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THE SPACE OF TRANSCENDENCE: SIMONE WEIL AND HER ART OF MYSTICAL PARADOXES

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Anytime, hearing a word “mystic” or “mysticism”, one does easily understand the concept in an intuitive way. But is it really that simple? What does “mysticism” really mean and who can be called a “mystic”? Mysticism can be described as a combination of intensified emotional life and growing individualism seeking for a personal relationship with God (“direct experience of the divine”¹). In simple words mysticism can be then explained as the feeling of divine love (a kind of love towards the Absolute) and a mystic is the one who experiences the spiritual union or direct communication with ultimate reality. Moreover, as the term “mysticism” is (via both etymology and tradition) linked with words like: “to conceal”, “secret” or “hidden”², mysticism appears there, where intellectual approach is not sufficient. The concept of mysticism is also often linked with piety, ascetism, gnosis or esoterism, but these five notions are not, in fact, synonyms. Only mysticism is based on a strong belief of direct con-

¹ *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Stanford 2011, [on-line:] <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/mysticism/> [01.02.2013].

² *Ibidem*.

tact with God and spiritual reality through subjective experience. Moreover, a mystic does not necessary have to be pious and neither is he (or she) obliged to show his (her) devotion by the abstinence from something. Mystical knowledge manifests itself on a completely different level and space: unlike esoterism, it is meant to be shared (it is not a kind of secret or “within” knowledge that is reserved to a specific group only) and the relation of divine love is not just vertical, but also spreads horizontally (which is to say, that for a true mystic love towards God is present also in “the beauty of the world and [...] neighbour”³).

Words and actions of a mystic are often surprising, unclear, or may even seem suspicious – just as when Meister Eckhart declared that God – “big nothing” – does not “exist”⁴. Of course, such words coming from a pious mystic cannot be seen as a pure declaration of atheism... – and yet this is the word-for-word translation. In order to explain such a potential confusion it is essential to understand that the position – the spiritual space – of a mystics is different than the majority of people and so is their knowledge. For someone, who had never experienced such a spiritual breakthrough, words of a mystic may seem full of inconsistencies, unclear or even disturbing, because mystical experience cannot be simply verbalized. But Simone Weil, who was a true mystic and whose usage of paradoxes was extraordinary, knew well that for a man united with God there is no gap between the Creator and its creation – and in the space of transcendence, a brand new state of consciousness is awoken. Ludwig Wittgenstein claimed that “the inexpressible [...] is the mystical”⁵ and thus, language in which mystics often express themselves may be confusing and with a meaning hidden somewhere inside. Metaphors and ellipses, paradoxes and oxymorons...

³ J. Hellman, *Simone Weil: an introduction to her thought*, Ontario 1982, p. 90.

⁴ For more information please check: *The Stanford Encyclopedia...*, [on-line:] <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/meister-eckhart/> [01.02.2013].

⁵ L. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, transl. by C.K. Ogden, London 1922, [on-line:] <http://www.kfs.org/~jonathan/witt/tlph.html> (01.02.2013).

– so many rhetorical devices and linguistic figures, only to express that, which cannot really be expressed literally. This might be the reason why so many mystics express their faith and spiritual knowledge and experience using via negativa (the root of apophatic mysticism and theology).

The word “apophatic” means “denying” or “rejecting” – of course it is not about the rejection of God, and neither does it question the existence of the Divine. Apophatic philosophy can be rather described as rejection of the human qualities of God. It means that God cannot be described using human features and with words that belong to earthly space and every-day order. The infinite spiritual being cannot be approached with positive statements, cannot be characterized in any way similar to a human being. The Divine is unspoken and beyond space, time or any concept. Realizing this, many mystics – like Eckhart and Weil – would speak about the spiritual being with negative statements rather than with positive ones – without pointless efforts to define what cannot be defined. This peculiar language makes the words of a mystic ambiguous and open for many interpretations.

For a reasonable and logical man such an accumulation of paradoxes may seem confusing and impossible to understand. Reading the works of a mystic, many find themselves in a completely unfamiliar space, “in a terra incognita where they cannot find even a single landmark”⁶. However, for a mystic himself (or herself), it is all clear and plain, brightened by the God’s presence – in the field of spiritual metaphysics everything is possible. Mysticism implies spiritual relationship between a man and supernatural being and this relations are beyond the limits of time, space and material universe. And so is a mystic, coming across transcendency. The feeling of absurdity is ever-present in the life of man, which in itself is an impossibility⁷, but only through the clash of contradictions a pre-eminent reality is born. This might remind Albert Camus’s⁸ philoso-

⁶ H. LeRoy Finch, *Simone Weil and the Intellect of Grace*, New York 2001, p. 113.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 36.

⁸ For more information please check: Gadacz T., *Historia filozofii XX wieku. Nurty*, v. 2, Kraków

phy – where a human being is living in a dualistic world of absurd (torn between the opposites) and encountering incomprehensible, “limit situations”⁹, that make one questioning their own existence. Camus personally was very fond of Simone's works, however there is an important difference between them – while Albert Camus represents an atheistic point of view; when speaking about a mystic, the idea of the Divine is always present. And when Simone Weil states, that “contradiction is the lever of transcendence”¹⁰ – the space of transcendence is filled with God's presence.

A French philosopher, social activist and also... a mystic – this is how Czesław Miłosz describes Simone Weil, “one of the greatest characters, given to humanity by the 20th century”¹¹, but also: a person such incredible and unexpected, that respect towards her is mixed with various objections. Nowadays usually categorized as a “Christian mystic”, Simone Weil was actually quite an enigmatic and out-of-the-ordinary person. Born and brought up in a Jewish, however secular, family, she received almost none religious education; yet felt a strong connection with Christianity Church – but even though she considered herself a Christian, declined to be baptized. Her religious interests were never limited to christianity only, she respected and admired other religions and spiritual traditions (including the religion of ancient Greeks, Hinduism¹² or Buddhism). Despite the fact that she lived in the difficult times of 1920s and 1930s –

2009, p. 484-499 (Albert Camus) or *The Stanford Encyclopedia...*, [on-line:] <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/camus/> [01.02.2013].

⁹ This notion (originally in German: *Grenzsituation*) was actually developed by K. Jaspers, but the concept itself plays a huge role also in A. Camus's philosophy of existence. For more information please check: Gadacz T., op. cit., p. 420 – 435 (*Karl Jaspers*) or *The Stanford Encyclopedia...*, [on-line:] <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/jaspers/> [01.02.2013].

¹⁰ S. Weil, *First and Last Notebooks*, transl. by R. Rees, Oxford, 1970, p. 134. As cited in: H. LeRoy Finch, op. cit., New York 2001, p. 240.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 6.

¹² In the spring of 1940 Simone has read the *Bhagavad-Gita*, and become infatuated with “those marvelous words, words with such a Christian sound”. S. Weil, *Farewell Letter to Father J. M. Perrin*, [on-line:] <http://payingattentiontothesky.com/2010/07/02/the-spiritual-autobiography-of-simone-weil/> [01.02.2013]. Excerpted from: S. Weil, *Waiting for God*, transl. by E. Craufurd, New York 1951.

the decades filled with “threads or temptations, of Communism and fascism”¹³, her faith was unquestionable and outstanding. She strongly believed, that God is present anywhere and wherever the reflection of beauty and good¹⁴ appears or manifests itself – and it goes much further than Christianity itself. Another interesting fact is that Weil became interested in Christianity not earlier than in her twenties and only just then experienced a religious ecstasy¹⁵, that, in her own words, made her “go down on [her] knees”¹⁶. Before that time her main field of interest was social and political activity and she described herself (and was described by others too) as “a trade unionist”, “a pacifist” or even “a socialist” or “a revolutionary troublemaker”¹⁷. Such background makes her “spiritual awakening” even more unexpected and significant.

Simone Weil's life was, as John Hellman states, “so coincided with her own philosophy”¹⁸, that it is almost impossible to separate them, her actions and thoughts are “always closely interconnected”¹⁹. And so, similar to Simone's inconsistent biography, her religious thoughts are also full of paradoxes, ever-open questions, ellipses, inner conflicts – so intense, that “every each and separately attracts attention”²⁰ and inspires one to deepen thoughts and reflections. As one touches the impossibility and contradiction, they allow to “emerge from the dream state”²¹ and through the gate of supernatural, a whole new space appears: a space of transcendence. In her writings and works Simone Weil focuses

¹³ J. Hellman, op. cit., p. 7.

¹⁴ S. Weil, *Portrait of Self-Exiled Jew*, Chapel Hill 1991, p. 148-150.

¹⁵ It happened in 1937, in Basilica of Santa Maria degli Angeli in Assisi.

For more information please check: M. von der Ruhr, *Simone Weil: an apprenticeship in attention*, London 2006, p. 13.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 10.

¹⁸ J. Hellman, op. cit., p. 2.

¹⁹ M. von der Ruhr, op. cit., p. 2.

²⁰ Cz. Miłosz, *Przedmowa*, in: S. Weil, *Wýbór pism*, transl. by Cz. Miłosz, Kraków 1991, p. 9. [own translation]

²¹ S. Weil, *Notebooks*, transl. by A. Wills, London, 1956, p. 410. As cited in: H. LeRoy Finch, op. cit., New York 2001, p. 36.

on spiritual matters, thus why rational logic is often irrelevant – as faith and facts do not belong to the same order. Although religion and science should not be at issue, when speaking religiously, contradiction brings one much closer to God than logic ever will. The meeting with God is, *sensu stricto*, a “mystical experience”²² – man can, through reason, bring oneself to the idea of the God (which is an intellectual concept), but not to the real God, who is beyond rationality. Understanding the idea is not the same as going through it fully. For this, there must exist a more rigorous “supernatural reason [...] the knowledge, gnosis of which Christ was the key”²³.

Simone Weil herself did witness a mystical presence of Jesus Christ (as she describes in her Farewell Letter to Father J. M. Perrin: “Christ himself came down and took possession of me”²⁴) and she understood that logic and reason would not ever be enough to describe such an intense and personal experience. She knew that “the word of God is the secret word”²⁵ and the understanding of mystical experience “only exists in souls which burn with the supernatural love of God”²⁶ – thus why she had never made her spiritual experiences a subject of an every-day discussions²⁷. Moreover, mystical faith and the feeling of God's presence is “too ineffable and personal to be expressed in words”²⁸ and cannot be examined by rational logic. Just as the mystery of faith should remain a mystery, one should avoid defining the existence (or features) of God, as both statements such as “there is God” or “there is no God” sound pointless, absurd and make absolutely no sense from the faith point of view:

²² *Powszechna encyklopedia filozofii*, ed. by A. Młynarczyk (Polskie Towarzystwo Tomasza z Akwinu SITA), v. 9, Lublin 2008, s. 723 – 724 (*Simone Weil*).

²³ S. Weil, *First and Last Notebooks*, transl. by R. Rees, Oxford, 1970, p. 109 – 110.

As cited in: H. LeRoy Finch, *op. cit.*, New York 2001.

²⁴ S. Weil, *Farewell Letter...*

²⁵ *Ibidem*.

²⁶ S. Weil, *First and Last...*, p. 109 – 110.

As cited in: H. LeRoy Finch, *op. cit.*, New York 2001.

²⁷ M. von der Ruhr, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

²⁸ *Ibidem*.

“their secret lies elsewhere”²⁹. The same applies to analyzing whether Jesus was or was not the Incarnation of God, as for Simone Weil it was never a matter of discussion and she was “in fact [...] incapable of thinking of him without thinking of him as God”³⁰. In her philosophy God is both personal and impersonal – at the very same time. What is more, one encounters God every time they encounter beauty, as it was the God Creator, the basis, who made existence possible. The world of Simone Weil is, in simple words, full of God. Because of this, it is very important for a person to be able to identify oneself with the universe: to adjust the rhythm of a human body to the rhythm of the world, and through this – to feel the constant flow of spiritual energy³¹.

Nowadays Simone Weil is highly respected in both religious and atheistic milieu, “the remarkable power of her religious writings”³² and her impact on the history of the mysticism so important, that Czesław Miłosz puts her name next to Blake and Swedenborg³³. However, there were times, when her unorthodox, provocative or controversial views and confusion creating opinions were not easily accepted – and sometimes even considered “heresy”³⁴. How can it be: a Christian mystic disapproved by her own Church? Actually, it is not a rare phenomenon – holiness always has its price and quite often Church would frown upon mystics and their activities, who saw their spiritual way somewhere outside the mainstream. Simone Weil, a “perfect single individual”³⁵, who has “never once had, even for a moment, the feeling that God wants [her] to be in

²⁹ S. Weil, *First and Last...*, p. 109 – 110. As cited in: H. LeRoy Finch, op. cit., New York 2001.

³⁰ S. Weil, *Farewell Letter...*

³¹ S. Weil, S. Weil, *Świadomość nadprzyrodzona. Wybór myśli*, transl. by A. Olędzka-Frybesowa, Warszawa 1986, p. 75.

³² J. Hellman, op. cit., p. 6.

³³ Cz. Miłosz, *Ziemia Ulro*, Kraków 1994, p. 262-270.

³⁴ Idem, *Przedmowa*, in: S. Weil, *Wybór...*, p. 8. [own translation]

³⁵ This is how Joanna Tokarska-Bakir refers to Simone Weil, emphasizing her individualism both in life and religious views. J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Matka Boska Fabryczna*, [in:] “Gazeta Wyborcza”, 22-23 August 1998. [own translation]

the Church”³⁶ was not an exception. Her works show that, while she had viewed Christianity Church as needed and important, she also believed that it had lost the universality which Jesus would want. The teaching of Jesus the Christ should rather be “added on to other religions”³⁷ than to replace or erase them. Moreover, as she states in her Farewell letter to Father J. M. Perrin, the words of mystics – “genuine friends of God”³⁸ – often differ from public Church discourse, just as intimate conversation between two people differs from collective language of many. The words of a mystic, the individual language of grace, are only understood and reserved to those, who had experienced grace upon them and made a direct connection with the Truth – those, who also exist in the space of transcendence.

Simone Weil's portrait of God is also quite an unorthodox – and Henry LeRoy Finch defines it as her “most surprising and most characteristic idea”³⁹, the great paradox. It is a God who abandoned God, who has retreated, who got rid of self⁴⁰. But why? God is the most perfect being, utter eternal fullness, leaving no space for anything else – for that, the act of creation is actually an abdication of God. This is also the true state of omnipotence – the moment when God voluntarily gives away his power and withdraws: the space opens up, so that the world of necessity could exist. Created through God's grace of withdrawal, as a place the universe must be empty of God, and this is “the most perfect expression of God's love”⁴¹, His willing absence from the material world. God of Simone Weil is merciful and because of this He is hidden and silent. His silence contrasts with the turmoil of Earth's voices – and only those, who devote their hearts to silence, can experience harmony. On the other hand,

³⁶ S. Weil, *Farewell Letter...*

³⁷ H. LeRoy Finch, op. cit., p. 105.

³⁸ S. Weil, *Farewell Letter...*

³⁹ H. LeRoy Finch, op. cit., p. 14.

⁴⁰ S. Weil, *Wybór ...*, p. 107.

⁴¹ H. LeRoy Finch, op. cit., p. 14.

people also have to limit themselves, to diminish “self” in order to make space for God⁴². Devotion to God – the ultimate loyalty – is manifested through self-sacrifice and letting the supernatural in.

Maria Janion describes Simone's Weil faith as “tragic Christianity”⁴³: always on the alert, always conscious, living “ever awake”⁴⁴ with no hope – somehow reminding Søren Kierkegaard's religiosity of dismal⁴⁵. Even though she believed that one can come to Christ “not through degradation, defilement, and distress, but in uninterrupted joy, purity, and sweetness”⁴⁶, pain, toil and constant inner struggle were present both in Simone's life and religious views. During the times Simone had been working in the factory or vineyards⁴⁷ – and despite many of her health problems and frequent illnesses she had chosen to work physically most of her life (often overworking herself) to gain first-hand experiences of working-class life – she often suffered splitting headaches, so intense that “each sound hurt [...] like a blow”⁴⁸. And yet, in this very moment of great affliction, through acceptance and concentration she was able to “rise above this wrenched flesh”⁴⁹ and discover the Divine love and joy hidden inside suffering. But the kind of faith she presents is neither meant to be easy nor should it be used to comfort the believer; religion that works only as a consolation is not authentic faith. Pain should not be viewed as a kind of sacrifice – this is just a veil that hides the truth about it. There is no need to ennoble what is wrong and bitter, there is no point in giving it a moral or spiritual meaning – on

⁴² J. Tokarska-Bakir, op. cit.

⁴³ M. Janion, *Życje życia traciemy*, Warszawa 2001, p. 33.

⁴⁴ Ibidem.

⁴⁵ For more information please check: *The Stanford Encyclopedia...*, [on-line:] <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kierkegaard/> [09.02.2013].

⁴⁶ S. Weil, *Farewell Letter to Father J. M. Perrin*, [on-line:] <http://payingattentiontothesky.com/2010/07/02/the-spiritual-autobiography-of-simone-weil/> [01.02.2013]. *Excerpted from: S. Weil, Waiting for God, transl. by E. Craufurd, New York 1951.*

⁴⁷ For more information please check: M. von der Ruhr, op. cit., p. 9-13.

⁴⁸ Ibidem, p. 24.

⁴⁹ Ibidem.

the contrary, suffering is accepted and granted as important just because it is⁵⁰. When one truly loves God– it's not only because and through good, but also through what is evil: when man loves God equally as the creator of good and evil⁵¹ and is grateful in the same way for both of them.

Misfortune and pain always raises a question “why?” (or even stronger: “Unde malum?”) and Simone Weil, who was never a naive optimist, was not afraid to ask them either. However, as the question is meant to remain unanswered and understanding, may never be granted; a key attitude in this kind of a situation is “acceptance”. At the point of pain and sorrow one should not pray for salvation, but equally accept both possibilities – bitter experience ending in a split second or lasting eternally. This brings one to a great paradox – and Simone Weil clearly shows it – giving up the idea of salvation or release from the pain is a salvation itself⁵². Living in a captivity of conditions human being can only become free when he overcomes limitations by accepting them willingly without wishing for anything different. When one accepts and desires the world as it is and nothing else, he is immediately free and his wishes are automatically granted. The ability to accept the necessity⁵³ just as it comes is, itself, a reward; and obedience (capacity to take orders from God) is the highest virtue⁵⁴. However, accepting the necessity and obedience are not, and never shall be, achieved under compulsion – Simone clearly states that it is just human nature (at it's own free will) accepts the necessity and acts just like the Divine would order (but the order itself is never stated directly).

Concentration and attention are crucial to approach the space of transcendence and spiritual reality. For Simone Weil “attention” is a mixture of

⁵⁰ S. Weil, *Świadomość...*, p. 174.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*, s. 67.

⁵² *Ibidem*, p. 112.

⁵³ Necessity is one of the key words/concepts for Simone Weil's philosophy. For more information please check: H. LeRoy Finch, *op. cit.*, p. 48-50 and S. Weil, *Wybór...*, p. 67 – 77.

⁵⁴ J. Hellman, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

patience, preparation and willingness to accept the Divine – yet without expecting immediate rewards. Just as “happiness is more easily found when it is not actively sought”⁵⁵, attention gives best results when they are taken for granted. For a supernatural appearance one has to get rid of his own expectations (the supernatural cannot be expected, as it cannot be even imagined). The value of waiting and preparing is the effort itself and only with such efforts one can create an empty space⁵⁶ in which the spiritual can enter. “Attention” is also the most important factor of a prayer, an authentic prayer is just all the attention oriented towards God. However, the act of attention should never be limited to sacred activities only, but applied to any kind of subject – and with a true attention “one transcend[s] the worldly dimension”⁵⁷. At this point Weil not only states the importance of active participation in anything that comes as necessity, she also admits that through intellectual, scientific or manual activities one can also get nearer to the supernatural. The concept of “attention” is also closely linked with Weil's social interests – it is not only about one's own life and activities, “attention” is also a special attitude towards one's neighbor, towards those, who suffer or are miserable. In words of Richard Bell, Simone Weil “forces [...] to listen to the cry of each suffering child”⁵⁸. This is more than warmth of heart, pity or sympathy. Ability to give one's attention to the unhappy ones is almost a miracle – and the lack of it is “at the heart of the most serious of the world's problems”⁵⁹. Presenting this kind of attitude towards other people shows clearly, that in her mysticism and philosophy Simone was not focused on God only, but she also stressed the extreme importance of one's love for one's neighbors.

⁵⁵ M. von der Ruhr, op. cit., p. 24.

⁵⁶ S. Weil, *Świadomość...*, p. 155.

⁵⁷ J. Hellman, op. cit., p. 87.

⁵⁸ R. Bell, *Simone Weil: the way of justice as compassion*, Lanham 1998, p. 15.

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 88.

Going through Simone Weil's philosophy, many connections with Fyodor Dostoevsky can be easily spotted. She often compares herself to Ivan Karamazov, the main character from Dostoevsky's novel "The brothers Karamazov"; and just as Ivan does not want any kind of harmony and forgiveness, where there is "unavenged suffering and unsatisfied indignation"⁶⁰, Simone Weil is not looking for compensation or retribution. The main difference is, however, that while Ivan "respectfully returns Him the ticket"⁶¹, Weil chooses to accept all the pain and countless horrors, for faith is to love the order of the world the way it is (and even through suffering), to commit to the moment without yearning for a different life. More importantly this love is not – as Weil clearly states – any kind of religious masochism or admiration of suffering⁶². Just the opposite – acceptance comes with transcendent delight that is expressed in a prayer. When a man of faith declares "Thy kingdom come/thy will be done"⁶³ this is a very significant proclamation: it means at the same moment – as Czesław Miłosz remarks – agreeing both with the end of the world or its continuous persistence⁶⁴. The decision is left in the hands of God.

However, despite the importance of God's grace, it would be misleading and rather incorrect to refer to Simone Weil's philosophy as quietism. God is almighty to redeem only those, who want and seek redemption, grace applies to those, who are prepared to accept it. This means, that man plays an active role in his own salvation and although God is the one, who opens the gate leading to supernatural, it is human who knocks at it⁶⁵. To seek redemption is for one to rely their existence on God (not faith in God, but God Almighty himself) – and this is the great paradox, the impossibility – to believe in what can-

⁶⁰ F. Dostoevsky, *The brothers Karamazov*, transl. by C. Garnett, New York 1922, p. 258.

⁶¹ *Ibidem*, p. 258.

⁶² S. Weil, *Świadomość...*, p. 111.

⁶³ From *Lord's Prayer*, [on-line:] <http://www.christusrex.org/www1/pater/JPN-english.html>[01.02.2013].

⁶⁴ Cz. Miłosz, *Wyznania tłumacza*, [in:] S. Weil, *Wybór...*, p. 21.

⁶⁵ S. Weil, *Świadomość...*, p. 181.

not be proved. This may resemble Søren Kierkegaard's concept of "leap of faith"⁶⁶ – as it is, what is needed, even if it may result in death. Kierkegaard describes religion as full of both trust and fear, awe and terror, as in the presence of God the great tragedy of existence, the insignificance of a human being is revealed and the contact with supernatural can be painful and scary. Certainly Simone Weil clearly understands this very paradox of human existence. She describes a human being just as Kierkegaard did – as inconsistent and inwardly torn from the very moment of creation; as insecure and full of conflicting feelings and desires; as, somehow, alike God and at the same moment extremely different from Him⁶⁷ – synthesis of necessity and freedom, inconstancy and infinity. Realizing this contradiction is essential to understand Simone Weil's view of humankind – both admirable and lamentable.

In her writings Simone often shows the littleness, weakness and spiritual abjection⁶⁸ of a human being. But at the same time she notices and values their most noble and pure heroism that manifests on many different levels (Weil admired mostly common people⁶⁹: the ones, whose heroism is caused by necessity). One of the hardest things one encounters in life is to know – to agree – that the world and other people differ from their beliefs and representation of them. This means, to realize and be always prepared that the things one confronts should be different from expectations and predictions. Moreover, this means to know that one's own reflection of self is also far from the truth. Things are more than one sees and the idea one has it is not everything. This knowledge is a very special act of acceptance and forgiveness – to agree that one's predictions will not be granted.

⁶⁶ For more information please check: *The Stanford Encyclopedia...*, [on-line:] <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kierkegaard/> [01.02.13].

⁶⁷ S. Weil, *Świadomość...*, p. 181.

⁶⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁹ H. LeRoy Finch, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

Simone Weil always shows a human being in a wider context and space – as an immanent part of the universe, harmoniously connected and united with everything⁷⁰. This is another great paradox she creates: becoming a part of the world means, for an individual human being, both the demission of “self” and the act of becoming a piece of a greater organism. At the very same time something is lost and something is gained – “self” is being dissolved in the rhythm of the universe and flows with it. When a single individual dies, the world still exists – but this is no consolation as long as these two are not united. But when one becomes a part of the universe, even if he dies, his death means nothing – because the world (and “self” dissolved in it) will still carry on. Human existence is temporal and finite, but as the part of the universe they also participate in the space of eternal wholeness⁷¹. Because of this special connection between any single human being and the world, one should limit their attachments and affection towards single, temporal objects (not only material ones, but also feelings or phenomena) and expand their love upon the universe as a whole. It is not about creating numerous relations with individual things, but about expanding one connection upon the entirely – everything is connected with everything and through every possible feeling (either pleasant or not) this connection can be sensed.

Works of Simone Weil are remarkable on many different levels – this powerful and uncompromising person made a huge impact in the field of religion, where she had “brought fresh and astute solutions”⁷² to many spiritual problems. But her achievements are also considered important in many other domains, such as philosophy, literature, social studies and even politics⁷³. Views and thoughts she presented – brilliant and original – were often confusing and

⁷⁰ S. Weil, *Świadomość...*, p. 74.

⁷¹ *Ibidem*.

⁷² J. Hellman, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

⁷³ *Ibidem*, 1.

unorthodox, sometimes considered heretical and alarming, but never were insignificant or unnoticed. This true mystic, as Richard Bell stresses, should be given all the possible attention, as she can influence or “even radically change”⁷⁴ the way one thinks about “issues of justice, human, community, friendship”⁷⁵ and many more. This French philosopher's works are important for many, even though she was a great individualist and most of her thoughts were inspired by her own, personal experience. Moreover, despite the fact she was, indeed, a mystic; she often concentrated on common every-day things and was able to approach them with a brand new uncommon attitude and insight. She also proved the possibility of balance between the spiritual and the intellectual sphere of life; being a great devotee of God never stopped her from admiring the truth and scientific knowledge – like mathematics (which submits to the same necessity as any God's creation)⁷⁶. She was also never a kind of hermit, in spite of her intensified spiritual life and close connections to God, she had never withdrawn from earthly life but actively participated in it, always ready to fight for those in need or oppressed.

Many would call her one of the greatest religious thinkers of the 20th century not only in Christian theology but generally in the field of spiritual and religious philosophy⁷⁷. But Simone Weil was a person, whose life was filled with questions and contradictions – and so was her thoughts and views. She was always pushing herself to the limit, brushing the impossibility and the boundaries of time and space. The great legacy of paradoxes she had left are still a challenge for the readers, provocatively putting them at the edge of transcendence. Most of her literary output consists of scattered aphorisms and letters – often enigmatic and confusing, open for wide interpretation. With them she

⁷⁴ R. Bell, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

⁷⁵ *Ibidem.*

⁷⁶ S. Weil, *Świadomość...*, p. 113.

⁷⁷ M. von der Ruhr, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

breaks through the limits of a language, logic and earthly world and reveals the supernatural sphere. She is not giving simple answers – perhaps because she was never looking for them either – but rather urges the reader to awake a new state of awareness and understanding, in which tough metaphysical questions are born. Dealing with them will not be easy, but just as Ludwig Wittgenstein assures: “if a question can be put at all, then it can also be answered”⁷⁸.

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⁷⁸ L. Wittgenstein, op. cit.

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Abstract

The article focuses on describing Simone Weil and her art of mystical paradoxes. At the beginning, the authoress explains in short the meaning of the word “mysticism”, its etymology and traditional usage, moving on later to characterising philosophical thought of Simone Weil in the context of the space of transcendence. The authoress analyses the language used by mystics (here confronting Simone Weil with Meister Eckhart) and proves, that mystical experience cannot simply be verbalized, and thus why paradox turns out to be the best medium of expression. The analysis presented in the article exposes an interesting parallelism: mystical space of transcendence slips out of the dictatorship of logic, earthly space and every-day order just as the great legacy of Simone Weil's aphorisms and letters exceeds boundaries of the language.

Abstrakt

Niniejszy artykuł jest próbą przybliżenia czytelnikowi osoby Simone Weil oraz jej pełnej paradoksów mistycznej myśli. We wstępie artykułu wyjaśniony zosta-

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Je sam termin "mystycyzm" oraz jego znaczenie (etymologia, tradycja), a następnie autorka koncentruje się na scharakteryzowaniu filozoficznej myśli Simone Weil w kontekście tytułowej przestrzeni transcendencji. Autorka analizuje język, jakim posługują się mistycy (zestawiając Simone Weil z Mistrzem Eckhartem) oraz dowodzi, iż momencie niemożliwego do zwerbalizowania mistycznego przeżycia (duchowej więzi z Absolutem) medium wyrazu staje się paradoksem. Proponowana w artykule analiza przebiega niejako dwutorowo i równolegle: autorka wykazuje, iż przestrzeń mistyczna wymyka się sztywnym prawom logiki, ziemskiego ładu i regułom ortodoksji, a duchowo-literacka spuścizna Simone Weil przekracza bariery języka.