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ABOUT THE DIFFICULT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE POLISH IDEA AND THE POLISH ETHOS IN CONTEMPORARY ART. MARGINALIZED TRANSCENDENTALS, CRITICAL DE-COINCIDENCE, INTENSIVE DIALOGUE AND AFFIRMATIVE ‘RENEWAL’

Abstract: First, the text introduces the notion of the ‘Polish idea,’ which is presented as metaphysicality in art and metaphysicality of art. In this context, the de-coincidence between the Polish idea and the Polish ethos can be perceived as criticism in contemporary art, as in the work of Artur Żmijewski. De-coincidence causing a ‘thrill of transcendence’ can be perceived as a threat, which Jerzy Bereś and Piotr Uklański warn against in their works. It can also reveal a ‘margin of transcendence’ (including that of the Polish idea), inspiring thereby innovative artistic explorations (Jakub Różalski, Jakub Woynarowski, Adu Karczmaczyk). They are pursued thanks to various forms of dialogue that revive affirmative views on ideas and the metaphysics of art.

Keywords: Polish idea, de-coincidence, margins of transcendence, metaphysicality of art, contemporary affirmative art

Polishness as an idea and the associated art

The survivability of the idea of Polishness or ‘the Polish idea,’ which has been cultivated over the centuries despite adverse historical developments, is

often pointed to as a characteristic feature of the Polish nation, in addition to their overvaluation of freedom¹. The continuity of the Polish nation is also attributed to Pole's Catholic religiousness, which is sometimes considered as superstitious emotionalism, a quality typical of Romanticism – along with the “history-focused” attitude professing the metaphysical order of history, the “Sarmatianmilitary” patriotism, the cherishing of symbols and the irrational idealism of Poles.

The metaphysical nature of the ‘Polish idea’ emphasizes participation in transcendentals, that is, in the properties of being, such as cause, purpose, existence, substance, thing, unity and separateness (distinctness)². Any question about these properties will at once be a question pertaining to sense and value, seeking to determine whether the way things are is good or bad. As a consequence, truth, goodness and beauty are listed among the fundamental values also known as axiological transcendentals (or universals).

Art can testify to the greatness of the Polish idea as it is manifested by the “substantially” or “formally” existing Polish state, its rulers and the heritage they bequeathed (for example, the 16th-century Sigismund's Chapel on Wawel Hill), but also by cultivating its persistence in history despite the absence of the state (which is done, for example, by 19th-century painting of Jan Matejko). Władysław Stróżewski refers to the presentation of sacralized rulers and of distinctive examples illustrating the permanence of existence as “metaphysicality *in* art.” According to Stróżewski, it emanates through the content depicted in and expressed by the artwork³. The content is derived from an insight into fundamental principles and metaphysical ideas that follow from an all-around experience of existence. When the artwork transcends the materiality of the real world towards the intention behind it and “recedes” into the background to reveal transcendental values, with particular beauty, this can be referred to as the “metaphysicality *of* art.” The beauty of art can and should correspond to the beauty of ideas. Beautiful art should tell the story of beautiful Polishness.

The idea versus the ethos. Critical view of de-coincidence

However, at times, the co-incidence between Poland as it existed substantially and the Polish spirit, or, in other words, between the Polish idea and the Polish ethos, was frail, not only due to the processual character of historic

¹ Cf. P. Rojek, *Awangardowy konserwatyzm. Idea polska w późnej nowoczesności*, Ośrodek Myśli Politycznej, Kraków 2016, p. 10-31.

² Cf. W. Stróżewski, *Transcendentalia i wartości*, in: id., *Istnienie i wartość*, Znak, Kraków 1982, p. 12.

³ Cf. W. Stróżewski, *O metafizyczności w sztuce*, in: id., *Wokół piękna. Szkice z estetyki*, Universitas, Kraków 2002, pp.118-119.

developments. This frailness can be considered an example of de-coincidence, as this term is defined by François Jullien⁴. Not all Poles were truly faithful to the idea of Polish freedom, nor did they always prove to be tolerant, merciful and supportive, as Catholics should be in a country boasting a multinational tradition. This lack of “coincidence”, this “mismatch”, or “discord”⁵, as Jullien would perhaps see it, is addressed by Polish critical art.

One example is *Our Songbook* (Nasz śpiewnik), a video installation by Artur Żmijewski. It contains a 2003 short (13'35") documentary film featuring a group of Israeli senior citizens who still remember various Polish national and religious songs (e.g., the national anthem, or the patriotic songs *Rota*, *Boże, coś Polskę*) and popular ditties (e.g., *Letnia przygoda*), which they had learned in childhood or adolescence. Encouraged by the director, they sing them in front of the camera. The protagonists live in a “retirement home”. Some of them are still active. Others, however, are bedridden or on IV therapy. Żmijewski's objective was to create the kind of pseudo sociological documentary for which contemporary critical art is known, although he said that his film is, in particular, about remembering⁶. Meanwhile, critical reviews stressed the viewers' impression of “cracked identity” and the now waning Polishness in Israel, a state built, after all, largely by Polish Jewry⁷. The paradox of Jews and Israeli citizens singing religious and patriotic songs that Polish people learn during Catholic church services could be seen as a critical view of the “colonizing” and “oppressive” imposition of power, culture and religion on ‘Others’ in inter-war Poland.

The situation could be described as multiple de-coincidence to use François Jullien's term⁸. At first, the relationship of Jewish citizens of inter-war Poland with the Polish idea may seem ambiguous and, over time, the identification with Israel certainly comes to the fore. And although the memory of the Polish ethos persists, bringing smiles to the old peoples' faces, old age implies the approaching end even of these marginal fragments of the Polish idea in Israel. Perhaps this stems from the fact that the Polish ethos was once imposed too oppressively, which Artur Żmijewski's critical art seems to suggest, sending unpleasant shivers or a “thrill” down our spines.

⁴ Cf. F. Jullien, *Ponownie otworzyć możliwości: de-koïncydencja i kolejne życie. Wybór tekstów*, transl. E. Marynowicz-Hetka, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź 2024, pp. 9, 63-102, 147-180.

⁵ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁶ Cf. *Którędy po sztukę odc. 33 - Artur Żmijewski*, <https://vod.tvp.pl/video/ktoready-po-sztuke,odc-33-artur-zmijewski,28020691> (accessed: 6 May 2020).

⁷ Cf., for instance, I. Kowalczyk, *Podróż do przeszłości. Interpretacje najnowszej przeszłości w polskiej sztuce krytycznej*, Wydawnictwo SWPS Academica, Warszawa 2010, p. 269.

⁸ See: F. Jullien, *Ponownie otworzyć możliwości...*, pp. 147-180.

Perhaps it is the kind of “thrill of transcendence” described by the Polish philosopher Grzegorz Sztabiński, which is triggered on the “skin of transcendence” or “margin of transcendence”⁹. Following S. Brent Rodriguez-Plate, Sztabiński wrote about the intense, often provocative use of some elements previously associated with transcendentals or sacred values (usually manifested in religious practices and often linked to national ideas) in contemporary art, which displays a peculiar “longing for transcendence”. Such longing is reflected in art in fragmentary, contingent and impoverished forms as traces or margins which can also be seen as a “step beyond aesthetics”¹⁰. When transcendental values seem to be incompatible with the artistic reality, and, at the same time, are treated “superficially,” this evokes the very “thrill of transcendence” referred to in the above example. Such works are often associated with critical art based on the theory of Theodor Adorno. The artistic task of “undermining the oppressive system” proclaimed by the philosopher would then also apply to the metaphysical system on which culture is founded¹¹. In line with Adorno’s philosophy, critical art involves “appropriation” of heritage (texts of culture including the national ethos) and subversive discussion or contestation and marginalization¹².

In the described example, the difficult condition of the metaphysical idea and its relationship with the actual ethos also seems to eliminate or marginalize the beauty of art. On the other hand, the “joyful” but coincidental disappearance of Polishness is also an oxymoronic, poetic paradox.

Warnings against “de-coincidence”?

Often, however, the criticism is not so categorical. For example, the margin of an elusive or misfitted Polish idea, as Sztabiński might have put it, or a de-coinciding idea, as Julien might have referred to it, is not only subject to criticism, but also exposed and cultivated. Even such fragmentary, contingent and impoverished forms, marginal traces, barely coincident or almost de-coincident, may be affirmed in art. Then the “thrill of transcendence” is supposed

⁹ Cf. G. Sztabiński, *Margins of transcendence in contemporary art*, “Art Inquiry” 2014, vol. 16, p. 60.

¹⁰ Cf. Ibid., p. 59. See also G. Sztabiński, *Poza estetyzacją. Problem duchowości w sztuce współczesnej / Beyond aesthetization. The question of spirituality in modern art*, “Sacrum et Decorum. Materiały i Studia z Historii Sztuki Sakralnej” 2009, vol. 2, p. 118.

¹¹ Cf. K. Karoń, *Bardzo krótka historia sztuki krytycznej*, in: id., *Historia antykultury 1.0*, <https://www.historiasztuki.com.pl/strony/026-00-00-SZTUKA%20KRYTYCZNA.html> (accessed: 19 August 2022).

¹² Cf. *Appropriation*, in: *Dictionary of Modern and Contemporary Art*, ed. I. Chilvers, J. Graves-Smith, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2009, pp. 27-28; Ł. Ronduda, *Strategie subwersywne w sztukach medialnych*, Rabid, Kraków 2006, pp. 9-11.

to reveal metaphysical ideas, even by its margins. The “thrill of transcendence” may signify the “metaphysicality of art”, despite the vanishing or concealed role of beauty.

On 19 November 2000, five fires were lit up in the Main Market Square of Kraków. They were called hope, freedom, dignity, love and truth¹³. The artist, Jerzy Bereś, in a black faux fur coat, soon emerged from the nearby Krzysztofory gallery, pushing a wooden *Romantic Cart* (Wózek Romantyczny). The title of the performance was *Romantic Manifestation* (Manifestacja romantyczna). The artist was well known for his use of his own naked body, often covered in painted signs, brushstrokes, or inscriptions. In winter, while performing outdoors, he would cover himself with a fur coat. His nudity harmonized with the austerity of his sculptural installations made of unprocessed wood. Each performance addressed an important issue and was meant as a polemic or dialogue with other artists, as well as a “holy sacrifice of the mass” devoted to art or other fundamental phenomena, such as Romanticism or Polish identity.

At the core of the sacralized artistry of his performance lay an act of sacrifice, and what was sacrificed was the artist’s own sense of shame, relinquished at the altar of nakedness, which served as the conceptual, intellectual substance of his art¹⁴. The raw qualities of the body (only minimally covered for protection against the biting cold), as well as wood, rope, fire and alcohol, though akin to the aesthetic values of ugliness or excessive intensity, were nonetheless meant to guarantee authenticity and, through their realism, to ultimately unveil truth. In Bereś’s *Romantic Manifestation* values were also represented by symbols, i.e., the fires as sources of “living” flames. They provoked a sense of light and warmth and communicated knowledge through sensations, often threatening ones. The knowledge in question pertained to the five fundamental principles explicitly named by the inscriptions painted on the ground next to the fires.

The honesty of Bereś’s sacrifice and his stubbornness implied truth, while his thrilling nudity served as a palpable “margin of transcendence,” traces of which were represented by the fires.

Like fire, the traces, which symbolize the origin and source of all universal values, also must be kept up. Bereś showed us what really fed them, helping the margins of transcendence expand outwards: the expansion is fueled by the Romantic attitude that cultivates a sense of Polish national identity, where the artist takes on the role of a prophet.

¹³ Cf. *Wydarzenia*, “Arteon” 2001, vol. 1, no. 9, p. 48.

¹⁴ See: J. Bereś, *Zwidy, wyrocznie, ołtarze; Dzieło czy fetysz and Szkic autobiograficzny*, in: id., *Wstyd. Międzypodmiotem a przedmiotem*, Otwarta Pracownia, Kraków 2002, pp. 78-79, 110, 168.

The *Romantic Manifestation* was first performed on 18 November 1981, coinciding with the era of Solidarity, which gave birth to a massive social movement¹⁵. The existence of Solidarity and the plans to restage the performance were interrupted by the Martial Law. *Manifestation* was only performed again in 2000, 2006 and 2011 (as well as in 2014, two years after Bereś's passing, by his daughter, Bettina Bereś, and other artists) and applauded as a living memento to Solidarity (*"Manifestacja romantyczna"*, 2000). In 1981, the symbolic *Romantic Cart*, which was used to transport the firewood, was poor and austere, just like Poland at that time. In 2000, it was plastered with flashy fictitious advertisements, which symbolized the mass consumer culture that was stifling both the Polish national identity and fundamental values.

For centuries, Poles had struggled to preserve these values, and the totalitarian oppression, systemic enslavement and humiliating poverty they had been subjected to had not prevented this. Bereś once believed that Poland is a Kierkegaardian "knight of faith" involved in a battle over values. The margins (the simple coat, raw wood, fire) were part of the contemporary renewal of Romantic ideas through the metaphysicality of his art. However, in the early 21st century, the artist seemed to ask whether the coincidence of universal values with Polishness would not fall apart under the influence of "colorful" prosperity and joyful consumption. Will the world of comfortable mass culture leave any room even for margins of transcendence?

In 2007, Piotr Uklański, a Polish artist based in New York, asked soldiers in red shirts to stand in the defunct Gdańsk Shipyard, in the vicinity of the symbolic port cranes, and to form together the logo of the Solidarity movement, which was 'written' using the characteristic typeface and was only visible when viewed from the air. The Solidarity, the sign, the community of people and their unity were then photographed as a "living memorial" to that last Polish Romantic struggle, which – given its peaceful nature – broke with the centuries-long insurrectionist tradition. The performance manifested one particular transcendental value as metaphysicality *in* art – by recalling the national unity of the past, and one transcendental value as metaphysicality *of* art – by forming the human material into an artwork (remodeling the group, the community into a work of art that acts symbolically and thereby opens up to poetic beauty). Through such parallelism, spatial unity was captured in time through the medium of photography and the equivalence of the unity of the "collective" logo and the metaphysical unity of the nation, once bound together by Solidarity, was achieved.

¹⁵ The idea for the annual lighting of the fires of hope, freedom, love, dignity and truth in the Market Square was born in 1975; prohibited by the communist regime, the project had to wait until the time of Solidarity (*"Manifestacja romantyczna"*, 2000).

However, Ukiński explicitly denied that his work was meant as “a tribute to the Solidarity movement”¹⁶. Later, in 2015, at an exhibition entitled *Fatal Attraction* at the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art, the photograph of the group arranged into the logo was accompanied by one that captured the soldiers scattered as they were going their separate ways, which rendered the sign illegible.

The symbolically blurring idea of Solidarity could mean the loss of Polish unity and the marginalization of the Polish *eidōs* through the detachment from the concept of Solidarity, which is crucial to Polishness. This marginalization and disappearance amount to ongoing decoincidence, clearly visible in the later work, as if Solidarity was ceasing to be synonymous to Polishness. On the other hand, this critical statement made by the artist could also mean a thrilling call to restore solidarity with a view of forming a transcendental national unity.

De-coincidence and affirmation

In 2014, Jakub Woynarowski recreated the ciborium over the exit from the crypt of Marshal Józef Piłsudski. The original canopy had been made of “spolia” that symbolized the foreign powers which had divided or “partitioned” Poland between themselves in the 18th century, erasing it from the map. Piłsudski was instrumental in reviving Poland in the 20th century. Woynarowski raised the roof of his ciborium slightly above the top of the columns. As a result, the flat, modernist cuboid with the words *Corpora dormiunt, vigilans animae* (“The bodies are asleep, the souls stay awake”) written on its edges did not rest securely on the classicist columns but instead seemed to float in mid-air (in reality, the roof was supported by hidden structural elements). This symbolized the gap and de-coincidence between “modern form and reactionary content” and the clash between the many “contradictory aspirations of the newly reborn state,” which, on the one hand, continued to be steeped in myths and superstitions related to its own past, but, on the other, joined the race towards modernity with an unshaken faith in progress” (Piłsudski also strengthened Poland by establishing a link between the Romantic tradition and modernity). Perhaps this puzzling gap (or de-coincidence) could also be interpreted as a thrilling space of metaphysics, where difference appears as *transcendental* by nature, putting up no obstacles to unity, in spite of the “de-coincidental” impression. The unity of the Polish idea can thus manifest itself in a variety of ways, through different aspects of the Polish ethos (Woynarowski’s colleagues noticed “an opposition

¹⁶ Cf. E. Gorzadek, *Piotr Ukiński*, <https://culture.pl/pl/tworca/piotr-uklanski> (accessed: 22 April 2022); S. Ruksza, *Bereś w czasach “recydywy romantyzmu”*, “Arteon” 2007, vol. 10, no. 90, p. 15.

between the homogeneous idea and the heterogeneous raw material that resists the demiurgic gesture”¹⁷. Perhaps this is the truth that can only be grasped by souls that stay awake, to which the canopy over the national necropolis was dedicated. For others, perhaps, these aspects are but *Impossible Objects* (*Figury niemożliwe*) (the title of the exhibition showcasing Jakub Woynarowski’s work). For such others, de-coincidence is only an obstacle, never creative.

Woynarowski showed, however, that even obvious inconsistencies can be apparent or dialectically creative and serve the Polish idea. In *The Age of Blue* (*Epoka błękitu*) (2017), an installation he constructed with Jakub Skoczek, blue color was the quality unveiling the aesthetic value of infinite depth and the super-aesthetic value of metaphysical calm¹⁸. Together with the cubical form of the space that housed the installation, which was meant to symbolize New Jerusalem – a city and space of salvation¹⁹, these served not so much as traces and margins as the visual equivalents of metaphysical values. At the center of this visualized metaphysical space, the artists put a sphere, cut in the middle by a jagged-edged diameter and coated with a mesh structure reminiscent of a neuronal network; the sphere seemed to grow out of two columns, which supported it at the bottom and the top. The installation was accompanied by a recorded collage of texts by Witold Gombrowicz (a writer who contested traditional Polishness) and Primate Stefan Wyszyński (who cultivated religiosity that largely shaped the Polish tradition in the post-war period). The de-coincident material surprisingly created a coherent whole thanks to the mutual resonance between the words of Gombrowicz and those of the Primate, as they reverberated in the immersive atmosphere of the blue calm.

De-coincidence and renewal

Jakub Różalski incorporates Polish realistic painting and battle art scenes in his digital graphics, drawing on the convention and style known from paintings of Józef Chełmoński, Leon Wyczółkowski or Wojciech, Juliusz and Jerzy Kossak²⁰. Often, as in the work *1920 Before the Storm* (*1920 Przed burzą*), peasants with scythes or village girls with rakes work in the fields and watch Polish cavalymen with white and red pennants on their lances ride across the fields alongside black Star Wars-like “walking machines” that support the

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Cf. *Jakub Woynarowski*, in: *Sztuka i metafizyka*, <https://sztukaimetafizyka.up.krakow.pl/woynarowski-jakub/> (accessed: 6 May 2022).

¹⁹ Cf. *Pismo Święte Starego i Nowego Testamentu w przekładzie z języków oryginalnych*, ed. 5, Pallottinum, Poznań 2012, Ap. 21-22, pp. 1625-1628 [Bible, Revelation 21-22].

²⁰ See, e.g., *Sierp i młot*, <http://polskagrafikacyfrowa.pl/sklep/sierp-i-młot-61> (accessed: 15 July 2022).

uhlans (*1920 Before the Storm*, 2014). In another image, entitled *Hammer and Sickle* (*Sierp i młot*) from 2014, one of the girls and a Polish soldier holding a lance look at a gigantic machine, but this time with a red star painted on it, rising above impressionistically blurred country houses. In another work, a machine leaning in the background again bears the Polish eagle on a red background. In front of it, in the foreground, a charging lancer is aiming his sabre at a Cossack in a fur cap, who is standing further in the background and likewise aiming at the rider.

In *A Connoisseur of Apples* (*Koneser jabłek*), another 2014 work, a soldier leans out of a smaller automaton and picks apples from a tree behind a fence lining the country road. The leaves of the trees are yellow and green in summer, the rails and roofs are illuminated by white-gray-blue light, a dog is barking at the machine, and the girl next to it is wearing a red skirt. An armed soldier is getting out of the black sidecar of a motorcycle on the other side of the road.

The appropriated Polish realistic painting style from the second half of the 19th and the first half of the 20th century, with genre and battle painting elements, enriched inventively with monumental fantasy elements drawing on the late 20th century, is thrilling due to the paradoxical contrast of conventions. The artist draws on mass culture, which is inappropriate or, as some will see it, marginal, for sublime national topics. Apparently, the de-coincidence is indisputable. Yet, the combinations create attractive imagery appreciated by art buyers. The pop-culture fantasy seems to be a form of contemporary representation of the margin of the Polish idea, and a bold redefinition of this idea based on this surprising margin of fantasy convention.

Since 2017, Adu Karczmarczyk has pursued an artistic online project entitled *The Great National Warm-up* (*Wielka rozgrzewka narodowa*)²¹. The videos illustrate physical exercises that “are intended to bring together quarrelling Poles”²². Adu and two “muscled” assistants, one dressed in white, the other in black, present the exercises using various sports fans’ accessories, like football team scarves, or copies of *Pan Tadeusz* by Adam Mickiewicz, the Great Polish Romantic, or of the modern novel *Ferdynand* by Witold Gombrowicz. Finally, they work out “on a cardboard mat in the shape of Poland and in national colours.” Perseverance in revealing the Polish idea with kitschy Campy props appropriate for pop culture, and therefore incompatible, de-coincidental, marginal in relation to sublime metaphysics, is also demonstrated by Adu’s *Miss*

²¹ See: *Wielka Rozgrzewka Narodowa*, in: the artist’s portfolio on her website *Adu, Ada Karczmarczyk*, <http://adakarczmarczyk.com/> (accessed: 10 June 2022).

²² A. Mokrzanowska, “*Lecimy ze Smoleńska*”. Kim jest ADU i dlaczego szokuje zarówno prawą, jak i lewą stronę?, <https://www.wprost.pl/newsroom/2021-04-26/kalendarium.html> (accessed: 24 June 2022).

Messianist project, started in 2018. The idea behind it is to ask questions about “the relevance of Polish messianic ideas in late modernity” and about “the identity of a modern woman inspired by messianism”²³ (which is a very Polish concept, but apparently incompatible with femininity). In addition to staged photographs posted on the Internet, inspired by the quoted works of Polish romantic visionaries (e.g. Józef Hoene Wroński, Adam Mickiewicz, Andrzej Towiański), resembling a romantic variety of performative “cosplay”, the project is notable for a videoclip for the song entitled *Miss Messianist*. Dressed in a silver jacket, the artist is shown up in the clouds, facing the audience, and, in her right hand, she holds a book with a pyramid on top, while her left hand supports a candle in cuboid frames. Every now and then, she lifts up her meekly lowered eyes, singing:

She invites you to enter the light
With messianism in her hands
She points to the Messiah
Her eyes the colour of the Kingdom of God
Her head adorned with the Gates of the New Age

At the end of the videoclip, a luminous light flashes in the middle of the screen, revealing a crowned figure in a blaze of glory.

The messianic margin of the Polish idea is revealed here with the use of mass culture by the irritating kitschiness, seemingly de-coincidental when confronted with the sublimity of the Polish idea. And yet, Karczmarczyk evokes the “thrill of transcendence” in her “Campy” way exceptionally aptly. Her project may be an example of what Grzegorz Sztabiński refers to as “living engagement”, which is useful for revealing and penetrating affirmatively the “margins of transcendence” in contemporary art²⁴. It precisely represented this adherence to decoincedental qualities that served the idea that was reinterpreted.

The examples described above result from the artists’ observation of and experimentation with the elusive notions of coincidence and de-coincidence between the Polish idea and the Polish ethos. Their projects have a capacity to trigger a surprising “thrill of transcendence,” which can go hand in hand with the feeling of “de-coincidence.” However, artistic projects created in this vein seem to have other purposes than just criticism of decoincedence by means of art.

Although the margin of the Polish metaphysical idea they convey may not seem entirely compatible with the Polish spirit, it may nevertheless be a vehicle of “silent transition” between metaphysics and reality. In contemporary art,

²³ *Miss Messianist*, in: the artist’s portfolio on her website *Adu, Ada Karczmarczyk*, <http://ada-karczmarczyk.com/> (accessed: 10 June 2022).

²⁴ See: G. Sztabiński, *Poza estetyzacją...*, p. 129.

however, the subtle silence of processual changes turns into the aesthetic “thrill” referred to above, forcing us into a dialogue with the past and with “the Others”, requiring us to “resume, transform, renew”²⁵.

The examples of de-coincidence discussed above should therefore be considered as serving to provoke dialogue. As a result, the works do not simply illustrate the postmodernist “liquid identity” Bauman or Welsch wrote about²⁶. They are rather intense calls for the dialogue, and, at the same time, materializations of the dialogue that François Jullien and Władysław Stróżewski (earlier, in Poland) wrote about. It is a dialogue with the past, with other artists and works, and finally with the Polish idea. It concerns the misalignment between the idea and the ethos, the mismatch between different ways of how ideas are perceived (sometimes the mismatch is only apparent), or the contemporary marginalisation of ideas, but also innovative ways of reviving them. The dialogue may involve criticism but also its opposite – affirmation. Such affirmation is possible in the observation of the de-coincidence and the resulting viewer’s concern for the abovementioned margin of ideas, this “space in between” – a concern that ultimately overcomes the existing state of inertia. Perhaps it is precisely the artistic concern for the barely fitting margins of ideas where the metaphysics of art is most pronounceably present, serving the idea better than illustrative representations of metaphysics in art.

This may imply that looking at the mismatch or de-coincidence, as Jullien would call it, but with the use of the concepts of Sztabiński and Stróżewski, will not only allow us to see the critical and “anti-system” elements, but also to “renew” and “re-live” metaphysical ideas and transcendentals in an affirmative way. Such affirmation is also present in the contemporary art that exposes de-coincidence or exploits the paradox of mismatch.

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²⁵ Cf. F. Jullien, *Ponownie otworzyć możliwości*, p. 12.

²⁶ See: Z. Bauman, *Tożsamość. Rozmowy z Benedetto Vecchim*, transl. J. Łaszcz, trans., Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne, Gdańsk 2007, p. 20; W. Welsch, *Stając się sobą*, transl. J. Wieteki, in: *Problemy ponowoczesnej pluralizacji kultury. Wokół koncepcji Wolfganga Welscha*, part 1, ed. A. Zeidler-Janiszewska, Wydawnictwo Fundacji Humaniora, Poznań 1998, pp. 11-34.

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O TRUDNEJ RELACJI POLSKICH IDEI I ETOSU W SZTUCE WSPÓŁCZESNEJ. MARGINALIZOWANE TRANSCENDENTALIA, KRYTYCZNA DE-KOINCYDENCJA, INTENSYWNY DIALOG I AFIRMATYWNE „ODNOWIENIE” (streszczenie)

Tekst wprowadza najpierw pojęcie idei polskiej, przedstawianej jako metafizyczność w sztuce i z wykorzystaniem metafizyczności sztuki. Przy tym de-koincydencja polskich idei i etosu obserwowana może być krytycznie w sztuce współczesnej, jak w pracy Artura Żmijewskiego. De-koincydencja wywołująca "dreszcz transcendencji" może być postrzegana jako zagrożenie, przestrzegają przed nim Jerzy Bereś i Piotr Uklański. Może także odsłaniać "margines transcendencji" (w tym idei polskiej) inspirując przy tym nowatorskie poszukiwania artystyczne (Jakub Różalski, Jakub Woynarowski, Adu Karczmaczyk). Prowadzone są one dzięki różnorodnym formom dialogu odnawiającego afirmatywne spojrzenia na idee i metafizyczność sztuki.

Słowa kluczowe: idea polska, de-koincydencja, marginesy transcendencji, metafizyczność sztuki, współczesna sztuka afirmatywna

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