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A MAN IN SEARCH OF GOD.
CHRISTIAN PARADIGM IN THE POEMS OF MIRKO JIRSAK

“God demands not only obedience from man, but courage as well.”
(Nikola Bierdiajev)¹

“In the palm of your hand / I give you a line // if you take it / you’ll die of poetry.” (Mirko
Jirsak, *Temptation*)

Introductory remarks

The main aim of this paper – the reconstruction of the Christian paradigm in the poems of Mirko Jirsak – determines the direction of the research into the poets’ consciousness. The starting point of the analysis is the assumption that a compact Jirsak’s stream of thoughts is expressed in his verses. The texts included in a posthumous selection of lyrics entitled *A hundred and one poem*, as well as the collections *Colours and pebbles* and *Late hours*, on which this analysis is based, point to the evolution of the poet’s stream of thought throughout time, reflecting its unity, in spite of many times being of becoming and polemic character. In spite of the synoptic and synchronic comparison, the reconstruction of the Jirsak’s stream of thoughts, as an approach to the interpretation of the complete reality, oversteps the individual work of art. The abovementioned collections do not include text providing a recapitulation of the poetic understanding and explanations of reality. Such attributes may possibly be found in the poem *That wall*, which, as will be shown later, simultaneously presents the quintessence of the Jirsak philosophy and Christian paradigm: “That wall is made out of stone / out of the human heart / a heart of stone. / And on this side I / had a hammer and a chisel in my hands / and I didn’t have the strength / to bash”². Salvation and antidote against solitude brings a meeting with another man, because the man becomes the *I* in contact with the *you*³. An alienation from the world as a consequence

¹ All translations are done by the author of this paper.

² M. Jirsak, *Pjesme iz postume*, RTF, 2009, p. 1. [PIP]

³ H. Paprocki, *Lew i mysz czyli tajemnica człowieka. Esej o bohaterach Dostojewskiego*, Białystok 1997, p. 15.

of the desire and the decision to be *yourself*⁴, erecting the wall which enables the chosen, hidden *I*: “As a seed / I was under the millstone/turning. / Now, I am different, / all broken, / in every parcel /absolutely myself. // Coated in / my reasons, / I erected a wall”⁵, brings consciousness about the horrible solitude which one cannot escape. Thus, a philosophy of tragedy which can be hinted at is already expressed in these mid-war verses – an anthropology of solitude.

In the process of reconstruction of the Jirsak stream of thought, various criteria and movements can be applied. Taking into consideration the particularly anthropological character of his thought, a perspective that starts with the reconstruction of the system from the analyses of the status of a man and the world of phenomena, to the intellectual creatures, and in the direction of the supreme creature – God, seems justified. Such a viewpoint places man and his inner world on the first place, while God (whose name is rarely, on several occasions only verbalized, which paradoxically does not mean he is non-existent but rather defined by ontological status as different from human) is beyond understanding and description. We reach God through man, bottom up, because the one who was embodied did not deprive humans of will, making them similar to God, in spite of the fact that he came to ensure salvation for man by showing him the way⁶. Owing to the gift of freedom, they seek answers to the questions of essence: “Where from and why the stamp?”⁷, “Are we worthy of that dream?”⁸, “What is a measure of universal effort? / a phrase in a frame? Or some gift / At the end of day / we are all dust on the wind / which falls over a pathway leaving a mark, // What is left?”⁹, “They’ve asked us/ what do you believe in? / We said: / In nothing. // A man / must believe in something! // Good, and what is it then?”¹⁰.

This will is what prevents them from making peace with the tiresome repetition of a prayer, which only provides a false security from which suspicion lurks. It is suspicion that sentences a man to a fight with restlessness, with the consciousness that “A man is small / under the grey sky - / big / in a bundle of sun”¹¹, with a blurred feeling of powerlessness in contact with eternity which is uncertain in poetic anthropology because “A man cannot / cross over certain boundaries”¹². However, it is owing to it that we are not punished with a feinted life, but can try “to understand the night”¹³, “seeking our own bottom”¹⁴, “shut our eyes” and watch from within¹⁵.

⁴ M. Jirsak, *Čovjek iza stihova. Mirko Jirsak, 1909. – 1999. – 2009*, RTF. 2004–2009, p. 33. [ČIS]

⁵ M. Jirsak, *Wall*, [in:] idem, *Sto i jedna pjesma*, RTF. 2004, p. 33. [SIJP]

⁶ W. Hryniewicz, *Chrześcijaństwo nadziei*, Kraków 2002, p. 30–31.

⁷ M. Jirsak, *Stamp*, [in:] SIJP, p. 27.

⁸ M. Jirsak, *And I didn't know it*, [in:] SIJP, p. 40.

⁹ M. Jirsak, *Late Hours*, [in:] idem, PIP, p. 19.

¹⁰ M. Jirsak, *Confusion*, [in:] PIP, p. 6.

¹¹ M. Jirsak, *Hide your pain*, [in:] PIP, p. 23.

¹² M. Jirsak, *Doctor Samuel Grün*, [in:] PIP, p. 9.

¹³ M. Jirsak, *At the moment of awakening*, [in:] SIJP, p. 22.

¹⁴ M. Jirsak, *Rower of time*, [in:] SIJP p. 38.

¹⁵ M. Jirsak, *How good it is*, [in:] PIP, p. 1.

Within the key criteria of analysis, we find the synoptic manner of reading all of Mirko Jirsak's poems included in the abovementioned collection. The second criteria stems out of this very method, and the poet's stream of thought and anthropology, as its integral and decisive part, will be treated as a general abstract model. The fact that reconstruction of a Christian paradigm within the borders of Jirsak's anthropology is apparent in the perspective of dogmatic and mystic theology, philosophy and contemporary religious thought of western and eastern Christianity is of crucial importance. The selection of such a research perspective directly arises from the totality of the teaching of John Paul II on the impossibility of theological consideration of fundamental terms of Christianity, within the framework of the essential questions of anthropology without the "usage of common results (achievements) and common goods (Christianity)"¹⁶. Such an approach is related to Jirsak's conception of a man, which is in my opinion based on the Christian concept of life, finding its support for thoughts and witnessing the man, his problems and his destiny within this concept. A poet's anthropology – very sensitive to ontological and cosmic measures of a man – is not subject to morals. It does not view man through the prism of his deeds, but rather through his essence. The question of the aim of his search is inscribed in Jirsak's man, as is the issue of the level to which a man can have an imperative to search.

The analysed poems create a picture of life (a life path) consisting of small poetic forms that become symbols of extremely important mental states and that define the psychic condition and the social status of a man. Such a level of research will lead us to the question which defines the ontological status of a man in Jirsak's stream of thought, dependant on the level to which the border between the spiritual and the bodily is efficient in a man.

The source of the Christian paradigm and Jirsak's anthropology

The foundation of Christian anthropology is to be found in the Book of Genesis and it refers to the creation of man in God's image:

And God said: Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth! So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth (Genesis 1,26–28).

Based on this description as well as Book of Genesis 2,18 the Holy Fathers have developed learning about human nature as open, free and capable of transcendence, as well as a theology of image and similarity to God. The first beginnings of a theocentric anthropology can be found in the recordings of Clement of Alexandria and Athanasius of Alexan-

¹⁶ Jan Paweł II, *List Apostolski Euntes in mundum z okazji tysiąclecia chrztu Rusi Kijowskiej*, Vatican 1988, p. III/6.

dria, while Gregory of Nice provided its first theological draft¹⁷. According to the understanding of the Popes, man is a creator, homo creator, the one whose art of life should consist of continual revelation of the unreachable (inaccessible comprehension) human nature, because in this manner we get closer to God, despite never being able to reach him¹⁸. By deepening the secret to ourselves, we are closer to Logos. Inscribed in this model, the Jirsak man has the possibility, capability and the time to do just that, because “Leaned on the corner of the street / in a narrow, short coat / wrapped in thoughts stands a day, but nobody wants to paint it”¹⁹. From a group of people who do not see a need for search, a poet is separated. He wishes, but whatever he does, wherever he goes, he comes across the wall of stone heart, the lethargy of living by day and not by eternity, the horrible silence which explodes in his ears. This all brings him to a complete and utter confusion, as if he was born not only in the wrong time and the wrong place, but as if he did not belong to the human kind. So he stops, not knowing where to go and what to do: “I have this small cocoon in my hand / a master of weaving is hidden in it / but it is dead and I have stopped / and I do not know where to start knitting”²⁰.

The dogmatic foundation of Christian anthropology stems from the decision of Chalcedonian creed, which is at the same time Christological and anthropological, as the Christological question points to the discovery of the human secret. The two unmixed and undivided natures of Christ – a true God and a true man. Thus, in each of us there is a part that is of God, which separates people from animals and makes us a person. In the unification in one person of God’s and human nature, Logos indicates two aspects of the human essence: *prosopon*, which is characterised by the psychological aspect of essence directed toward the inner self and *hypostasis*, an aspect of open essence which transcends its own world in the direction of God²¹. The participation of both aspects in a man has a direct influence on the dynamics of the poet’s anthropology. The open consciousness which tends to the supernatural appears as a consequence of the essential search of the inner self. “The man behind the verses is irresistibly called by bells”²², he leaves “without pain, without sorrow / and tears”²³ starting “a new, turning path”²⁴. However, a temporary hidden, but tireless and endless cause – the search of his own bottom, is inscribed in his departure²⁵.

In the abovementioned foundations of Christian anthropology, we find both realization straightforward causality (creation), as well as a formal and principal one (created by sample), having as a consequence the conception of participation. The world – as the reflection of a deeper and fuller reality – participates (has its share) in God, thus causing shaping element of the world in God’s image. This marks the fact that every creature created does not exist for its own sake, but that it is a reflection of the meta-reality and is prone to the

¹⁷ Grzegorz z Nyssy, *O stworzeniu człowieka*, trans. M. Przyszychowska, Kraków 2006.

¹⁸ O. Clément, *Boże Narodzenie w katolicyzmie i prawosławiu*, trans. K. Stopa, Kraków 2008, p. 81.

¹⁹ M. Jirsak, *A day*, [in:] SIJP, p. 31.

²⁰ M. Jirsak, *Cocoon*, [in:] SIJP, p. 20.

²¹ H. Paprocki, *Obietnica Ojca*, Bydgoszcz 2001, p. 214–215.

²² M. Jirsak, *When parting*, [in:] SIJP, p. 2.

²³ M. Jirsak, *Departure*, [in:] SIJP, p. 7.

²⁴ M. Jirsak, *Resignation*, [in:] SIJP, p. 8.

²⁵ M. Jirsak, *Rower of time*, [in:] SIJP, p. 38.

community. The theory of participation in God presupposes the interfusion of human and God's creature, the teanthropology and human openness²⁶. Such understanding of relations and relationships between a man and God is inscribed, in my opinion, in the analysed poetical forms leading Slatican to the conception of the anthropology of solitude, *a reborus*. His man feels an irresistible need to travel, to understand, to answer questions. In the process of the discovery of his own bottom, the search for God's elements, for the reflection of meta-reality is inscribed. The philosophy of tragedy is founded on the consciousness that he is alone, that his street is "silent"²⁷. His tendency to achieve community with God, his earning for understanding the mystery of life – is connected with an astonishment that nobody searches any more. Thus, he stays lonely among people, but also with a consciousness that God and his reflection in man are unreachable to cognition.

Non-Christian philosophy occupies a significant place in Jirsak's stream of thought. It has directly affected the dogmatic and theological shape of Christian anthropology. Interpretation of the place and the role of man in the universe, the concept of soul and spirit, as well as the presence of God's fire in man, were taken by the Holy Fathers from Plato and Philo of Alexandria, just to mention the most significant stoics. Christianity used the idea of man as a border personality; a creature which exists at the border of two realities or even more, the essence that actually makes the border (gives the meaning to it). What differentiates Christian, and in some measure Jirsak, anthropology from the abovementioned philosophers is the understanding of the human body as a necessity of earthly life, complementary to the soul.

"Then the Lord God took some soil from the ground and formed a man out of it; he breathed life-giving breath into his nostrils and the man began to live" (Genesis 2,7). In Jirsak's poems, on the one hand, we find harmony between the soul and the body, primarily when describing youth: "I remember her lips, / fresh, / small, / sweet as cherries, / rosy"²⁸; even when it directly relates to the Christian place of *sacrum*: "In front of the holy painting of Aloysius, / a young man of pure heart, / a sweet little dame, / cries and cries, and bellows, // bowing to the saint: / deep cleavage she has, / and the saint looks in wonder, / and it's as if he nods his head"²⁹. On the other hand, the poet explicitly follows a platonic thought that man and his body belong to the ephemeral world and that cognition is only a memory of a pervious life of idea. This is primarily reflected in the poems remembering his home and the happiness of youth, but is unambiguously present throughout his works *My old, black suit* and *My old, black suit II*³⁰ in which the word *shame* denotes the mental state of a person suddenly becoming aware of his/her temporality. However, I wish to emphasise that I do not find a lack of harmony between the soul and the body in Jirsak's poems. Even in his last two poems, where the human organism is only a *black suit*, it is not deprived of honour. After death, both components of a man await life in eternity. In the poem about the end of the earthly existence, the last common point is not the co-existence of the soul and body, but the beginning of their conscious life: "My old, black

²⁶ H. Paprocki, *Obietnica...*, op. cit., p. 216.

²⁷ M. Jirsak, *I told myself*, [in:] SIJP, p. 44.

²⁸ M. Jirsak, *Under the cherry*, [in:] SIJP, p. 1.

²⁹ M. Jirsak, *In Church*, [in:] SIJP, p. 3.

³⁰ SIJP, p. 44.

suit / does not go out anymore. / Half-heartedly / it will be carried out by some men / on a far journey / an endlessly long path. / It is then that we will both be ashamed”³¹. Matter is presented as an integral part of life, which is, in spite of its temporality and changes, God’s work and “everything that the God had made, it was very good” (Genesis 1,31).

Anthropology of the image and of similarity

The poet’s anthropology is based on the essential status of man, the aim of his earthly existence, origin and place of residence. Taking into consideration that these last two points of reference are the subject of the work *Escape abroad*, which includes an attempt at a definition of Jirsak’s spatial *home and abroad* from the perspective of a lost but never forgotten heaven, at this point of the analysis I will attempt to decode the human gist hidden in his poems.

The key for the definition of Jirsak’s man is hidden in the Christian marking of a person as a secret. The Old and New Testaments, as well as the letters of the Holy Popes, depict a man as an undecipherable and paradoxical consciousness, a puzzle to its own self, fearful of the very solution to this enigma of existence. The attempt to understand human consciousness brings Job to the question: “What is man, that you make so much of him, and that you set your heart on him?” (Job 7,17) while Saint Peter writes about the “inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight” (1 Peter 3,4). On these foundations, Jirsak builds an anthropology in which man bears the marks of the platonic man, born in a cave and seeing only shadows during his earthly life. Such a person is unable to achieve full cognition: “Everywhere I direct my steps, wishing to get rid of everything / I meet the cold threat of damp, rotten things / and then I see the village’s pain and hurt in front of my eyes / and that eternal hardship that makes you tremble and age”³². When leaving the cave, the platonic man is blinded by light, making him go back in fear. Jirsak’s man, who “outside of the cave” does not find the aim of his search, is pulled in by “many, beloved dreams and the hard lethargy of sorrow”. The shine does not affect him negatively, but rather gives him hope: “Oh, my dreamy joy / I kill crazy dreams / and above the dreamt rivers / I leave dead water // to some other sun / and some other freedom / I direct my steps / and my ships sail”³³. However, very soon, the light creates a shadow: “All life is concealed by shadows. / Open the roads / to all sources of light / because at the end one must reach / the last shadow”³⁴. Jirsak’s shadow does not pose the platonic mark of ignorance, of life of illusions, but becomes a symbol of the old testament on temporarily and earthly life: “As a shadow a man passes” (Ps 39,7) said Psalmist, and David uses such words to answer to God: “For we are strangers before you, and sojourners, as all our fathers were. Our days on earth are like a shadow, and there is no abiding” (1 Chronicle 29,15). Leaning on one’s own shadow, i.e. conscious of the temporality of his life, the poet’s man waits for the dark – his death – perceived in human understand-

³¹ Ibidem.

³² M. Jirsak, *Resignation*, [in:] SIJP, p. 8.

³³ M. Jirsak, *Cognition*, [in:] SIJP, p. 14.

³⁴ M. Jirsak, *In shadows*, [in:] SIJP, p. 41.

ing as the absence of light: “A tree in the field / leaning on its shadow // waits for the night (...) A woodcutter comes. // Leaning on its shadow / the tree awaits”³⁵.

The above-mentioned poems express the Christian idea of light as a source of life³⁶ and as the attribute of God, who himself is everlasting light (Isaiah 60, 19–20, The Book of Wisdom 7,26) and who knows everything that is going on in the dark: He reveals the deep and hidden things; he knows what lies in the darkness, and light dwells within him (Daniel 2,22). The already quoted text of the work *Hide your pain*: “A man is little / under the dark sky – / great / in the abundance of sun” shows a person as a creature that can find peace only in Lord’s light: “There be many that say, Who will shew us any good? LORD, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us” (Psalm 4,6). The absence of light does not mark the absence of God, but the impossibility of human cognition. A man is lost in the dark, he cannot find his way. “Vineyards / who takes us away / from the sun bathed hillsides / in dark depths / to the root of our vine? (...) descending into the valley / there is no light / on hillsides I walk down”³⁷. In the dark, in space and time without the presence of light, a man cannot start any business; he goes to rest³⁸. In such a context, the poem *To-night* becomes an oral icon of the birth of a man living without God’s presence³⁹.

The abovementioned paragraph from the Book of Genesis “Let Us make a man in Our image”, tells us that man is God’s image, that *image* is part of human nature, takes part in the characteristics of the pre-model. The whole description of the creation of the world shows the true position of man, but also underlines the difference between man and God. However, the question asked is where this God’s image is to be found in man, and how to understand God’s similarity. As the Bible does not provide us with the precise answer to these questions, the Holy Fathers, theologians and translators of the Holy Bible, have determined what the idea of image and similarity mean. In biblical comments we read:

“similar to oneself” seems to alleviate the concept of “image”, thus excluding equality. The concrete term “image” denotes physical similarity, like one between Adam and his son (5.3). Such a relation to God singles out man from animals; even more, it presumes the general similarity of nature: reason, will and power; man is a person. This lays ground for a higher declaration: man’s unity in God’s nature by Grace⁴⁰.

This means that the reality of an image cannot be limited to one sphere or one part of a man, but to everything that we call a person. The term *man* neither signifies the body nor the soul, it expresses the unique and beautiful bond of both these elements⁴¹. God’s image is the whole *humanitas* of a man, together with the soul, body, reason and will, capable of a conscious choice⁴². While the image is something dynamic, similarity can be defined as

³⁵ M. Jirsak, *The tree awaits*, [in:] SIJP, p. 24.

³⁶ M. Lurker, *Słownik obrazów i symboli biblijnych*, trans. K. Romaniuk, Poznań 1989, p. 327.

³⁷ M. Jirsak, *A poem from my vineyard*, [in:] SIJP, p. 27.

³⁸ M. Jirsak, *In the evening*, [in:] SIJP, p. 9.

³⁹ SIJP, p. 14.

⁴⁰ *Jeruzalemska Biblija. Stari i Novi Zavjet s uvodima i bilješkama iz »La Bible de Jérusalem«*, ed. A. Rebić, J. Fućak, B. Duda, Zagreb 1994, p. 14.

⁴¹ Focjusz, *Biblioteka. Tom III. Kodeksy 230–246*, Wrocław – Warszawa, p. 243/96.

⁴² Św. Ireneusz z Lyonu, *Bóg w ciele i krwi*, trans. W. Myszor, Kraków 2001, p. 72–23.

a task which demands realization. After the sin, the image has remained within the man without change, but has been “reduced to the state of ontological silence, powerlessness and inability to realize itself in similarity”⁴³. Because the loss of similarity to God can occur, i.e. the capability for creative positive action, the imperative of the search within himself and the image of God is inscribed within man, while creativity is the human way of expressing God’s image⁴⁴. However, only God is a Maker, only he has created everything *ex nihilo*, and man can exclusively be a creator. “From the hand my things came out hard and rough/ and I wished to create some wonderful world with them”⁴⁵. The poet’s work which is a reflection on God’s similarity, and simultaneously trying to disclose God’s image cannot be ideal nor can it lead to cognition. “Aggregated in unknown / they have to be in light / as a source springs / under the hill. // Placed within existence / they lose their real essence”⁴⁶. A verse written down on paper loses its ideal because it enters into contact with something that has already been created, that exists, but is not perfect. Thus, what is hidden in man, God’s image that we need to find through creation, once in contact with the earthly world, starts to occur to a man as something imperfect, rough and even unnecessary. This is the biggest paradox of creativity, impossible to overcome. The power of creation transfers a man to another, transcendent level of life. It is the biggest human victory over determinism. However, all products of creativity are only objects, they become something verbalised, painted, formed and so on, they stop being dependant of man. “The creative act overcomes the borders of the subject’s essence and directs man towards a new life, towards God’s Kingdom, but the products of creation belong to the world which is a contradictory person-world, which is ruled by determinism, necessity and trouble”⁴⁷.

The anthropology of solitude

The described paradox of creativity brings the Jirsak man to silence, a temporary withdrawal from search, from solving the puzzle of life: “I told myself / do your daily duty / and be quiet as your street is quiet”⁴⁸. For a man who is discovering God’s image and who considers the act of creation to be the explanation and contribution to human life, silence is an unnatural, weird and irritating state of affairs, exploding in his ears: “I am scared, / I am scared of terrible brightness. / Nobody is yelling. // Everything is bright/insanely. // Nobody feels / the explosion of silence”⁴⁹. In Jirsak’s work, silence is mixed with fog, dark-

⁴³ H. Paprocki, *Obietnica...*, op. cit., p. 219.

⁴⁴ “A basic human command is creation, which is at the same time the only form of realization of a man, a person giving up on creations, stops being a man, which means that they instantly fall into a state of subjects, subjected to determinism and coercion”, [in:] W. Krzemień, *Filozofia w cieniu prawosławia. Rosyjscy myśliciele religijni przelomu XIX i XX wieku*, Warszawa 1979, p. 140.

⁴⁵ M. Jirsak, *Recognition*, [in:] SIJP, p. 14.

⁴⁶ M. Jirsak, *Verses*, [in:] PIP, p. 5.

⁴⁷ W. Krzemień, op. cit., p. 140. Such understanding is the foundation of Bierdi philosophy.

⁴⁸ M. Jirsak, *I told myself*, [in:] SIJP, p. 44.

⁴⁹ M. Jirsak, *Fear*, [in:] SIJP, p. 29.

ness and rain, while light and sound possess the qualities of something ideal. “And then suddenly / we are shaken / by the crystal clear sound within us⁵⁰.”

Jirsak’s philosophy of tragedy is connected with the fact that only a poet has Bierdi’s courage, which God demands from men. “By turning the last page / I felt / my hands are aching // Not from work, / not from years. // From doubt”⁵¹. Doubt, presentiment, and search – activities foreseen for men – reaching their hands for the unreal⁵². Nevertheless, silence provides the earthly subject peace, it attracts and lures. In a poem entitled *The King of Illusions*, it even acquires the characteristic of the apostle at the end of his earthly existence: “Oh, how waved silence is. // This is the end of / all illusions, / going back to the dream”⁵³. For this reason, memories and dreams appear as unnecessary valuables in Jirsak’s poems⁵⁴, “many, but beloved dreams”⁵⁵, as sweet cargo which pulls us to the substance and leads us away from the real aim of earthly existence.

The courage possessed by a poet must inescapably lead to social catastrophe, because others are silent, they chose apparent, current peace, happiness of previous days and burned dreams. As if they do not wish to become aware that “We are undoubtedly dismaying ourselves / when we believe / that we hold in our hands / the certainty”⁵⁶. As if they are killing this predicament, which allows them to keep silent. “Clouds move over the sky / they move big / and white / and they carry the poet’s sorrow / towards a white and faraway world. // They cross over the plane / casting shadows / shadows they fear/ small sleepy souls”⁵⁷. The poet’s voice breaks their peace, it casts shadow, it shows them a life in search for a secret hidden in man; a life aware of its temporality, a life filled with predicament from which the Jirsak man does not want to escape: “Let’s put for a moment/ moments of memories / in the days of emptiness / and try / to understand the night”⁵⁸. This poem is a desperate scream directed towards men living in their dreams, memories, and earthly tranquillity. The feeling of the need to verbalize, to give a verse in a palm of the hand and the restlessness which shakes him have become a constituent part of his life. For this reason, Jirsak finishes his poem in the following manner: “As game discloses its scent / I disclose my/ hidden pain”.

It is irrevocable that a feeling of disharmony between the everlasting man who is searching and man who is silent plays a dominant role in the analysis of the poems. A possible foundation of this problem can be found in the biblical description of the creation of the world. In accordance to the Book of Genesis,

a man is created as the essence on the border of two contradictory ends: Gods and bodiless (non-substantive) nature and irrational life characteristic of animals. It is difficult to assess what God

⁵⁰ M. Jirsak, *The conspiracy of silence*, [in:] SIJP, p. 43.

⁵¹ M. Jirsak, *Doubt*, [in:] SIJP, p. 41.

⁵² M. Jirsak, *Rower of time*, [in:] SIJP, p. 38.

⁵³ SIJP, p. 28.

⁵⁴ M. 2004, *Before summer*, [in:] SIJP, p. 17.

⁵⁵ M. Jirsak, *Resignation*, [in:] SIJP, p. 8.

⁵⁶ M. Jirsak, *Verses*, [in:] PIP, p. 5.

⁵⁷ M. Jirsak, *Above home town*, [in:] SIJP, p. 12.

⁵⁸ M. Jirsak, *At the moment of awakening*, [in:] SIJP, p. 22.

has intended with this. Maybe he wanted to bring the whole creation closer to him, so that the earth does not feel the lack of sky, and sky lack of earth. Thanks to creation of man both worlds take part in each other⁵⁹.

A man is thus a place in which God touches the material world, and the question of the choice of the search or apparent peace is dependant on how efficient the border between the spiritual and the bodily is in every person. The feeling of loneliness present in the poet's work is a consequence of the previously mentioned ascribed desire of man to form community with another person. "It is not good for a man to be alone" (Book of Genesis 2,18) said the Lord when creating the world. The Jirsak man desires to find another person in the process of searching his own secret, but it turns out that a man of covert heart becomes a man of stone heart. It seems as if in some people the creation, doubt, and the desire for searching the unlikely does not occur at the border of the physical and the spiritual. For this reason, the poet remains alone, he builds the wall, feels himself as the scar of a deep wound⁶⁰. For this reason, he says he has lost everything, even though he wanted to remain a man primarily in his life. "When I die / notify death / that it had made a mistake. / It did not gain anything with me / and I have lost everything"⁶¹. This poem hides the reconciliation with eternity, but also a terrible grief over man.

Nevertheless, the Christian paradigm of Jirsak's poetry expresses an anthropology of solitude, *a rebours*: "To be old and alone / is always better / than to be alone / and having anything / to gasp for / so that the time passes"⁶². A man is alone among people, but never in front of God, for whom he searches constantly even though he can't ever find him. The aim is not important, but the search⁶³. As a smile which is human when it derives from understanding (consciousness), and not from life in illusions: "When I have met it (laughter) on the face of the old man / I could not immediately find my way/ I was only silent, weirdly shaken/ that that smile means something hidden"⁶⁴.

Instead of a conclusion

A hundred years before Jirsak has coined the verses: "A dark street of departure / leads to me"⁶⁵, Fjodor Mihajlovič Dostojevski wrote in a letter to his brother: "A man is a mystery. It should be solved and if you keep on trying to solve it during your whole life, do not say that you have wasted time: I am dealing with this secret, because I want to be a man"⁶⁶. Even though Dostoevsky and Jirsak are separated not only by time and place, but

⁵⁹ Grzegorz z Nyssy, op. cit., p. 14.

⁶⁰ M. Jirsak, *Autobiography*, [in:] PIP, p. 3.

⁶¹ M. Jirsak, *When I die*, [in:] PIP, p. 17.

⁶² M. Jirsak, *Verses*, [in:] PIP, p. 5.

⁶³ "A man has to constantly prove that he is a man, and not for example a piano key. He is interested in the process of reaching the aim and not the aim itself. For a man „two plus two are four” is not life anymore but the beginning of death”. H. Paprocki, *Lew i ...*, op. cit., p. 10.

⁶⁴ M. Jirsak, *Laughter*, [in:] SIJP, p. 20.

⁶⁵ M. Jirsak, *Rower of time*, op. cit.

⁶⁶ H. Paprocki, *Lew i ...*, op. cit., p. 7.

by the product of their creation as well, they are connected by a deep feeling of the *conspiracy of silence*, which must be broken by man every day of his life on earth. Creation – human victory over the reality and determinism given to man, as well as the continuation of God’s creation of the world – oversteps earthly existence and brings man towards the other reality, a world of freedom. In this manner, this paper, which consciously avoids literary – historic context, poetics of analysed works as well as analyses based on Christian lexica present in many poems, applies an apofatic method of analysis, which allows for the search of the poet’s *street of leaving*. It is an attempt to answer the question asked by the poet’s son, Predrag Jirsk: “What can a verse be? What else can it be to literature?”⁶⁷

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⁶⁷ ČIS, p. 13.

JOANNA RĘKAS

A man in search of God. Christian paradigm in the poems of Mirko Jirsak

Summary

The primary objective of the study is to find and decode the reconstruction of the Christian paradigm in the poems of Mirko Jirsak (1909–1999), a Croatian poet, writer, journalist and translator. In the search of the model of the works, I prioritise marking the human hiding behind the lines, i.e. the poetic consciousness, which is expressed in the works. The poet's anthropology is based on the essential status of man, the aim of his earthly existence, origin and place of residence (anthropology of the image and of similarity). The key for the definition of Jirsak's man is hidden in the Christian marking of a person as a secret.

Keywords: Mirko Jirsak, Croatian poetry, Christianity, paradigm, lyrical subject