological prejudices. Thus, the assumed "self-insecurity" in science is deliberately used to undermine the state of its diagnosis, and thus – to question its credibility, whip up doubts or conduct alternative, disinformation-oriented "research." At the time of *junk sciences*, designed to evoke scepticism and gaining in popularity, it becomes increasingly difficult to evaluate expertise, especially in the areas that deal with complex phenomena, operate with unstable methodologies and require an interdisciplinary approach. This entails the risk of scientific manipulations, which at the same time involve the illusion of returning to the old, traditional patterns of reasoning about the world. Especially those which are unfamiliar with the critical analysis of Foucauldian power/knowledge systems or the strategies of their functioning.

The consequences of undermining the authority of science are also associated with the rebirth of the structures of religious thinking, which Jürgen Habermas describes in his treatise *Glauben und Wissen* [Faith and Knowledge] as ones that, contrary to the forecasts, have resisted the processes of secularization.[7] What the philosopher assumed to be a source of moral and social inspiration in the West[8] and to remain free from any claims to an interpretative monopoly is not often expressed today in a constructive dialogue with secularism.[9] The relationship between religion and the public sphere is increasingly commonly translated into an interest in axiological radicalism, which is seen as the opportunity to restore anachronistic moral norms, usually extremely heavy-handed and restrictive. Thus, in opposition to the ongoing processes of emancipation,

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[6] Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway, *Merchants of Doubt. How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing Press, 2010), 268. As cited in Bińczyk, *Epoka człowieka*, 219.

[7] See Jürgen Habermas, *Wierzyć i wiedzieć*, trans. Małgorzata Łukasiewicz, *Znak* 9, no. 568 (September 2002).

[8] Jürgen Habermas, *Między naturalizmem a religią*, trans. Marcin Pańków (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2012): 116–117.

[9] Cf. Gilles Kepel, *Zemsta Boga*, trans. Agnieszka Adamczak (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2010).

one is particularly eager to return to the fundamentalist treatment of religion, as well as to the manifestation of cognitive relativism towards everything that is contrary to the traditional humanistic model of the subject.[10] Similar aspirations are reflected in the attempts to restore discredited binary divisions and hierarchies – in relation to ethnicity, class, gender or species; the old model of thinking about the world in terms of ontological difference. This axiological radicalism also affects the negation of the achievements of contemporary sciences, especially those social and natural disciplines whose research poses an obstacle to the most chauvinistic practices. In the face of the climate crisis, such conservative extremism can also be an effective tool of media-driven information wars, which are further strengthening the spectrum of denial attitudes. The extreme anthropocentrism and human absolute power over the world turn out to be not as much a rational choice but a moral necessity – the "natural" existence of the "crown of creation" which, in order to meet religious demands, is constantly obliged to "subdue the earth."

Some transhumanist philosophies[11] also contain elements of anthropocentric thinking, which strengthens the attitude of distancing oneself, denying or forswearing knowledge about the climate crisis. In the method of problematizing humanity these philosophies propose, one does not deviate from the hegemonic vision of *homo sapiens* which puts itself above other creatures through progress. Its dominant position is to be sanctioned especially by participation in technological evolution, in which it aims to overcome the physical limitations of its own species and to go beyond the conditions shared with non-humans – mortality or susceptibility to suffering. In turn, attempts are made to justify the supremacy itself through the intellectual expansion of humankind intensified by the Enlightenment – it is humans who have the ability to improve their life through modifications of themselves and nature as well as through technological control over what is biological. Transhumanist reflection on the world is

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[10] Rosi Braidotti, "Wbrew czasom. Zwrot postsekularny w feminizmie," trans. Monika Glosowitz, in *Drzewo poznania. Postsekularyzm w przekładach i komentarzach*, ed. Piotr Bogalecki and Alina Mitek-Dziemba (Katowice: Wydawnictwo FA-art–Uniwersytet Śląski, 2012), 290.

[11] I particularly mean the concepts of scientists and futurologists who are associated with the so-called popular transhumanism (see Bart Simon, "Introduction. Toward a Critique of Posthuman Futures," *Cultural Critique*, no. 9 (Winter 2003): 1–9, and, unlike the representatives of critical transhumanism, they promote extreme form of scientism; unlimited human enhancement through highly developed technologies, usually at the expense of the natural environment. They are, among others, Max More, "Transhumanism. Towards Futurist Philosophy," Wayback Machine Internet Archive, accessed December 20, 2020, http://web.archive.org/web/20130806172107/http:/www.maxmore.com:80/transhum.htm; Marvin Minsky, *The Society of Mind* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1986); Marvin Minsky, *The Emotion Machine* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2007); Ray Kurzweil, *Nadchodzi osobliwość. Kiedy człowiek przekroczy granice biologii*, trans. Eliza Chodkowska and Anna Nowosielska (Warszawa: Kurhaus Publishing, 2017); or Hans Moravec, *Robot. Mere Machine to Transcendent Mind* (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1999).

thus reduced to the question of humans as a species, focused on the need for the development of only one population and reduced to the affirmation of its unlimited influence on planetary systems. The technoscientific essentialism and self-referentiality of this philosophy often take quasi-religious forms, in which the ideas of immortality, resurrection or salvation are made present by the condition of the posthuman who is yet to come. With the support of future technologies – mind transfers, cyborgization, genetic engineering, cryonics – the posthuman could experience prosthetic enhancements and extensions and stay alive indefinitely. Assigning progress the role of guarantor in the process of humankind's quest for a higher level of existence is therefore conducive not only to the absolutization of this category, but, above all, to its perception in the order of a technologized *sacrum*.[12] One can even risk the claim that these trends of transhumanism repeat the story-related postulates of Western metaphysics in many respects, both in the field of idealization of reason and technology, and in the sphere of returning to categories borrowed from the traditional model of spirituality.[13] It is often spirituality from before the time of Ricœur's "hermeneutics of suspicion," and in some respects also preceding Kant's formulation of the assumptions of his transcendental philosophy.[14]

Both the renaissance of religious fundamentalisms and the constitution of quasi-metaphysical orders through techno-sciences respond to the social need to see the world as an ordered whole. The dream of "establishing the universe

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[12] Maria Rogińska, "Sacrum ponowoczesne. Nauka i nowa duchowość w poszukiwaniu całości," *Annales Universitatis Paedagogicae Cracoviensis. Studia Sociologica* 156, vol. 1 (June 2014): 57–60.

[13] In his book *Bóg cyborgów. Technika i transcendencja*, Rafał Ilnicki comprehensively describes the relationship between technology and transcendence, dealing with the problem of the new sacrum – the sanctity of technology, which took the place of nature sacralized so far by man. The researcher shows the complexity of the issue considered in terms of the sacralization of media and technical objects (which become the subject of ritualistic activities, constitute the media between man and the sacred sphere, or provoke questions of theological nature); spirituality that machines were supposed to display (G. Simondon's concept of essence belonging to technical objects); proposals of escape from humanity into the world of teleinformatic consciousness (T. Leary, R. A. Wilson) and searching for transcendence in cybernetics (F. Varel, H. Maturano, R. Royer). As Ilnicki notices, new transcendence understood in this way concerns the sphere of experiences rather than the sphere of concepts (p. 87), which does not mean that the existing spiritual perspectives are not modified at all. Despite the "exchange of the foundations of the world, previously referred to as nature, on which culture was built up" the technologized *sacrum* is again inspired by historical forms of religious thinking (p. 87). See Rafał Ilnicki, *Bóg cyborgów. Technika i transcendencja* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Wydziału Nauk Społecznych UAM, 2011). Categories understood mainly through the prism of the Greco-Judeo-Christian tradition play the key role here: the soul, immortality, resurrection of the dead, direct contact with all forms of intelligence and disembodied beings, deification and transmutation of one form into another, the virtuality of the Absolute.

[14] See Miłosz Puczydłowski, "Filozofia Jürgena Habermansa wobec zwrotu postsekularnego," *Kwartalnik Filozoficzny*, vol. XLIV, issue 1 (2016): 162.

in the midst of chaos" accompanying humanity for centuries is undoubtedly becoming more and more common today – also in response to an increasingly complex and incoherent reality. But those returns to religious stories, which are to reveal the meaning of human existence and remove all uncertainties from it, also reiterate the vision of human being as the absolute ruler of creation. It finds expression not only in neoconservative historiosophical ideas, but also in specific economic and political practices that support unlimited human supremacy over the natural world. However, for the humanities dealing with the problem of climate crisis, this does not have to result in remaining helpless in the face of anthropocentric aspirations growing in power along with the "religious awakening" or succumbing to the pressure of uncritical or cynical reference to religious concepts and dogmas. An alternative may be an attempt to adapt knowledge to the challenges of the present day – creating such research approaches which would make it possible to look for levels of understanding for the hitherto diverging tendencies: the need for spiritual experiences and the necessity to respond to pressing ecological problems. It would constitute a space of resistance against fundamentalist structures determining public life, and it would free the understanding of what is religious from the patterns of dogmatic orthodoxy. Such projects include, in particular, postsecular thinking which allows to include spiritual exploration or intuitive knowledge within the bounds of mainstream rationality, which is always self-critical.

As Rosi Braidotti observes in her renowned essay *In Spite of the Times: A Postsecular Turn in Feminism*,[15] the spiritual may transfer and enhance the strength of emancipation discourses – gender, postcolonial, and ecological ones.[16] The new alliance of secularity and religiousness – not treated any more as contradictory spheres but as coexisting human life dimensions[17] – is particularly conducive to abandoning thinking in terms of resignation and passivity categories.[18] Therefore, despite the negativity of the times we live in, deconstructing a secular heritage involves looking for ways to restore the lost potential for action to discriminated minorities – supporting them through models of thinking that come from the spiritual orders. According to Ewa Domańska, postsecularism does not need to draw solely from the European heritage, but it can also open up to the non-Western beliefs and practices of transcending immanence. This also evokes the need for the humanities to focus on non-

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[15] Braidotti, "Wbrew czasom," 284–314.

[16] Cf. John A. McClure, *Półwiary. Literatura postsekularna w czasach Pynchona i Morrison*, trans. Tomasz Umerle (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2016).

[17] Cf. Michael Kaufmann, "Locating the Postsecular," *Religion and Literature*, vol. 41, no. 3 (Autumn 2009).

[18] Rosi Braidotti, "Siła afirmacji. Odpowiedź Lisie Baraitser, Patrickowi Hanafinowi i Clare Hemmings," trans. Magdalena Dąbrowska, in: *Zwierzęta, gender i kultura. Perspektywa ekologiczna, etyczna i krytyczna*, ed. Anna Barcz and Magdalena Dąbrowska (Lublin: E-naukowiec, 2014), 74.

Anna Filipowicz

Judeo-Christian concepts of the world, especially regarding the diverse from the monotheist religions' understanding of the subject, unity, sacrum, time, space, relations with non-humans.[19] The researcher pays heed to the potential to create a more holistic, integrating, democratic cognizance of the natural environment, which serves to solve the ecological problems as well as to change the mind-set regarding the relations of humans with their natural surroundings. Perceived in such manner, postsecularism encourages to overcome the Europocentric perspectives distorting our thinking, which allows us to recognize the potential of non-Western indigenous lore,[20] bolstered by a direct contact with the natural world and observation of its operational principles. As emphasized by Alina Mitek-Dziemba, the dialogue of such "majority" and "minority" approaches with spirituality thus acquires a transcultural and comparative dimension, which may no longer fit in the dichotomic divisions into rational/affective, enlightened/naive, future-oriented/referring to the sentimental turn towards the past.[21] Therefore, postsecularism provides the humanities with ready tools for change in awareness while supporting other pro-ecological philosophies (new materialism) in their struggle for a non-anthropocentric future of the world. This is for instance visible in new animism – the postsecular interpretation of ancient cognition patterns about the inhabited environment, which are still contained in indigenous and traditional practices of perceiving reality.

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Today, animism examined from the non-ethnocentric perspectives has little to do with its canonical definition, with a modernist view of the "spiritual life" of prehistoric human societies. Therefore, it evokes no connotations with the system of "primitive" beliefs, which would reflect an early stage of religious development (Edward Burnett Taylor's concept), or even with the model of perceiving reality, which may be reduced solely to the level of psychological phenomena (Sigmund Freud's concept).[22] The contemporarily analysed animism

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[19] Ewa Domańska, "Humanistyka ekologiczna," *Teksty Drugie*, nos. 1–2 (2013): 23.

[20] This concerns in particular the critical indigenous studies within the old Western colonies conducted in close cooperation with native scientists or by native scientists. See Chris Andersen, "Critical Indigenous Studies. From Difference to Density," *Cultural Studies Review* 5, no. 2 (2009).

[21] Alina Mitek-Dziemba, "Krytyczne otwarcie świeckości. Postsekularyzm jako formuła komparatystyczna," in *Drzewo poznania*, 266–283; Alina Mitek-Dziemba, "Postsekularyzm jako sposób reanimacji lektury postkolonialnej? O granicach i paradoksach secular criticism," *ER(R)GO* 37, no. 2 (2018): 119–132.

[22] Paweł Chyc addresses extensively the animism related scientific paradigm changing over years. See Paweł Chyc, "Wyobraźnia fantazmatyczna a animizm w Amazonii. O ograniczeniach w stosowaniu pojęcia fantazmat w badaniach antropologicznych," *Sensus Historiae*, vol. 21, no. 4 (2015): 53–72.

(though, due to cultural differences, one should rather talk about animisms[23]) constitutes instead a form of ontology and epistemology – it is a relational manner of inhabiting the world and drawing practical knowledge from the continuous and direct interactions with the environment.[24] This concept assumes that the human exists in a system of complex environmental dependencies, bases his or her identity on relationships with human and non-human beings, and considers all the resulting experiences to be a key method of learning about reality. According to religious studies scholars and anthropologists – Graham Harvey, Tim Ingold, Rane Willerslev[25] – not only does one find the psycho-physical dualism to be alien but also the arbitrariness of distinctions among

[23] Researchers analyzing the new animism issue indicate a similarity of the fundamental components of the "environmental knowledges" typical for the cultures of the indigenous peoples of North America, South America, Australia, New Zealand, subarctic and arctic Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. However, at the same time, they implicate the specificity of animisms characteristic of those communities and which may vary in sets of entities engaging in relations with humans. See Graham Harvey, *Animism: Respecting the Living World* (London: Hurst & Co, 2005), xi.

[24] The concept involves reformulating interpretation of animism under the influence of the latest ethnographic research conducted in an inclusive mode and in accordance with the postcolonial studies paradigm (including the indigenous peoples' knowledge in the framework of studies of their culture). The origins of such approach date back to the 1960s, in the work of an anthropologist A. Irving Hallowell (*Ojibwa Ontology, Behavior, and World View* [1975]); however, it owes its definition to the modern anthropologists and scholars of religion, such as Graham Harvey, who in his *Animism. Respecting the Living World* [2005] understands animism as follows: "Animists are people who recognize that the world is full of persons, only some of whom are human, and that life is always lived in relationship with others. Animism is lived out in various ways that are all about learning to act respectfully (carefully and constructively) towards and among other persons. Persons are beings, rather than object, who are animated and social towards others (even if they are not always sociable). Animism may involve learning how to recognize who is a person and what is not – because it is not always obvious and not all animists agree that everything that exists is alive or personal. However, animism is more accurately understood as being concerned with learning how to be a good person in respectful relationships with other persons" (Harvey, *Animism*, xi). It seems that a researcher finds it also important, aside from restoring the term animist to the indigenous peoples, to treat it as a challenge for the Western knowledge system, in particular within ethics: "Animism is not only an enchanting vision of a world that might be, it is a considered and cultivated interaction with a world in which there are better or worse ways in which to relate and act" (Harvey, *Animism*, xx).

[25] Eduardo Viveiros de Castro observes that in animistic cosmology all differences among individual existences are considered a derivative of differences within the human condition, which is not privileged in any manner: "This causes the human condition to cease being "special" and to become, instead, the default mode or generic condition [*condição genérica*] of any species. The domain of nature characterized as a province that is counter-unified by the eminent unity of the human domain, in essence, disappears. Animism is "anthropomorphic" to the exact extent that it is anti-anthropocentric. The human form is, literally, the form from which all species emerge: each of the species is a finite mode of a humanity as a universal substance." Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, "Pojęcie gatunku w historii i antropologii," trans. Monika Świda, *Teksty Drugie*, no. 5 (2014): 163.

individual existential domains of people, animals, vegetation as well as objects and weather phenomena. The position of humanistic cuts and hierarchy is occupied by a readiness to identity transfers, openness to a change in the manner of perception, feeling, understanding the world, situational perception of empowerment. Naturally, this bears specific ethical implications – relational perception of oneself entails awareness of one's natural vicinity as well as one's rules of living which respect also the non-human's best interests.

In animism, processually treated subjectivity is not solely reserved to humans but it is a right of all existences which create relations with the world. As Eduardo Viveiros de Castro observes, having a potential to impact the surroundings seems entirely enough to be considered an empowered person, conceived on the grounds of an anthropomorphic, although non-anthropocentric, personal model.[26] Every being may hold social attributes of human beings – similar familiarity systems, authority and behaviour standards, similar customs and rituals, habitats and households, finally similar goods and artefacts[27] – while sharing with them identical cultural dispositions. Every being, however, finds fulfilment in a manner inherent to their existential class and experiences the world from separate physical perspectives, always dependent on their natural physical disposition. A convergent ontological status of human as well as non-human persons is not in contrast with their different perception or diverse functioning in reality and, in consequence, with manifesting their inherent activities in it. This is slightly reminiscent of a life in *Umwelts*, known from Jakob von Uexküll's concept of surrounding-worlds,[28] subjective universes, where an individual being's reaction to their environment is conditional upon the bodily dispositions (sensual and affective)[29] in time and space. The surrounding-worlds are separate and contiguous at the same time; they are connected through various types of common grounds, which need to be redefined and reassessed upon every contact. Therefore, their meetings may be based on negative (hostility or competition) and on positive (drawing alliances and benefits exchange) relations[30] as derivatives of the environment images generated by both sides.

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[26] See Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, "Cosmological Deixis and Amerindian Perspectivism," *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol. 4, no. 3 (1998).

[27] Viveiros de Castro, "Cosmological Deixis and Amerindian Perspectivism," 469–488. See Kacper Świerk, "Perspektywizm, miłość i cykady. Uczucia, transformacje i etos w opowieści Jerinti z folkloru Indian Matsigenka," *Indigena*, vol. 3, no. 1 (2013): 36.

[28] See Tim Ingold, "Kultura i postrzeganie środowiska," trans. Grzegorz Pożarlik, in *Badanie kultury. Elementy teorii antropologicznej*, ed. Marian Kempy and Ewa Nowicka (Warszawa: PWN, 2003).

[29] See Aldona Pobojewska, "Nowa biologia Jakoba von Uexkülla," *Przegląd Filozoficzno-Literacki*, vol. 31, no. 2–3 (2001).

[30] Paweł Chyc, "Początek religii? Koncepcja animizmu," in *Człowiek, Społeczeństwo, Wiara. Studia interdyscyplinarne*, ed. Bartłomiej Stawiarski and Sylwia Rodak (Wrocław: Instytut Historyczny Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2008): 114–128.

In animism, this simultaneous synchronization and mutual existential dependence bears a potential for a change in perspective; a potential to acquire a point of view different from one's own. A person's contact with beings, artefacts or weather phenomena treated personally is particularly conducive to crossing "to the other side" and temporary metamorphosis into non-human persons, with or without deliberate intent to be transformed. This is usually expressed in a mental projection, which, however, does have its physical foundations – as in the instance of hunters who during their pursuit imagine themselves as their own prey on the grounds of physical behaviour exhibited by both the hunters and the hunted; their ability to feel, sense, experience, surrendering to emotions.[31] An intense contact with their prey allows them to internalize the perspective of a non-human person and, at the same time, to maintain their own, human optics, which practically means functioning in-between identities as a hunter and as a prey. Having at one's disposal two perspectives simultaneously tends to be depicted as a complicated process that expropriates one from his or her "place in the world" and is compared to the "occurrence" of Deleuzian nomadology.[32] The hunters perceive themselves in it as an ontological assemblage – they become a subject observing an animal-object as well as an object watched by the animal-subject, whose attributes they find in themselves. Then, they initiate a mimetic performance: they copy the creature being tracked (to convince it that they belong to its existential class) and lure it like a member of a human being community (so it allows them to be caught). Thus the hunters constitute themselves at the contact point of diverse perceptions, in a perspective alliance with the animal; they define themselves through their own externality and immanentize the difference separating them from the world. At the same time, such a process is always risky – due to an ontological correspondence of existence the human may unintentionally remain on the non-human persons' "side," allow themselves to be absorbed by the diverse (animalistic, vegetal, natural phenomenon related) and abandon the human community for good.

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[31] According to anthropologists, in the animistic cultures hunting is an equal game between humans and non-humans: "Hunting is not undertaken in an aggressive spirit at all, and is certainly not a 'blood sport' or motivated by sadomasochistic tendencies… [nor is it] a war upon animals, but rather almost a sacred occupation… Ritual power is seen manifested in the game animals that they hunt, and typically hunter-gatherers view animals as spiritual equals who, in an important sense, allow themselves to be killed if the hunter is in the right mental and spiritual condition." Brian Morris, *Animals and Ancestors: An Ethnography* (Oxford: Oxford and New York: Berg, 2000), 20.

[32] Annette Watson and Orville H. Huntington, "They're H e r e – I Can Feel Them: The Epistemic Spaces of Indigenous and Western Knowledges," *Social and Cultural Geography*, vol. 9, no. 3 (May 2008): 259; Rane Willerslev, *Soul Hunters. Hunting, Animism and Personhood among the Siberian Yukaghirs* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 106.

To secure themselves a continued existence, people continually engage in their environment, which does bear an impact on their mind-set and range of skills; on what they create, shape or what they use.[33] Such dwelling-in-the-world also involves the need for permanent attention, understood as an ability to differentiate, locate and extract sense from the sounds, scents, tastes, colours or textures encountered in nature. They affect the entire human existence modus based on a direct experiencing of reality, becoming sensitive to the changing ecosystem properties, responding to the processes occurring within it. This also refers to all other existences of the status of a person, which resonate – in a manner similar to people – together with the natural environment that transforms around them. Such engagement with one's environment differs significantly from the well-established post-enlightenment approach to nature, "external" in relation to the human, which is seen as a product of the human mind, usually based on a priori assumptions and with no reference to the physical reality.[34] Meanwhile, an animistic dwelling-in-the-world is accompanied by a conviction that the natural environment constitutes a part of ourselves, just as we are an inseparable part of this reality.[35] In the words of Tim Ingold, "human life is interwoven in the landscape and it is a lasting process without an end."[36]

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Thus understood animism does not remain an exclusive heritage of the indigenous peoples of both Americas, Australia, New Zealand, Sub-Saharan Africa as well as the arctic and subarctic Asia. According to archaeologists, traces of similar beliefs were also present in some of the oldest European folk beliefs of pre-Christian origin, which, in Europe's hardly accessible and scarcely populated outskirts, were kept alive well into the 18th and 19th centuries

[33] Martin Heidegger, "The Thing," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Alfred Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 161.

[34] The idea here is the legacy of the 18th century naturocentrism (J.J. Rousseau), which with the back to nature postulates, actually sanctioned separation of a human and the world. Constituting a new identity project, it rendered nature only an artefact of nostalgia, which was a means to surrender to a nostalgia for an irretrievable lost relation with it. Nature itself was within the double reification order – its place was on the other pole of the human subject and was becoming an object of their sense-generating operations, thus it is contributed to the "birth of a sovereign, autotelic *subiectum*." Even a nature-focused human has always been a condition for their constitution and existence of any related knowledge. Cf. Bronisław Baczko, *Rousseau. Samotność i wspólnota* (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo słowo/obraz/terytoria, 2009), 34; Charles Taylor, *Źródła podmiotowości. Narodziny nowoczesnej tożsamości*, trans. Marcin Gruszczyński (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2001), 692.

[35] Ewa Klekot, "Linia biegnąca do przodu" (afterword), in Tim Ingold, *Splatać otwarty świat* (Kraków: Instytut Architektury, 2018), 152.

[36] Tim Ingold, "Culture on the Ground. The Word Perceived Through the Feet," *Journal of Material Culture*, vol. 9, no. 3 (November 2004): 333.

(or, in some places, even longer).[37] It was facilitated by the most anachronic, when compared to the Central-West, collectivization models, autarchical space utilization models, collective use of resources affecting the (character of the) relationship with the natural environment. They made it possible to keep in memory the ancient hunter-gatherer models of closeness to the environment, especially the conviction that there are numerous dependencies linking the human and the non-human worlds or that they were, as a result, subject to principles of life. That laid foundation for the "bottom-up" morality, which drew from the experience of coexistence with the biosphere and defined the conditions of its non-expansive use, which mainly came down to satisfying one's own needs. Since respect for a person seen in a plant or an animal, still alive in certain places, assumed avoiding materialistic use of natural resources as well as drawing from them to a rather limited, farm-oriented, extent – being aware of the fact that other, non-human creatures are also entitled to them. Even forests or meadows, which had their administrative owners, were often treated here as a type of common property which should be co-shared based on the principles devoid of arbitrarily imposed privileges.[38] This, admittedly, neither abolished the issue of competition nor solved the issue of violence entirely, but in the world "crowded with non-human persons"[39] the decisions related to any structural, hierarchical inequalities were not made indiscriminately. Thus understood participation remained distant from the foundations of Western modernity, which was being solidified at that time, whose horizons were defined by the Enlightenment's separation from nature and capitalistic forms of its exploitation.

This animistic mindset manifested itself to a degree in the culture of the Romany people living in Poland, especially in the traditions of those ethnolinguistic subgroups which had pursued a nomadic lifestyle for a long time (Polska Roma). Due to weak integration with the social environment – voluntary self-isolation and superficial conversion to institutional religion (Catholicism, the Orthodox faith) – they still identified with the ancient, tangible approach to the

[37] This is particularly true of the area of Finnish Karelia stretching from the White Sea coast to the Gulf of Finland. Cf. Matthew Hall, *Plants as Persons. A Philosophical Botany* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2011), 119–136; Antti Lahelma, "Sexy Beasts: Animistic Ontology, Sexuality and Hunter-Gatherer Rock Art in Northern Fennoscandia," *Time and Mind. The Journal of Archeology, Consciousness and Culture*, vol. 12, no. 3 (2019): 221–238; Anna-Leena Siikala, "Singing of Incantations in Nordic Tradition," *Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis*, no. 13 (1990): 197; Deborah J. Shepherd, "Bear, Elk, and Fish Symbolism in Finnish Contexts," in *The Symbolic Role of Animals in Archeology*, ed. Kathleen Ryan and Pam J. Crabtree (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), 28.

[38] Cf. Aleksandra Ubertowska, "Pisanie puszczy. Ekonomie dyskursu ekokrytycznego i postkolonialnego," *Teksty Drugie*, no. 6 (2017): 202–203.

[39] Harvey, *Animism*, xxi.

natural reality. Not only did it constitute a reminder of Hindu beliefs,[40] but most of all a legacy of the hunter-gatherer customs – the very same ones which were also part of the folk legacy of Europe. It resulted from the fact that the animistic approach was facilitated most by indirect contact of the Romany people with the natural environment – their functioning in the vicinity of forested lands, still treated as a site to set up camp, for horses to graze and for obtaining food, firewood or healing ingredients. Until the interwar period, therefore, the forest was a guarantor of the preservation of the traditional model of community existence, which was reflected in the rules passed from generation to generation, sanctioning the use of natural resources. These included a prohibition on burning campfires, felling trees for firewood, polluting rivers and streams, and excessive exploitation of resources in the area where the camp was set up.[41] It appears that this was probably related to a principle of self-restraint, originating from animism, which involved non-invasive use of the land, using it to satisfy one's own needs and refraining from the abuse of violence against other creatures living in that area.[42] This entailed a willingness to share access to meadows or forests with non-humans and a sense of gratitude for the food obtained from animals and plants, which usually determined day-to-day survival.

The remnants of this approach can be found, for example, in the work of the Romany poetess Papusza, where the intimacy of humans and their natural environment is most evident. The author of the volume *Lesie, ojcze mój* [Forest, My Father] depicts it at a crucial moment for her community – the moment of the requirement imposed on the Roma to radically change their way of life as a result of the state's forced settlement campaign (the 1950s). The songs by Papusza, in Jerzy Ficowski's translation thus become a testimony to the community's entry into the reality of the Great Stop, as well as to the customs and practices, reflecting the living bond with the natural world, which were disappearing before the poetess's eyes. A forced parting with the previous nomadic tradition therefore meets with the need to protect – record and commemorate – the Romany understanding of the relationship between people, animals, plants and the Earth. In particular, it indicates the mnemonic potential of this creation, which aims to pass on to younger generations the daily ways of perceiving reality, which were previously only encoded in oral tradition[43] and now also need

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[40] The origin of the Romany people from India, which for a long time was solely presumed, was finally confirmed by recent genetic testing. Cf. Isabel Mendizabal, "Reconstructing the Indian Origin and Dispersal of the European Roma: A Maternal Genetic Perspective," *PloS One* 10, no. 1 (2011), accessed July 29, 2020, https://antropologia-fizyczna.pl/statystyki-krajow-regionow-populacji/europa/cyganie-antropometria-i-genetyka.

[41] Magdalena Machowska, *Bronisława Wajs – Papusza. Między biografią a legendą* (Kraków: Zakład Wydawniczy "Nomos," 2011), 232–237.

[42] Cf. Willerslev, *Soul Hunters*, 35–42.

[43] Mirosława Szott, "Pieśni Papuszy w perspektywie geo- i etnopoetyki." *Konteksty Kultury* 13, no. 4 (2016): 472.

to be recorded in writing. This is probably the reason why the links between man and the realm of nature, present in the works of Papusza, are far removed from being an object of melancholic reflection, which – as in the sentimental tradition of the West – would be a manifestation of an individual leaning over his own vision of nature. Instead, what becomes important in them is recalling the reality of nomadic life taking place in a defined environment, which therefore remain unchanged and valid. Despite the unquestionable limitations of translation,[44] the recording of tradition in poetry has, in this case, the former power of oral lore, demonstrating the potential of real action – it can affect the physical world, evoke changes in it and create new states of affairs, favourable to the Romany people.

In the Romany world depicted by Papusza, the conviction of human being's close economic and ontological dependence on its natural surroundings appears

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[44] At this point it is worth mentioning the controversy related to the translation of song manuscripts by Jerzy Ficowski, discoverer of the talent of the pope and popularizer of her work. The "free" record of the poetess's works (lack of punctuation marks, some letters, syllables and words), the translator's writing habits and the political reality surrounding his work (pressure from the Polish communist authorities who wanted to include the Romany community in the utopia of the Stalinist social pedagogy) sometimes determined the far-reaching transformation of the original. The key accusation against Ficowski concerned in particular interference in the style of the works, which manifested itself in the omission of a "roughness" and "longevity" of the oral narrative, which did not conform to the standard pattern, and the removal of repetitions (they brought to mind the poetess's divination, which was frowned upon by the authorities) – see Machowska, *Bronisława Wajs*, 35, 224, 331. However, the transformations made by the translator did not cover the pictorial content of the works and their extra-versification qualities (Machowska, *Bronisława Wajs*, 224), whose specificity – crucial from the point of view of this argument – Ficowski tried to save most of all [cf. Jerzy Ficowski, "Papusza – rediviva," *Współczesność*, no. 7 (1971): 6].

These transformations, problematic from the post-colonial point of view, can be partly explained today by the then understanding of intercultural dialogue, which focused mainly on overcoming community differences, overlooking the abuses resulting from unification. Ficowski seemed to find it important to convey the Romany beliefs present in the poetry of Papusza in a manner that fit the standard model, and thus also the perception habits of the Polish audience. The very attitude of the translator to the changes he made explains a lot here; it demonstrates his intention to expand the group of "sympathisers of the Gypsy cause"; to convince people open to the hermetic Romany culture and life [cf. Jerzy Kandziora, *Poeta w labiryncie historii. Studia o pisarskich rolach Jerzego Ficowskiego* (Gdańsk: Fundacja Terytoria Książki, 2017), 351]. Such an undoubtedly ethical intention, although not devoid of naivety, is revealed by the following words: "It has never happened to me […] to add anything to Papusza. I omitted some things from the manuscript. If I treated Papusza and her works as a folklore peculiarity, then as a folklorist I would translate everything she has written. For me – she was a poetess" [Leszek Bończuk, *Papusza, czyli wolność tajemna* (Gorzów Wielkopolski: Wydawnictwo Rolland, 1996), 16, as cited in Szott, "Pieśni Papuszy w perspektywie," 471). In them, two poles of Ficowski's bohemian interests are demonstrated – "the pole of hard realism in the image of the Gypsy life and the pole of myth, in whose form the translator's popularizing and artistic activities return to him." Cf. Kandziora, *Poeta w labiryncie historii*, 351].

to be crucial. The natural environment provides people with the resources necessary for their survival or places to live, at the same time organizing a complete system of existential connections with non-human reality – plants, animals, elements, landscape components. On the one hand, the forest turns out to be a provider of food obtained from plants or animals (mushrooms, blueberries, raspberries, herbs, fish, hedgehogs), a reservoir of branches for firewood or an effective hiding place where one can hide from danger (the Nazis tracing Roma in the forests), if necessary. On the other hand, it constitutes an area that determines the relationship between the animate and inanimate entities that function there, interact with each other, affect each other, affect each other's behaviours, states or forms. Moreover, the Romany living-in-the-world requires constant referencing to the reality of the landscapes, changing due to human and non-human impact, permeating all spheres of people's social life and constructing their identity. In these poems, the forest becomes a field of personal experiences and feelings, while the creatures and physical elements (trees, rivers, glades, paths) it describes gain an individual dimension as a result of the states and emotions they evoke. Everything that inhabits and co-creates the forest space can contribute to a person's self-knowledge.

Human engagement in the surrounding environment understood in this way can be seen in the work "Las" [Forest]. Papusza discusses here the thread of the elements that co-create the human's identity and they become the point of reference for them in understanding the surrounding reality, having impact on their awareness, perception, valuating of all components of the natural world. Water, fire or wind turn out to be powerful instrumental forces that support the living changes that occur in the forest and that condition to a large degree their existence or their course. Thanks to multifarious actions of the elements, life that rolls on earth, in the air, in water can grow, form, circulate and penetrate other components of the environment. Thus, the actions influence the entire forest's existence, including also the human being functioning in this landscape who through them takes information on their surrounding and undertakes continual dialogue with them. It is of considerable meaning for both human perception and emotions as well as for the creative potential that are always formed in the relationship with vital forces of the elements and through access to the fauna and flora worlds known through them ("The forest loved me, / gave me the Romany word. / The wind taught me to sing, / the river helped me to cry / […] My dearest forests / rise the smoke to the sky, / the bonfires ask God / for the fire not to touch the forests" [81][45]). This is where the respect shown to water, fire, and wind comes from. It is not limited only to gratitude for the possibility to satisfy thirst, to warm oneself, to be able to move around

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[45] All of the passages of Papusza's poetry quoted in this text have been rendered into English by the translator of this article and come from the volume Papusza, *Lesie, ojcze mój*, trans. Jerzy Ficowski (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Nisza, 2015).

more easily, but it seems to express animistic trust in their forces favourable for the human. Moreover, this song by Papusza can be read as an equivalent of the gift that a human being gives to the natural world awaiting to an analogous counter-reaction – guaranteeing to the humans the conditions favourable for life. The poetess refers here directly to the crucial in the prospective thinking principle of reciprocity that consists in paying back with the same and is now also applicable to humans and the elements in the process of their dialogue.

The belief in the extraordinary instrumental powers of the elements is also reflected in the work "Woda, która wędruje" [Water That Wanders] which talks about the knowledge of the Romanies that was being forgotten as they settled and regarded the potential of the forest stream. Its ability to transform the surroundings no longer understood by people – to shape the landscape, to condition life renewal, to guarantee the beings the occasion to move around – still remains obvious for the animals living next to the Romanies' communities ("Only the horse that grazes in a field / next to a barn / listens to the grass and understands its sounds" [27]). It is the animals to whom water reveals its personal status, thus showing the features of the Ingold's mediator. This personal status serves the purpose of experiencing and getting to know the world and thus functioning in it.[46] Similar features of the element make Papusza hope to access its instrumental forces, making it also the poetess's trusted "repository" and the existential "heir" of her community. Water, which offers the living environment to various beings and guarantees movement, fluctuation, the possibility to act, can still be favourable to the already settled Romanies' group and continue as a sort of substitute former migratory humans' dispositions. Thanks to imperceptible although still indelible relations with the human being, the element now takes over the nomadic way of Romani existence, which in the continuously flowing stream can already last without obstacles ("It's been long time / since the Romanies were wandering. And I can see them: / they are as swift as / strong, transparent water that flows. / And one can guess / that it wills to speak" [27]). The life of water depicted by Papusza and showing by mediation the Romany living-in-the-world, also corresponds with the animistic ontology according to which reality is in the continuous process of metamorphosis. It is the result of constant passing to "foreign part of" being and obtaining dispositions other than one's own – another point of view, different material localization, external to one's own subjectivity.

This processualism and dynamicity of the forest environment as well as of all beings dwelling in it is depicted to the fullest by the mushroom motif in the work "Na śladach ognisk grzyby wyrosły" [Fungi Grew on the Remnants of the Bonfires]. Fungi are associated in the Western culture as the symbols of death or decomposition and in Papusza's poems, they mainly show their properties

[46] Tim Ingold, "Earth, Sky, Weather," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol. 13 (2007): 25–26.

that can be stated empirically and are of necrovital nature – despite growing in dead matter they are the beachhead of new life and the embryo of further transformations.[47] The colonies of fungi that occur abundantly in the place of former Romani camps thus connote the possibility of ever regenerating existence here subject not to linear development, but to the principles of metamorphosis and decomposition.[48] It is in part also human existence, which, however, already occurs in a form other than the regular one – the human being incorporated in the complex of various forest beings always functions in it through fauna or flora. The growing fungi keep in them a part of the community already absent in the forest, which thanks to the vitality of the mycological organisms seems to live "their life after life." It is also aided by the special place of the change, rebirth of fungi-Romanies "on the marks of the bonfires" – at the source of fire as the moving spirit strengthening the action of metamorphosis. So as far as the stream from the work "Woda, która wędruje" [Water That Wanders] continues as a substitute for the Romanies' wandering way of existence, fungi guarantee to the human group vast "post-mortal" living-in-the-world ("Among the black forests fungi / on the marks of the bonfires grew, / with black heads as the Romany children. / Black, poor Romanies' / black forests departed. / Black luck left them / and remained in fungi" [30]). In the forest environment it can still lead its existence related by marriage ("The sun remembers about the fungi, / it warms them by each trunk" [30]), entirely different from the existence of the Romanies forced to settle in their *homes*, whose children that do not know the life in a camp function away from the former community – similarly to the boletes, growing individually and without creating large clusters like *black fungi* ("today in their homes the Romany children / like small boletes grow, / forget about the forest" [30]).

Such functioning in a relationship of the participating-in-the-world plants, animals, elements, parts of landscape is expressed in the belief of the relationship of humans and non-humans. The motif of non-human brothers and sisters in Papusza's poetry ("Everything that lives in the forest / are my sisters and brothers [81]; There comes a poor bird at my window / it is cold – asks for bread / Oh, he is my forestal brother!" [44]) seems to be the evidence not only of personal condition of forestal beings, but mainly of continuous dialogue of their ontologically identical environments – around worlds. They establish themselves with regard to each other in heteronymous interactions, simultaneously remaining in the identical dependency to earth and forest, the powerful natures that influence the natural reality to the highest degree. Hence they

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[47] For post-humanistic interpretation of the existence of fungi, see Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World. On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2015).

[48] See Ewa Domańska, *Nekros: Wprowadzenie do ontologii martwego ciała* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2017), 73.

can both favour the dwellers or pose a threat to them and thus one should continually count with them to guarantee safe and abundant survival. Due to their extraordinary power earth and forest also take the leading position in the splice of human and non-human collectivity relations. In this they resemble "great" actors (actants), known from Bruno Latour's actor-network theory, who condition making and building relations, creation of coalitions, stabilizing relationships between "minor" actors[49] – particular classes of creatures, phenomena artefacts. Probably this is why they are thought of in this poetry as of caring though severe parents guaranteeing balance in the division of goods between beings and unfavourable to unequal distribution of resources (lack of showing gratitude for the obtained gains, not paying back debt incurred from other parties to the relation, excessive exploitation of common space). Such approach is reflected in the works "Lesie, ojcze mój" [Forest, My Father] or "Ziemio moja, jestem córką twoją" [My Land, I Am Your Daughter] that contain apart from expressing longing for the past times also the motif of animalistically understood parents. Less powerful beings show them here their respect ("My forestal land, / I am your daughter. / The forests sing, the land sings beautifully. / The river and I make the singing / into one Romany song [61]), simultaneously indicating their dependence on them (Forest, my father, / […] you raised me / you abandoned me, / Your leaves shiver / and so do I, / you sing and I sing, / you laugh and I laugh" [85]).

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Diminishing along with the Great Stop, the traditional Romany knowledge about the natural world should be discussed today in the context of ethnic practices connected with it that regard living in a human–non-human environment. It turns out to be a reservoir of particular actions and strategies based on the belief that nature cannot be controlled and its development cannot be fully foreseen.[50] The understanding of natural dependencies acquired during interactions with the surroundings brings an alternative to the Western way of thinking concerning the use of natural goods – balanced, limited to one's own needs, also considering the best interest of non-human universes. It focuses our attention on the need to protect the environment we dwell in since it is understood as a social space that is shared with other beings, which is not read in the context external to the human, but through the prism of a part of one's own identity. One can even risk an assumption that the Romany knowledge of natural reality – similarly to much of non-Western indigenous knowledge – suggests to modern culture, science or politics the proposals of "categories, models,

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[49] Krzysztof Abriszewski, "Teoria Aktora-Sieci Bruno Latoura," *Teksty Drugie*, nos. 1–2 (2013): 120–121.

[50] Domańska, "Humanistyka ekologiczna," 26.

metaphors,"[51] especially helpful in solving the escalated ecological problems. They would be priceless for more responsible treatment of collectivity consisting of both human and non-human actors – particularly in matters regarding the rights of animals and plants, protection of their habitats or maintenance of biodiversity.

It also seems significant due to the relationship to nature strengthened in the native culture, which is frequently manifested in the full of ressentiment thinking about ecology. The form of "malaise of anthropocene" found in the Polish context constitutes the symptom of loss of relationship with the natural environment and of practices of bringing nature to one's own equivalent – the subject of phantasmal nostalgy (less frequently) or absolutely exploited resource. This approach to plants or animals seems to be connected with a similar approach to human "strangers" (the Jews, the Romanies, the Ruthenians, the peasants), treated through the prism of assumed inferiority – as symbolically and economically managed non-humans (the proof of which was obligatory locating of Romany community). According to philosophers and sociologists of culture,[52] it turns out to be the gleanings of the homogenous model of national identity assumed in the past and accompanied by isolation from thinking about one's own ethnic, religious or class diversity and from non-institutional forms of spiritual matters. As it is worth remembering that the discourse of the Polish nature that has been formed for the last two centuries assumed not only marginalizing minorities and damaging their appurtenant cultures, but also disunion with ways of understanding the world entered into the local traditions, frequently based on relations with nature. The consequence thereof was a radical change of approach to the natural environment, which became the space of (self)colonizing appropriation – the supplier of unlimited amounts of raw materials, the area of instrumental manipulations, the ground of far-going industrial modifications. One can also see it today in the intent of maximum technological subordination of natural world, in its extent presenting even the features of abreaction – the result of erasing from memory the processes beyond the ethnocentric/anthropocentric supremacy. What is wiped returns in fierce reluctance to ecological initiative, disregard for non-human interests of forest

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[51] Bińczyk, *Epoka człowieka*, 190.

[52] I refer here to research carried out by, among others, Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, "Ganz Andere? Żyd jako czarownica i czarownica jako Żyd w polskich i obcych źródłach etnograficznych, czyli jak czytać protokoły przesłuchań," *Res Publica Nova*, no. 8 (2001); Barbara Engelking, *Jest taki piękny, słoneczny dzień… Losy Żydów szukających ratunku na wsi polskiej 1942–1945* (Warszawa: Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, 2011); Jan Sowa, *Fantomowe ciało króla. Peryferyjne zmagania z nowoczesną formą* (Kraków: Universitas, 2011); Andrzej Leder, *Prześniona rewolucja. Ćwiczenia z logiki historycznej* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2014); Anna Engelking, "'Poleszuk' nieoswojony. Wokół funkcji chłopskości w konstruowaniu polskości," *Teksty Drugie*, no. 6 (2017): 68–94.

or water habitats' dwellers, lack of reaction to harm and injustice that can be found there.

The traditional Romany knowledge about the natural world captured in Papusza's poetry allows today to create a contraposition to anthropocentric paradigm so well-established in the Polish culture. It is a suggestion of non-oppressive discourse that does not retain generic prejudice in itself, but functions as a performative favouring overcoming symbolic and as a consequence also physical forms of abuse towards nature. Similarly, as in the case of the traditional ecological knowledge, which draws on the experience of indigenous environmental knowledge,[53] the Romany way of living-in-the-world opens the humanities to the sphere of practical actions. It seems particularly necessary for the domestic post-dependency studies, which would equip this way of living-in-the-world with the project of revised language/thinking, giving hope for emancipation of minorities excluded from the official discourse – both the ethnic minorities (the Romanies) and the generic minorities (plants, animals, natural elements of landscape, atmospheric phenomena). They would also be connected with a lesson of spirituality devoid of triumphalism and fundamentalism or religious tribalism but, instead, reaching willingly for the attitude of engagement, empathy, care or mindfulness close to St. Paul's universalism or Deleuze's "becoming-smaller." So understood a "twist" of the tongue/thinking/believing can today become a specific "emergency mission" and an opportunity to constitute more ethical collectivity of beyond ethnical and beyond generic nature. Collectivity based on co-existence – thanks to literature – with our human and through them also non-human neighbours, which will allow to overcome the reactions of resignation and apathy accompanying the climatic crisis.

Translated by Dominika Pieczka

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[53] See Raymond Pierotti and Daniel Wildcat, "Traditional Ecological Knowledge," *Ecological Applications*, vol. 10, no. 5 (October 2000); Domańska, "Humanistyka ekologiczna."

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