

## FROM POLAND WITH LOVE.

### DIMENSIONS OF FEELING IN THE INTERWAR ESOTERIC REFLECTION

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Love is a feeling whose metaphorical descriptions are full of magical references: one can charm someone, fall under someone's spell, spend magical moments with someone, and even say that feelings and emotional reactions – not only others, but also your own – are black magic. The connection of the subject of feelings, emotions, and especially love with magic has many dimensions and is related to the liminality of both phenomena and the difficulty of grasping them rationally. The comparison of the emotional sphere with something mysterious, difficult to define and control, and not fully understood by ourselves, naturally invites associations with esotericism in colloquial discourses. In addition to human love, which we find, among others in partnership or family relationships, love can also be understood as a religious and ontological element, like the biblical statement that God is love is interpreted (John 4: 8, 16). The sphere of feelings, interpreted in various ways, could not be missing from the esoteric reflection. This article presents both selected conceptualizations of fleeting, momentary feelings, emotional aspects of thoughts that play important roles in Western Esotericism, and a theory of love in a metaphysical and soteriological context.

#### IMAGES AND COLORS OF EMOTIONS

When we think about what “images of emotions” are meant to mean, an occurring association is with emoticons, which are used every day in the era of electronic communication, and minimalistic in terms of aesthetics – that is, something that has now become an inseparable part of informal communication. Emoticons are used to signal the appropriate interpretation of a message from a sender which one cannot see. In direct communication, intentions can be read directly from behavior, facial expressions or tone of voice, that is, generally speaking – the body and its physical properties. But what if the body does not consist of matter visible to the naked eye, but still has subtle layers, what if there are several “bodies”? An answer was supplied by adepts of Theosophy, who extended the observable symptoms of emotions to, rarefied forms of matter, the existence of which they supposed, perceivable to clairvoyants educated in this skill.

A peculiar esoteric bible in this regard was the work of Charles Webster Leadbeater *Man Visible and Invisible. Examples of different types of men as seen by means of trained clairvoyance*,<sup>1</sup> first published in 1902. Although this work was not published in Polish, archival finds indicate that it was read and known in Poland. Earlier theosophical texts, including the basic introductions to Theosophy by Blavatsky, analyzed subtle bodies, and especially their perceptible aspects, to a limited extent. In Leadbeater's approach, who, together with Besant, to some extent reformed the concept of corporeality in general (by changing the number of subtle layers and their names in relation to Blavatsky's canon), subtle bodies are characterized by a whole riot of colors and visual effects. The layers observable by the "trained" clairvoyant, including the astral, mental and causal bodies, could not only have all the colors of the rainbow, but also patterns and dynamics, such as vortices.

Interestingly, in this concept, feelings or emotions are phenomena that resonate on various planes of reality, do not stop on the physical body, but permeate, among others, the astral world. But how to understand them? This is what Leadbeater explains in chapter XIII on the meaning of colors.<sup>2</sup> He does this in great detail when it comes to the colors themselves, discussing their various shades and the resulting combinations. According to the author, recognizing each of the elements is complex, because e.g. anger is represented by scarlet, and love by crimson and rose, but both anger and love are often immersed in selfishness and in such cases body shades will be darkened with the hard brown-gray color characteristic for these negatives. If, on the other hand, these feelings are mixed with pride, they will acquire a shade of deep orange for the observer.<sup>3</sup>

The Theosophists' interest in this type of "observation" and the popularization of Leadbeater's work on a widespread scale is largely behind the popularity of "aura" phenomenon and its study, present in the second half of the twentieth century in numerous currents of new spirituality described under the banner of New Age. Although many authors refer to Eastern inspirations, in fact the concepts are mediated in Theosophical imagination. And although the aura today, like for the Theosophists from a century ago, may allegedly indicate, for example, the level of spiritual development, it should be remembered that emotions were once at the very center of considerations on the visibility of subtle bodies. From shades of blue, associated with religious feelings, through yellow for reason and to greenish-brown with dark red reflections signifying jealousy, colors have

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Webster Leadbeater, *Man Visible and Invisible: Examples of Different Types of Men as Seen by Means of Trained Clairvoyance* (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1902).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 80–6.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 80–1.

become not only an element of description, but also a direct, observable expression of a certain energy vibration. The colors could not only be seen, but also felt or expressed through their own complex corporeality.

If we juxtapose *Man visible and invisible* with books *Thought-forms*, the book first published a bit earlier – in 1901,<sup>4</sup> and *Power and Use of Thought* by Leadbeater from 1911,<sup>5</sup> we get a full description of Theosophical synesthesia that is widely present in visual arts and music. From the *Thought-Forms* we learn, among other things, that the vibrations colored for the recipient are also produced by music, and therefore music can be painted. The second work explains where the power of thought and intention comes from. It has already been said here that our thoughts and emotions in this concept extend to the astral world, but it appears from further Theosophical works that they can also have a direct influence on this world. And the path from the subtle world to the world of hard matter is shorter than one might think.

#### INTENTIONS, THOUGHTLINGS („MYŚLAKI”) AND ASTROIDEAS

American Spiritualism and its European brother Spiritism contributed to the popularity of the concept of astral bodies as well as French Occultism, Modern Theosophy and Anthroposophy. Regardless of whether we consider esoteric concepts of corporeality in the perspective of the dualism of soul and body, the threefold rooted in the ancient Gnosticism, within which only the spirit is saved, the four-stage Anthroposophical vision, the sevenfold structure of man in Theosophy, or the concept of the nine elements in some Rosicrucian currents – they are united by the assumption that there is an eternal element in man, and at least one of the indicated layers can separate (alone or in a special vehicle) from the physical body. Hence the journeys of specters, ethereal twins, bilocation – this is, however, only one way to explain the activity of an individual in the extra-material worlds. An analysis of the tangible world of emotions had to be supplemented with an outline of the ideas introduced by the second generation of Theosophists including expanded understanding of functioning in the astral world without “leaving the body.” After the publication of *Thought-Forms*, the interest of artists in this system became almost massive – from symbolists, through abstractionists, to muralists, many

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<sup>4</sup> Annie Besant and Charles Webster Leadbeater, *Thought-Forms: A Record of Clairvoyant Investigation is a Theosophical Book Compiled by the Members of the Theosophical Society* (London, Benares: The Theosophical Publishing Society, 1901).

<sup>5</sup> Charles Webster Leadbeater, *Power and Use of Thought* (Adyar, India / Wheaton, IL / London, UK: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1911).

well-known names referred to the works of Besant and Leadbeater, often drawing even from Blavatsky. As already noted, the topic reached a wider audience and become popular not only among adepts of initiatory organizations.

The idea that one can sin by thoughts is not new – after all, we find it, for example, in the Judeo-Christian tradition. However, the belief that God knows our thoughts because He is omniscient, and the concept that we by our thoughts give birth to a whole host of “angels and demons”, who later act to some extent in the world independently of us, is separated by an ontological gulf. According to Theosophists,<sup>6</sup> every thought, especially one strengthened by a strong emotion, feeling, conviction, is a real being that arises in the astral world. This thought separates itself from its creator and, powered by positive or negative emotions, begins its activities in the spiritual world, which in turn affects the physical world, because all layers of reality interpenetrate. Over time, such creatures may become independent. An individual or groups of people may be responsible for their creation. Man, thinking about various things, people, situations, releases a whole host of creatures that gain independence over time – usually he does it completely unconsciously and accidentally. The task of an adept is to control this process, think consciously, and thus – intentionally influence reality. Importantly, if we think about this schema from a Theosophical perspective, this process is embedded in the evolutionary schema and has to do with the law of Karma. Those “elementals” that arise from thoughts determine Karmic debt and can affect its fulfillment.<sup>7</sup> Evolution, on the other hand, is a cosmic necessity and is subject to the cycles that each individual must go through.

An interesting phenomenon that can be followed in recent decades is the emergence of dozens of psychological guides (far from academic rigor), including world best-sellers such as Joseph Murphy's *The Power of Your Subconscious Mind*<sup>8</sup> or *The Secret* of Rhonda Byrne<sup>9</sup> which argue that the strength of positive thinking alone can completely change one's life. Undoubtedly, these concepts have their roots in the Theosophical constructs discussed here, which link Western Occultism with Eastern religious-philosophical systems, but completely neglect their ontological character. Even if they superficially evoke the scientifically grounded notion of the subconscious, in fact they refer to the vision of God-manhood and the unlimited creative powers of each religiously-based individual. From the complicated system, only the power of positive thinking remains, which,

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. Annie Besant, *Karma: Theosophical Manual No. 4* (Adyar: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1895).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Joseph Murphy, *The Power of Your Subconscious Mind* (New York: Bantam Books, 1963; repr., Martino Fine Books, 2011).

<sup>9</sup> Rhonda Byrne, *The Secret* (New York: Atria Books, 2006).

unlike Theosophy, no longer serves to liberate people from the circle of incarnations, help humanity to accelerate evolution, but only improve relations at work or self-esteem, etc. The authors therefore focus on emotions and feelings themselves – what was once a tool becomes the aim itself, and spiritual discipline has been replaced by taking care of the individual well-being.

In Poland, a list of terms related to Esotericism, Occultism and their various ideas was collected and edited by Alojzy Krzysztof Gleic (1897–1950) in the form of the *Glossarjusz okultyzmu* [Occult Glossary] in the interwar period.<sup>10</sup> Theosophical references (which can be seen, for example, from definitions that follow Blavatsky, and not, for example, Steiner) played an important role in it, but it also covered issues from many different currents of thought. There are several entries in it that refer to ideas popular in Poland in the period in question, related to the concepts of the astral influence of thoughts and strengthening them with emotions. And so there is the term *astroidea*, which means “human thought laden with feeling and formed in the astral”<sup>11</sup>. The author adds that *astroideas* are produced by humans or other creatures and can be perceived by clairvoyants. Although Gleic points out that a *thoughtling* – “myślak” is a synonym for *astroidea*, this one receives a separate description in the lexicon, in which the author explains not only its origin, but also its further operation.

A *thoughtling* [myślak], that is a *thought-form* [myślo-forma] (here a clear reference to *Thought-Forms*) “is a being that thought brought to life. The stronger and more precise a thought is, the greater the energy and vital force it creates. Every thought strives to be realized, so every *thoughtling* (for the time being only clothed in mental matter) strives to clothe itself in coarse matter, primarily astral, and then ethereal, and finally becomes an act in physical matter. Therefore, it is the strong *thoughtlings* that are usually emotionally (astral) tinged.”<sup>12</sup>

Another concept that sometimes appears in the context of *thoughtlings* is a *larva*. A *larva* is also a creature that is created by human desires (which is also noted by Gleic), but often in esoteric imaginations it has a personal form. The term alludes to the religion of ancient Rome; in reference to this meaning Cornelius Agrippa wrote of the *larvae* as sinful souls who had not got to any good place. According to some esotericists, the *larvae* appear at spiritualist sessions pretending to be other spirits, deliberately misleading the par-

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<sup>10</sup> Alojzy Gleic, *Glossarjusz okultyzmu* (Kraków: Nakładem miesięcznika „Lotos”, 1936).

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 59.

ticipants of the séance.<sup>13</sup> We may add that according to Theosophists, these episodes are caused by the empty shells of Kamarupa inhabited by other beings.

A separate category is the *egregor*, that is, here “an astral creature with common intentions and thoughts, created on the principle of a magical chain of a whole group of people, connected by one thought and one will.”<sup>14</sup> Unlike the *thoughtling*, who is often driven by random emotions, creating an *egregor* is a deliberate process in this approach. Gleic’s study collects terms present in the Occult discourse, appearing in numerous Polish publications. The presence of several synonyms of *thought-forms* clearly indicates that the theoretical background of the concepts that created or systematized them was well known at the time. The issue of *thought-forms* is, as it was indicated, a very interesting subject of analyzes concerning the contemporary reception of pre-WWII esotericism, but also an example of the important role played by controlling one’s emotions in the context of Cosmic evolution.

#### ALL-LOVE. LOVE TO THE GRAVE... AND BEYOND

A novel that not only played a very important role in the formation of 19th-century Western Esotericism, but also in the genre of the Occult romance, is *Zanon* by Edward Bulwer-Lytton first published in 1842. The theme of emotions beyond death became very popular thanks to it – and then also thanks to the spinning tables fever. In Poland, one of the most famous Occult romances was the novel *A gdy odejdzie w przepaść wieczną. Romans zagrobowy* [And When He Goes Down the Eternal Abyss. An Afterlife Romance, 1910] by Hanna Krzemieniecka (born Janina Furs-Żyrkiewicz).<sup>15</sup> The theme of a feeling that exceeds the limits of life was often explored perversely – as a karmic debt burdening the main character, e.g. for tragically ending romances. Antoni, the protagonist of Agnieszka Pilchowa’s *Zmora* (1932)<sup>16</sup> learns at some point that the demonic phantoms that haunt him and cause the nocturnal emissions are none other than mistresses murdered by him in the previous incarnation. Motifs of this type, however, were not only explored in fiction, they also became the subject of studies, including books and articles published by various esotericists. For example, Józef Chobot wrote about why marriages

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>15</sup> Hanna Krzemieniecka, *A gdy odejdzie w przepaść wieczną...: Romans zagrobowy. Dwa tomy w jednym* (Warszawa: P. Laskauer, 1910).

<sup>16</sup> Agnieszka Pilchowa, *Zmora: Powieść okultystyczna osnuta na tle prawdziwych przeżyć* (Wisła: „Hejnał”, 1932).

seem to be seemingly mismatched in the article *Tajemnicze działanie Karmy w miłości* [The mysterious operation of Karma in love, 1921].<sup>17</sup>

In the 1920s and 1930s, there was an interesting Esoteric milieu in Wisła in Cieszyn Silesia region. Its members shared the interests and beliefs linking Christianity with various esoteric trends, as well as the mission of proclaiming the revealed truth related to the destiny of Poland. The core of the circle were people who settled in Wisła. They were, among others Andrzej Podzorski (1886–1971), Agnieszka Pilchowa (1887–1944) also known as the Clairvoyant of Wisła, Jan Hadyna (1899–1971), Józef Chobot (1875–1942) and others. Wisła's esotericists gathered a large group of collaborators around them. The "satellites" of the Wisła community, as they can be called, came from various parts of Poland, but remained inextricably linked with the center in Cieszyn Silesia. Among them were, to mention just a few, Józef Świtkowski (1876–1942), the author of *Okultyzm i magia w świetle parapsychologii* [Occultism and Magic in the Light of Parapsychology] (1939)<sup>18</sup> but also the author of the abovementioned *Glossary of Occultism* – Alojzy Gleic (1897–1950), Jan Henryk Bloch (1866–1938), and the president of the Polish Metapsychic Society in Warsaw and editor of "Zagadnia metapsychiczne" (journal Metapsychic Issues), Stefan Kowalski (1870–1934). Both Kowalski and Bloch analyzed love in an esoteric context and these analyzes will be outlined here.

Stanisław Kowalski in his text *Miłość, jako czynnik ewolucji* [Love as a factor of evolution, 1934]<sup>19</sup> wrote about love as a law of nature that manifests itself in every form of life in the universe:

In its essence, love is a powerful impulse, which is the basis of the existence of individual life and the development of every earthly form of being; it is a law of nature, pulsating in all its manifestations, as an inexhaustible striving in every matter to exist, persist and multiply; it is a tendency to unite and complement each other in the expression of affect of two opposite poles: male and female, in order to create new beings out of existing matter. It is a ruling power which is manifested in all nature by the law of eternal rebirth, an imperative to become ever new, to constantly evolve.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Józef Chobot, „Tajemnicze działanie Karmy w miłości,” *Odrodzenie: Miesięcznik poświęcony sprawom odrodzenia człowieka i badaniem zjawisk duchowych* 1, no. 9 (1921): 7–8.

<sup>18</sup> Józef Świtkowski, *Okultyzm i magia w świetle parapsychologii* (Lviv / Wisła: nakładem redakcji miesięcznika „Lotos” 1939.)

<sup>19</sup> Stefan Kowalski, „Miłość, jako czynnik ewolucji we wszechświecie,” *Wiedza duchowa* 1, no. 1 (1934): 16–21; no. 2: 48–50; no. 3: 66–70.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

In this approach, love is not only an expression of the highest combination of the male and female elements, but also “the axis of the formation of matter, the stimulus conditioning every life, the driving force behind it from the lowlands of the unconscious being to the peaks of the spirit.”<sup>21</sup> The love drive stands on the border of body and spirit, which is at the heart of life itself. Despite this, Kowalski puts love somewhat in opposition to life; according to him, life has an element of destruction in it – and love is a force stronger than death. It seeks rebirth and its nature is reincarnation. This force, however, is not limited to activity among rational beings such as humans but extends to all levels of creation – even the mineral world.<sup>22</sup>

Kowalski describes various levels of love – starting with the one that appears in the kingdom of plants and animals and which is understood as the most primitive and selfish, ending with spiritual love that covers the entire universe.<sup>23</sup> Only love in the physical dimension is available to animals, which has a creative power, the power to renew the species. Kowalski devotes a lot of space to the descriptions of the ways and limitations within which such love works in the plant world. It describes, *inter alia*, love-hate relationships that allow the preservation of one's offspring by producing toxins that kill foreign pollen.<sup>24</sup> At higher levels of development, there is altruism, love for the species, and further – the love of the entire Universe, which exceeds selfish motives. In addition to the sensual love that is characteristic of the lower forms of existence, there is also a much stronger spiritual love. The higher in evolution, the more “love cleanses itself, becomes more powerful, becomes capable of the highest altruism, sacrifice for the benefit of an individual or country, or a lofty idea, often turning from an original, instinctive feeling to a flame of pure spirit.”<sup>25</sup> It is the creative element in all areas of human activity – from art, science, through law, to religion. The personification of perfect love is the Spirit from whose impulse the universe arose. Love is therefore not only a Cosmic law, the principle of existence, but in a way the Creator, although Kowalski also describes it as the greatest gift of the Creator.<sup>26</sup>

But how does this image relate to the meaning of love as a feeling between two people? First of all, not everything we call love is love – it is often just an apparent instinct

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 16–7.

<sup>23</sup> Kowalski, „Miłość,” 17–20.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 18–9.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.



rooted in nature. True love is one that exhausts itself on one person and is so selfless that it places the happiness of the other person above their own. According to Kowalski, such love between a woman and a man is a reflection of spiritual love. It appears like a lightning bolt – “it is not a false flame of smoldering feelings, fading away in the wind of the first adversities, and the heat that burns through the human heart; it is not merely a saturation, but a message to higher ends; it is not the word of the world, but the mind of the Spirit; an echo going into the immortal distance from the beating of two hearts, the fulfillment of longings that have accumulated in the human soul for centuries.”<sup>27</sup> Undoubtedly, in this perspective, love is something that goes beyond the limits of one life and death. Kowalski believed that every human being on earth has a soul mate. Hence the desire to find the perfect sweetheart. As the author writes poetically: “The longing of a disconnected spirit follows us through millions of years and lasts until we find two disconnected poles, to incinerate all feelings in ourselves in a revelation of love.” However, he emphasizes, love between two people, even one that is completely selfless and free from lust, is only a reflection of this perfect love, called omnipotence. Omnipotence leads to rebirth “into a new being for the spirit” and to “being in the immortal infinity.”<sup>28</sup>

The soteriological dimension of love is important here because it not only allows one to be reborn in the spiritual world, but is the highest and most important goal in life. Love is also the original source from which everything flows and to which it finally flows. It is also interesting that a man who experiences omniscience (and it is possible on earth, Kowalski claims) gains the opportunity to develop intuition and other elements of transcendental cognition.<sup>29</sup> Bearing in mind that Kowalski was the President of the Metapsychic Society in Warsaw, his ideas regarding the theoretical foundations of the manifestation of psychic abilities had to be taken into account in the community. For Kowalski, love itself is a process that is constantly taking place in the universe. It constitutes, together with death, the dynamics of the universe which is driven by it like a perpetual motion machine. Thanks to the approach of two principles – female and male – this process can be realized. It is within its framework that God is born from the connection which consists in the complete interpenetration of these elements with one another. Love is therefore something that precedes God in the order of existence. The coexistence of love and death, or death in the name of love, is the principle of development and progress. A higher principle must give up part of its essence for a lower principle to exist. This in turn

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 67–8.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 67.

sacrifices itself so that the lowest souls could participate in the cycle of reincarnation to rise again from the lowest to the highest. Kowalski places man in the very center of his system and considers his path towards higher stages of development to be a significant contribution to the construction of the universe. This anthropocentric concept places the greatest emphasis on the spiritual work of every human being and the cultivation of omnipotence. Omnipotence is the secret of the highest goal of life – liberation from the chains of matter and return to the homeland of the Spirit.

### THE FORCE THAT REDEEMS

Jan Bloch also wrote about the redemptory aspect of love. In 1939, the *Hejnał* [The Bugle Call] – which was the name of a journal and a publishing house – published his small book *Mistrz Mówi. Kultura Miłości* [The Master Speaks. Culture of Love, 1939].<sup>30</sup> The author of the text was an extremely colorful character. The son of the famous Jan Bogumił Bloch (1836–1902), an entrepreneur and banker, he was involved not only in industry and in breeding of racehorses, but also in Spiritualism and Theosophy. He supposedly became interested in broadly understood Esotericism during his stay in Brazil and Argentina. He published a number of esoteric writings. Józef Chobot in the introduction to the book mentions some of Bloch's works on this subject, including *Chrześcijańska wiedza tajemna, Jak Chrystus zdobywa Wschód*, and *Życie Pana Jezusa według widzeń Akaszy* [Christian Secret Knowledge, How Christ conquers the East, or the Life of the Lord Jesus according to the Akashic vision]. Bloch wanted to acquaint the reader with the hidden side of Christianity, his work was an interpretation of the so-called "Christian occultism." This book is a kind of inspired letter or message that is communicated by "The Great Spirits from Beyond." According to Chobot, Bloch was one of the links between Humanity and the World of the Spirit. From the perspective of the Wisła esotericists, he was considered a member of the group of selected great spiritual teachers, as evidenced by the way in which the editor of the Bugle Call journal describes his life and activity in the field of esotericism.<sup>31</sup>

At the beginning of his work, Bloch emphasizes: "God is Love – she is the queen of the world. Love is the greatest power – it is omnipotent, it gives birth to worlds, it is beautiful and it leads to perfection."<sup>32</sup> Love is a creative force. It is characteristic, however, that, according to the author's words, love is both God and Jesus Christ, and that it can manifest

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<sup>30</sup> Jan H. Bloch, *Mistrz mówi: Kultura miłości* (Wisła: „Hejnał”, 1939).

<sup>31</sup> Józef Chobot, „Wstęp,” in J. H. Bloch, *Mistrz mówi*, 2.

<sup>32</sup> Bloch, *Mistrz mówi*, 2.

itself under both of these forms. Additionally, it functions as a kind of force, a principle of reality: "Love is both Strength and Power over Powers, from it comes power and strength, because the Father, who is Love, is also Omnipotence, and all his Omnipotence and Wisdom were born in him out of his Love."<sup>33</sup> Bloch also states: "Everything passes, has its end – only God and Love are eternal, because these two words are synonyms. For God is not only Love Himself, but also the whole Love of the world. Love in creation is God's activity in His child, and its level is varied and there are thousands of shades of it depending on the perfection of the instrument through which the Creator works."<sup>34</sup> This dimension of love as the principle of the world and something eternal is similar to Kowalski's concept outlined earlier. Bloch does not stop at identifying God and Love, in his inspired text he mentions various types of it. For example, love for another human being, which he describes as tenderness, is not for him the same as true love – available to human individuals. True love overwhelms everything; then each person is loved without exception, although he is seen with all the advantages and disadvantages. The path of love also leads to God. It leads through the development of individual levels of love, building it in yourself through successive stages such as pity, mercy and tenderness, and then true, all-embracing love.

Love is the principle of the world, but also creativity is its trait. One of her creations is Beauty. For Bloch, nature is perfectly beautiful, but this can only be perceived as a result of practice and cultivating true love in oneself. To see beauty is to be in harmony, to feel an integral part of the entire universe. Silence, peace, harmony are the elements from which strength and power, as well as joy and healing, wisdom and knowledge arise. All this happens thanks to Love.<sup>35</sup> Bloch proves that every human being should be guided in his life by love and strive for all-embracing love. An example should be taken from Christ, but the author also gives other recipes to achieve the state of true love (Bloch 1939, 6–8) – these rules are based primarily on the internalization of love, nurturing it in your soul. An impulse flow from the inside and activates the process of spiritual development, i.e., as the author understands it, opening oneself to the action of love in man. The love felt by people necessarily comes from God, because he is the Love of the world and it is through love that you can rise to the Creator; "to facilitate this task for you, the Father descended into the Son, who is the personification of all the Father's Love. you can

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 13–5.

ascend easily with your heart."<sup>36</sup> Moreover, Bloch points to love as the only factor through which one can come to God. The author definitely rejects reason and knowledge as a possible way to get to know the divine essence, i.e. paths characteristic of many other esoteric currents. Interestingly, although Bloch focuses on love, also in his work we can find a chapter devoted to the colors of the aura observable by clairvoyants, and specifically the desired changes in the aura of the student developing under the guidance of a spiritual master. As can be seen, this aspect of considerations related to emotions and feelings was developed in various esoteric groups.

A vivid interest in the soteriological function of love in the milieu of esotericists from Wisła is evidenced by the publication of the Polish translation of the text *Miłość wybawieniem* [Love as the Salvation] by Albin Valabregue (1853–1937), a French playwright. Again, there is a call to love, which is to lead people to salvation. Christ is her personification and he, as the judge, in the hour of judgment, will hold people accountable only on the basis of love. The world is to be saved through love. Another voice on this matter was Chobot's article entitled *Miłość i małżeństwo* [Love and marriage] published in the monthly *Odrodzenie* [Rebirth].<sup>37</sup> Despite the fact that the author discusses in it for the most part love between two people, he finally concludes that the key is to discover a higher love in oneself. Knowing it is achieved, similarly to Bloch's philosophy, by going through various stages and practicing "lower", or rather less perfect, kinds of love. According to the author, love is a condition for rebirth, it is also a signpost that man can use to seek salvation and wander in both the material and astral world, full of dangers. Love is the mystery of being, revealed to us by Christ, who brought us from God the highest commandment of love for your neighbor, saying: "Yes, also love one another as I have loved you" – this love, divine, angelic, pure and solar, opens the gates of eternity for us according to Chobot.<sup>38</sup>

Another author who wrote about Love as a Cosmic law was Józef Domżał. He believed that "The Great Synthesis of the Teachings of the Master of Life and Death, the Greatest Law of the Cosmos – Love, is a universal principle of life in all its manifestations and in all worlds of the Great Space, that Love binds the worlds together and throws them into the Great Ocean of Absolute Life, that with the great fire of Love, they purify themselves and save all the worlds that once were, are and will be, that only the Great Love can reveal all secrets, solve all puzzles and problems such as: philosophical, ethical,

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>37</sup> Józef Chobot, „Miłość i małżeństwo,” *Odrodzenie: Miesięcznik poświęcony sprawom odrodzenia człowieka i badaniem zjawisk duchowych* 1, no. 9 (1921): 5–6.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 6.

economic, financial, political, etc., all in general, which has ever disturbed, disturbs or will disturb the thought of intelligent beings."<sup>39</sup> Undoubtedly, here too, love is understood as the fundamental principle of life, a cosmic strength and a path to salvation.

In texts related to the Wisła milieu, love was often identified with the highest divine being, the first cause, from which the cosmos arises and from which worlds are born. It was also understood as an actively working principle that permeated everything – much like God in the pantheistic concept. It cannot, however, be treated here as an independent principle, which is absolutely guiding the universe; the development of the doctrine of love in this vision of mystical Christianity finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ as the Cosmic Savior.

## CONCLUSION

Selected examples of ideas functioning in esoteric discourses at the beginning of the 20th century show that, on the one hand, the thematic scope of the analyzed motifs was very broad, and on the other – that the same or very similar themes appeared in various authors, often in ideologically separate groups. For example, the emotionally tinged colors of the aura, visible to clairvoyants, appear both in Theosophists and Spiritualists, and the theme of love as a principle ruling the world in various forms can be found both in pantheistic currents and Esoteric Christianity. The literature of esoteric circles offered explanations of problems, such as marriage problems, which were also written about in various guides and magazines. However, the hypotheses put forward in the esoteric literature and the ranges of conclusions presented there went far beyond explanations of the "incompatibility of characters" kind; the causes of the problems were sought in the offenses of previous lives accumulated in karmic debts. From the surveyed writings published by esotericists of this period, we can learn that the visions of self-salvation propagated in various circles through the cognition of the nature of reality, mystical experience or gnosis are not paths leading to liberation as much as Love – which is both the goal of the process of evolution and the means to achieve it.

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<sup>39</sup> Józef Domżał, „Przyjdźmy i oglądajmy!” *Odrodzenie: Miesięcznik poświęcony sprawom odrodzenia człowieka i badaniem zjawisk duchowych* 2, no. 4 (1922): 3.

