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IN SEARCH OF THE WISE OLD MAN ARCHETYPE: MASTER TWARDOWSKI

W POSZUKIWANIU ARCHETYPU STAREGO MĘDRCA: MISTRZ TWARDOWSKI

Abstrakt: Artykuł przedstawia legendarną postać obecną w kulturze polskiej – Mistrza Twardowskiego – w kontekście archetypowej myśli Carla Gustava Junga. Mag z legendy, spopularyzowany zwłaszcza przez autorów romantycznych (takich jak Mickiewicz czy Krasiński), powiązany zostaje z archetypem Starożytności, figury obecnej w kulturze od starożytności, charakteryzującej się wiedzą i umiejętnościami magicznymi. Twardowski w toku analizy uznany zostaje za specyficznie polską aktualizację wspomnianego archetypu.

Słowa kluczowe: romantyzm, Jung, archetyp, mędrzec, Mistrz Twardowski

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Introduction

The aim of the article is to introduce the figure of wizard Master Twardowski, a legendary character also known under the name of “Polish Faust”, in connection with Carl Gustav Jung’s archetypal thought. The article consists of two parts: the first is devoted to a brief reflection on the Wise Old Man archetype, the second presents Master Twardowski as an embodiment of the aforementioned archetype in relation to the alchemical framing of a process of individuation.¹

¹ This article is based on excerpts from the book: M. Rozmysl, *Mistrz Twardowski w romantyzmie. Próba mitobiografii*, Lublin 2016 (Rozmysl 2016).

The figures of sages, magicians, diviners or wizards are common in culture. They seem to be deeply rooted in tradition and they epitomise a broader type of independent heroes which occur especially in the mythical structures. This type can be recognized as the archetypes. Jung describes them figuratively:

Archetypes are like river-beds which dry up when the water deserts them, but which can be found again at any time. An archetype is like an old water-course along which the water of life has flowed for centuries, digging a deep channel for itself. The longer it has flowed in this channel, the more likely it is that sooner or later the water will return to its old bed. (Jung 1978: 189)

The father of analytical psychology advocated that some ideas, models or types are repeated continuously in culture. Jung was searching for the sources of those types in the collective unconscious: “the contents of the collective unconscious are invariably archetypes that were present from the beginning” (Jung 1979: 8). The nature of archetypes can be presented more precisely: archetypes are the prototypes of religious beliefs, feelings, aspirations and activities shared by people regardless of their origin, education or cultural background. An archetype is an inborn pattern of behaviour which manifests itself in dreams, works of art, myths or in rituals (Cf. Clarke 1992: 117; Mączka 1992: 92), a pattern that “always begins to function when there are no conscious ideas present, or when conscious ideas are inhibited for internal or external reasons” (Jung 1989a: 377).

The Wise Old Man archetype and its embodiments

There are a few archetypes particularly prevalent in the literary research, one of them is the figure of the Wise Old Man, “less frequent and less striking, which has likewise undergone poetic as well as mythological formulations” (Jung 1980: 285). In the narrations, this archetype is impersonated by an old man, a sage who is often a help to the main hero, giving him advice and bestowing magic artefacts (Jung 1980: 215-225). Even Jung found his own realization of this archetype. In his dreams, the author of *Red Book* met a figure named Philemon, who is believed to be a guide, the Wise Old Man, that came from the unconscious (Dudek 1992: 158).

Marie-Louise von Franz gives additional information on the Wise Old Man archetype:

If an individual has wrestled enough with the anima (or animus) problem so that he, or she, is no longer partially identified with it, the unconscious again changes its dominant character and appears in a symbolic form, representation of the Self [...]. In the dreams of a woman this center is

usually personified as a superior female figure - a priestess, sorceress, earth mother, or goddess of nature or love. In the case of a man, it manifests itself as a masculine initiator and guardian (an Indian guru), a wise old man, a spirit of nature, and so forth (Franz 1980: 207-208).

One of the first embodiments of the Wise Old Man archetype is probably presented in the *Symposium* written by Plato, when the author wants to outline the origins of Love (Eros). Plato thereby distinguishes three groups of human beings and their approaches to wisdom. The first group does not possess it and does not crave it, those are the ordinary people. The second group is different, they realize their lack of knowledge and they try to acquire it, those are the philosophers. Lastly, there is the third group, the gods and the group termed in Greek as *sophos*. Plato explains: "No god is a philosopher or seeker after wisdom, for he is wise already; nor does any man who is wise seek after wisdom" (Plato 1902: 496). Benjamin Jowett translated the term *sophos* as a "man who is wise", so it is safe to state that other suitable translations of *sophos* are "sage" or "savant".

All the divisions made by the author of *The Republic*, account for the conclusion that Eros is an example of *sophos*, in turn easily associated with one particular archetype. As demonstrated, Love has a plethora of special features typical of the Wise Old Man: "he is intermediate between the divine and the mortal" (Plato 1902: 495) or "a philosopher at all times, terrible as an enchanter, sorcerer, Sophist". Plato adds: "for he is neither mortal or immortal, he is alive and flourishing at one moment when he is plenty, and dead at another moment, and again alive" (Plato 1902: 496). Eros seems to be familiar with magic and the esoteric arcana therefore being also able to manipulate life and death. Those are the elements that let us recognize an instance of the Wise Old Man archetype in Eros.

There are further examples of homologous figures in the history of culture resembling Eros incarnated as a Wise Old Man. Tiresias, the blind clairvoyant, is present in the Greek mythology (Schmidt 2006: 303-304). In the Norse mythology, Mimir exists – a wizard who knows the secrets of the past and the future (Stupecki 2003: 298), likewise Odin – the seeker of wisdom (Stupecki 2003: 115). There are also: Myrddin, commonly known as Merlin – a Welsh wizard and poet (MacKilop 1998: 340); Jethro (Jung 1979: 210) and Solomon (Minczew and Skowronek 2006: LV), both descendants of Judeo-Christian tradition.

A brief history of the figure of Master Twardowski

Let us then focus on another example of a Wise Old Man, the figure of Master Twardowski, who is probably one of the greatest Polish incarnations

of this archetype. Twardowski, a legendary figure, as the legend has it, sold his soul to the devil to gain knowledge, wealth and other gifts. His most famous work is the invocation of the spirit of Barbara Radziwiłłówna. Twardowski's story was popularized in the 19th century, mainly thanks to the texts written by Adam Mickiewicz and Józef Ignacy Kraszewski. Also, as early as in the 19th century, there were opinions that the figure of the wizard belongs to larger, mythical structures: "The figure of Twardowski does not relate to one individual person, it is a model of a sage" (Sas-Zubrzycki 1928: 54). Or to cite Józef Grajner:

However the figure of Twardowski was made up throughout the ages. The folk did not create this legend by itself, but as a result of many inspirations: variety of episodes in the history and various migratory ideas, and it is possible that this figure has its origin in the archaic days of paganism (Grajner 1859: 470-471)

As demonstrated by the above sources, Twardowski was considered a recurrent type of hero, years before the concept of archetype was created and the suitable notions became utilized in research. Sas Zubrzycki and Grajner were aware of the special status of the wizard who was probably a manifestation of the collective unconscious. As a matter of fact, the magician, as the article is about to illustrate, has all the components which allow for the Wise Old Man archetype.

It is believed that some person called Twardowski actually lived in the 16th century and was known for his career as a magician in the city of Cracow. That Twardowski transformed into a folk and literary figure and became popularly recognized in Polish culture mainly due to one episode of his well-known, flamboyant existence: the wizard had signed a pact with the Devil himself in exchange for the typical gifts associated with an infernal pact: wisdom, knowledge of magic and alchemy, wealth, immortality and so forth. The presence of Twardowski in writings dates back to 1566, the publication date of *Dworzanin polski* [The Polish courtier] by Łukasz Górnicki, the first work in the Polish literature which refers to Twardowski. The magician was popular, especially in the literature of romanticism (but it is worth mentioning that the youngest work on Twardowski, *Królikarnia* [The warren] by Maciej Guzek, was published recently, in 2007). Therefore, the continuous re-occurrence of the hero has lasted almost four hundred and fifty years, during which time Twardowski's legend has had time to inspire many poets and writers worldwide, which resulted in a series of mysteries, themes and variations on Twardowski "literary biography", as well as

multiple attempts to explain and to identify Polish magician's peripeteia with reference to history and folklore.

The History of Twardowski is reiterated in the most coherent manner through the work of Julian Krzyżanowski entitled *Polska bajka ludowa w układzie systematycznym* [Polish folk fable in the systematic framework] which is a Polish equivalent of an Aarne–Thompson tale type index. In the folktale, the Devil obtained Twardowski's soul by a pact with Twardowski's own father burdened by troubles, in exchange for an immediate help. Young Twardowski decides to go to hell to take the contract his father had signed with Satan. The journey is successful and the young boy saves his soul. Yet, it is not the end of Twardowski's torments with the Devil. When he becomes a student in Cracow, he wants to gain great wisdom and wealth (not to mention the love of the most beautiful woman). Twardowski thus decides to sell his soul once again, but this time with some special settlements appended. The Devil agrees to fulfil the contract, being promised Twardowski's soul, which could be taken only in Rome. The wizard proceeds to develop his magic career, he marries the beloved woman, and in the end is snatched by the Devil. In the finale of the story, the magician's soul is rescued by Virgin Mary when the hero repents (Krzyżanowski 1963: 228-230) and, according to the legend, Twardowski has still been living on the Moon until this very day. The folktale's plot shows how extensively the biography of Twardowski is similar to those of other popular magicians: Faust from the great work of Goethe and Saint Theophilus of Adana, both realisations of the Wise Old Man archetype (Piasecka 1990: 98, 104).

Towards the rejuvenation and the individuation process

We infer that the most interesting issue in this story is probably the question of the magic praxis. In almost every work that was inspired by Twardowski, the hero was a powerful wizard and sage, helping people. Generally speaking, those features combine to make a Wise Old Man. As Jung says, "The old man thus represents knowledge, reflection, insight, wisdom, cleverness and intuition, on the one hand, and – on the other – moral qualities such as goodwill and readiness to help" (Jung 1980: 222). In all of the narrations, Master Twardowski uses all sorts of magic abilities: necromancy, divination, atmospheric magic, love magic, alchemy. Lastly, the most important skill of the wizard is healing and rejuvenating.

This ability to cure was chosen to elaborate on in this article. According to Jung, there are five forms of rebirth (which may be considered as a hypernym for ‘rejuvenation’):

(a) metempsychosis (transgression of souls) which is a “life-sequence interrupted by different reincarnations” (Jung 1980: 113);

(b) reincarnation, which differs from metempsychosis by the possibility to recall all of the prior existences after rebirth;

(c) resurrection;

(d) *renovatio* “rebirth in the strict sense, that is to say, rebirth within the span of individual life” (Jung 1980: 114). This type of renewal may be an effect of a magic intervention. It may be a total rebirth – a complete conversion of the ontological status: “the transformation of a mortal into immortal being, of a corporeal into a spiritual being, and a human into a divine being” (Jung 1980: 114). An instance of this renewal is the resurrection of Christ or of Virgin Mary;

(e) participation in the process of transformation, especially in the religious rites as the Mass or the Eleusinian mysteries (Jung 1980: 114-115).

According to Jung, *renovatio* took place also in the action of *Faust*, when the main character was changed into a young boy by means of magic. It is important to underscore that the renewal of Master Twardowski also was a rejuvenation. Moreover, as the character is related to Goethe’s *Faust*, it is clear that his transformation was also of type (d). It was the effect of a magic ritual which leads to a complete transfiguration.

A further form of transformation is achieved through a rite used directly for this purpose. Instead of the transformation experience coming to one through participation in the rite, the rite is used for the express purpose of effecting the transformation. It thus becomes a sort of technique to which one submits oneself. For instance, a man is ill and consequently needs to be “renewed”. The renewal must “happen” to him from outside, and to bring this about, he is pulled through a hole in the wall at the head of sick-bed, and now he is reborn; or he is given another name and thereby another soul, and then the demons no longer recognize him; or he has to pass through a symbolical death; or, grotesquely enough, he is pulled through a leathern cow, which devours him, to so speak, in front and then expels him behind; or he undergoes an ablution or baptismal bath and miraculously changes into a semi-divine being with a new character and an altered metaphysical destiny (Jung 1980: 128-129).

According to Jung, magical rites have a great power and when they are performed, major changes occur. A magical ritual was likewise performed by Twardowski and it concluded in the old wizard’s rebirth in a new, young body.

Jung describes a very interesting convergence between two seemingly distant phenomena: “The concepts of alchemy and the individuation process

are matters that seem to lie very far apart, so that the imagination finds it impossible at first to conceive of any bridge between them” (Jung 1989b: 3). But it is not impossible to achieve. The rite of rejuvenation can be considered alchemical *opus magnum*. Jung expounded a theory in which all of the alchemical processes were performed not for the prize – the legendary philosopher’s stone or gold – but for a different desirable effect. The crucial point was, it had an intellectual or spiritual dimension – a successful process of individuation (Błocian 2010: 290).

Maria Piasecka, in her work, implies that the figure of Master Twardowski had special inclination to alchemy, and in his work he combined the matter and the spirit (Piasecka 1990: 105), since the alchemists do so. It is also worth noting that one of the ancient Greek alchemists, Zosimos of Panopolis, believed that alchemy was a sort of sacral mystery in which both body and chemicals were subject to the action of the inexplicable heavenly and hellish forces (Bugaj 1971: 15). Bearing this in mind, we can therefore state, that the process of rejuvenation, regarded as alchemical work, is to be identified with the process of individuation. In other words, Twardowski in his literary biography, after the renewal, had emerged as an archetype and it was surely the Wise Old Man archetype.

In conclusion, Master Twardowski is an exceptional hero correlated with the Wise Old Man archetype in two complementing ways. Firstly, the wizard can be *a priori* found to be an embodiment of the discussed archetype. Secondly, in the scope of his epic story, Twardowski is an example of a person who conducts a successful process of individuation and emerges as a Wise Old Man.

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Abstract: The article presents a legendary Polish figure – Master Twardowski – in the context of the archetypal thought of Carl Gustav Jung. A wizard from legends, popularized especially by romantic authors (such as Mickiewicz or Kraszewski) is associated with the Wise Old Man, the archetypal figure common in culture since antiquity, characterized by, conventionally, knowledge and magical skills. In the analysis, Master Twardowski is described as a specific Polish embodiment of the aforementioned archetype.

Keywords: Romanticism, Jung, archetype, Wise Old Man, Mistrz Twardowski

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