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‘TEN SAM JEST BÓG’
NORWID – ABD EL-KADER – IBN ‘ARABI

Once Erazm Kuzma wrote that Adam Mickiewicz, in the trinity of our romantic poets, was a typical Occidentalist; Słowacki, though bewitched by the East, closed his way to the myths of the Orient with his Genesis concepts; while Norwid was the most Eurocentric of them¹:

Eurocentrism apparently appears in the works of Cyprian Norwid; you will not find there the ‘Eastern masquerading’ typical for his predecessors².

While you may agree with the latter part of the opinion without hesitation, the first raises some doubts, especially since the term ‘eurocentrism’ can have decidedly negative semantic load in the times of post-colonial studies. Besides, the Orient is evidently present in Norwid’s works (though not in the ‘mythical’ way). A thorough analysis enables you to find, in literary works, notes and art works of the poet, almost 200 places where the author turns to the Arabian (Muslim) culture at different levels of meaning: from direct referring to figures, socio-cultural, geographical, political, literary, philosophical, religious facts to more veiled references: in the form of motif³, motto, quote, allusion, paraphrase, language borrowings, metaphor⁴.

¹ Cf. E. KUŻMA, *Mit Orientu i kultury Zachodu w literaturze XIX i XX wieku*, Szczecin 1980, pp. 171-192.

² *Ibid.*, p. 177.

³ One of those Eastern accents in Norwid’s poetry is a motif of desert which has more biblical than Arabic provenance in his works. Cf. E. FELIKSIĄK, *Czy Norwid był poetą pustyni?* [in:] *Strona Norwida. Studia i szkice ofiarowane Profesorowi Sawickiemu*, ed. P. Chlebowski, W. Toruń, E. Żwirkowska, E. Chlebowski, Lublin 2008, pp. 109-122.

⁴ ‘Rodowód arabski’ contains a beautiful metaphor that was used by Norwid in his letter to Joanna Kuczyńska from May, 1862, where he calls America ‘the land of thrown-out Ishmaels’ (kraj

The Eastern theme in Norwid's work grew into many interesting motifs⁵. However, the main reason why, generally, we are inclined to link his name with the Arab world, is his famous and repeatedly commented by norwidologists⁶ ode to charismatic Emir Abd el-Kader (*Do Emira Abd el Kadera w Damaszku*). Abd al-Qâdir al-Ġazâ'irî was undoubtedly the most significant and prominent historical figure of Arabian Orient.⁷ He was honoured and immortalized by the poet in his lyrics, and, what is the most important, with which he established intercultural dialogue in his solemn poem. He daringly exceeded the boundaries of civilisation

„Izmaelów wypchniętych”) (*Letter to J. Kuczyńska*, PWSz IX, 37). Ishmael, the progenitor of the Nabateans and all Arabs, the eldest son of Abraham and his Egyptian slave Hagar, after the birth of Isaac, was sent off with his mother by envious Sarah to the desert, where both of them hardly survived. Humiliated and banished Ishmael becomes the figure of fate for multitudes of European immigrants for whom there was no space or bread on the Old Continent. The poet could also be found among those Ishmaels. Norwid signed with the name ('Ishmael') in his two letters sent from New York to Maria Trębicka (PWSz VIII, 192, 198).

⁵ Cf. R. GADAMSKA-SERAFIN, *Orient Norwida. Wybrane arabica i islamica literackie*, [in:] *Georomantyzm. Literatura – miejsce – środowisko*, ed. E. Dąbrowicz, M. Lul, W. Sawicka-Mieczyńska, D. Zawadzka, Białystok 2015, pp. 306-336.

⁶ Among others by Zenon Przesmycki (C. NORWID, *Pisma zebrane*, compiled by Z. Przesmycki, A. Kraków 1912, p. 1022), Zofia Szmydtowa (*Liryka romantyczna*, part I: *Mickiewicz – Słowacki, Krasiński – Norwid*, compiled by Z. Szmydtowa, Warszawa 1947, p. 42), Stefan Sawicki (*Religijność liryki Norwida*, [in:] *Polska liryka religijna*, ed. S. Sawicki, P. Nowaczyński, Lublin 1983, pp. 59-60), Wojciech Kudyba („*Aby mowę chrześcijańską odtworzyć na nowo...*”. *Norwida mówienie o Bogu*, Lublin 2000, p. 132-133), Zofia Dambek (*Wokół ody „Do Emira Abd el-Kadera w Damaszku”*, [in:] *Ibid, Cyprian Norwid a tradycje szlacheckie*, Poznań 2012, pp. 176-182).

⁷ To be precise, we should mention that Abd el-Kader came from Algeria, so it was Arabian Occident rather than Orient. After the victory of France, he was in exile in Damascus and spent the rest of his life there. In 1830s, Europe heard about the son of marabout Mahied Din coming from the religious elite. He stood at the head of the Algerian tribes fighting for shedding the yoke of France. Thoroughly educated, in good standing of religion and having the opinion of a fearless warrior (and, at the same time, of endearing beauty), he became at the age of 24 an undisputed leader of the Algerian bearing the title of Sultan. Eventually, he resigned from the title because he did not aspire to power; he sought to establish the independence of Arab tribes that he united into a nation. During almost 20-years' long war, he won and lost everything several times. He used to be abandoned, betrayed and mocked even by his relatives. Finally, the Arabic resistance was suppressed by France, and Abd el-Kader was imprisoned in the castle in Amboise (against the provisions of the peace treaty). After several years, Napoleon III freed him and consented to his departure for Damascus. It seemed that the world would forget about the heroic leader of Arabs, especially, because in his exile, he devoted himself almost exclusively to family life and religious contemplation. However, the dramatic events of July 1860, placed his name on the front pages of the global press. Cf. A.H. KASZNIK, *Abd El-Kader 1808-1883*, Wrocław 1977.

and religion of that time, blasting the captivating narrowness of prejudices and stereotypes.

In his book on the Emir, Alexandre Bellemare, a 19th century biographer of Abd el-Kader, cited words of Napoleonic Marshal of France, Nicolas J. de Dieu Soult, spoken in 1843:

At present, there are three people in the world who could be described as 'great'. And all of them are Muslims; those are: Abd el-Kader, Mehmed Ali and Shamil⁸.



Abd el-Kader on the photograph, 1855 (Mayer & Pierson)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abdelkader_EL_Djenzairi#/media/File:DamascusabdulKader.jpg (date of access 01.07.2016)

Having considerable standing both among his coreligionists and deadly enemies⁹, a prominent Muslim being 'the face' of the whole Arab world in Napoleon

⁸ A. BELLEMARE, *Abd el-Kader, savie politique et militaire*, Paris 1863, p. 3 (online: <https://archive.org/stream/abdelkadersaviep00bell#page/n13/mode/2up>) (date of access 1.07.2016).

Muhammad Ali Pasha was a viceroy of Egypt in years 1805-1849 (he also appeared in Norwid's works), whereas Imam Shamil (1797-1871) was a politician and a religious leader of North-Caucasian Muslim tribes, a hero of bloody fighting for the independence of Caucasus from Russia (the war was fought in the years 1817-1864). After being captured, he was exiled to Kaluga and then to Kiev by Tsar Alexander II of Russia. Abd el-Kader met him in Egypt in 1869 when Shamil, getting permission from Tsar, held pilgrimage to the holy places for Muslims. Cf. A. BOUYERDENE, *Emir Abd el-Kader: Hero and Saint of Islam*, translation. G. Polit, World Wisdom 2012, pp. 3, 216.

⁹ General E. Daumas, who was a French consul in Mascara in 1830s, recognized Abd el-Kader as a restless fighter for freedom of Algeria. He was full of admiration not only for the bravery of the emir, but also for his expertise in the techniques of breeding Arabian horses and poetical tal-

III's France¹⁰ Abd el-Kader was a spokesman for its political and moral rights, an exponent of its aspirations and interests; a personification of its spirit (how different from European!). The Arab left his mark not only in Norwid's poetry, letters and notes as 'one of those good of that time' who were excavated from the turmoil of the storm period and showed as a special commemorative exemplum of humanity. He was also amazingly akin in thoughts to the Parisian recluse. Perhaps, this Muslim hero and saint¹¹ had more profound impact in Norwid's spiritual biography than we had previously thought.

Spiritual and intellectual closeness of both outstanding personalities of the nineteenth century was noticed as early as in 1970s. The 20th century authors of a monograph *Nowa i współczesna literatura arabska* in the passage devoted to Damascus and philosophical and religious poetry mentioned Norwid's ode adding the following comment¹²:

These words of the inspired poet are in harmony with tolerant views of the Arabian emir in an amazing way¹³.

The issue of these similarities, however, has not been widely developed by them, but only mentioned.

Indeed, Abd el-Kader's and Norwid's striking parallelism of thought (and even unanimity) will fascinate any person who picks up their writings, works, letters or poetry. It is visible mainly in a convergent (though, of course, it grew out of

ent! In his work dedicated to Arabian horses, he enclosed the emir's letters, breeding advice and his desert poem *Éloge du désert*. Cf. E. DAUMAS, *Les chevaux du Sahara et les mœurs du désert par le général E. Daumas, Directeur des affaires de l'Algérie, avec des commentaires par L'Émir Abd-el-Kader*, ed. 5, Paris 1858. Also other soldiers and commanders spoke with admiration of the noble Arabian enemy. Cf. A. BOUYERDENE, *Emir Abd el-Kader...*, pp. 44-47, 53.

¹⁰ Abd el-Kader was the would-be sultan of Algeria, and in the projects of Arabian kingdom in Syria dependent from France, created in the circles of French politicians. He was even to be the ruler and leader of all the 'sons of Ishmael' in the Middle East. French politicians wanted to use the impeccable authority of the emir among Muslims (and Christians) for efficient management of their Arabian colony. Abd el-Kader never agreed to play such a role from the endowment of France. Cf. B. ETIENNE, *Les projets d'un «royaume arabe» au Bilâd al-Shâm: histoire d'un malentendu entre la France et l'émir Abd el-Kader*, [in:] Abd El-Kader. *Un spirituel dans la modernité*, sous la direction de A. Bouyer-dene, É. Geoffroy, S.G. Simon-Khedis, Damas 2012, pp. 69-82.

¹¹ Cf. A. BOUYERDENE, *Emir Abd el-Kader*.

¹² Z. Dambek also noticed the commentary: (*Wokół ody „Do Emira Abd el Kadera w Damaszku”* ..., p. 179).

¹³ J. BIELAWSKI, K. SKARZYŃSKA-BOCHEŃSKA, J. JASIŃSKA, *Nowa i współczesna literatura arabska 19 i 20 wieku. Literatura arabskiego Wschodu*, Warszawa 1978, p. 171.

different religious and ideological roots) visions of civilizations and culture and in harmonizing concepts of integral humanity too. Norwid as a Christian and Abd el-Kader as a Muslim, with their deeply substantive polemic against the model of European 'Modernity' in nineteenth century version (and generally modern) expressed similar (if not the same) reservations. They used almost the same arguments, creating a new alternative project against the chosen one by Western world of that time. They were both Universalists exceeding the spiritual and intellectual limits of impuissance of their epoch (also in religious issues). Looking at Norwid's poem, it is good to recall that fascinating duet of the representatives of two different nineteenth century civilizations, western and eastern, holding a dialogue from the distance of over thousand kilometres between them. The lyricist should be seen, in more complete context not recalled yet, in comparison to the emir's writings, works, poetry and a fascinating heritage of philosophical and religious Arabic tradition that bore him.

The subject of the work will be the common space in the works of Abd el-Kader and Norwid, though due to the lack of space, there will be chosen only those issues that somehow fit the theme and the message recalled at the beginning of the poem (*Do Emira...*).

It should be added that the addressee of Norwid's ode, 'Arabic Napoleon' today is not only a statuesque celebrity from nineteenth century history of the Middle East, but also one of those heroes and thinkers whose ideas are presently the most frequently commented in Muslim literature published in Europe and behind its borders. In 20th and 21st century, he have been dedicated vast, mainly French-language historical and biographical, hagiographic literature etc.¹⁴ That Algerian national hero and a noble defender of Christians during Druze – Maronite conflict

¹⁴ Those are mainly works of Algerian and French researchers of Arabian descent. The latest works are: *L'un et le multiple: pour une nouvelle lecture de la poésie mystique de... l'Emir Abd el Kader...*, présentation, traduction et notes M. Souheil Dib, Alger 2002; B. ÉTIENNE, F. POUILLON, *Abd el-Kader le magnanime*, Paris 2003; A. BOUYERDENE, K. BENTOUNÈS, *Abd El Kader par ses contemporains: fragments d'un portrait*, Paris 2008; J.W. KISER, *Commander of the Faithful: The Life and Times of Emir Abd El-Kader*, New York 2008; A. BOUYERDENE, *Abd El-Kader ou l'harmonie des contraires*, Paris 2008; *Abd el-Kader. Un spirituel dans la modernité*, sous la direction de A. Bouyerdene, É. Geoffroy, S.G. Simmon-Khedis, Damas 2012; A. BOUYERDENE, *Emir Abd el-Kader: Hero and Saint of Islam*; B. ÉTIENNE, *Abd el Kader*, Paris 2012; A. BOUTALEB, CH. BOUTALEB, *Abd-El-Kader: Entre Résistance et Actions Humanitaires*, Prose Publishing 2013; E. MARSTON, *The Compassionate Warrior: Abd El-Kader of Algeria*, Wisdom Tales 2013; C. de DECKER, J.J. THONISSEN, *Biographie d' Abd-El-Kader... – Primary Source Edition*, Nabu Press 2014. They also republished 19th century French biography of the emir from 1863. Cf. A. BELLE-MARE, *Abd-El-Kader: sa vie politique et militaire*, Whitefish: Kessinger Publishing 2010 (reprint of Parisian edition from 1863).

(Mountain War) in Lebanon and Syria in 1860¹⁵, rallied a sizable bunch of Muslim scholars as charismatic as he was, who republished all his literary philosophical works. They also did their best to recall thoroughly his humanistic thought to make it a refined intellectual image of a modern, peaceful and universalistic Islam, an alternative to the fanatical version of fundamentalist terrorism. In recent decades, West even identified it with the base of the followers of the religion of Muhammad¹⁶. Kader's phenomenon has not lost anything from the Universalism and uniqueness, once so appealing to Europeans. It even gained, in present Arabic world and in the new geopolitical context, updated dimension. It may also lead to understanding Norwid's poem in a different way¹⁷.

¹⁵ Those events are known, therefore we will remind their course briefly. In 1860, the rivalry among France, Great Britain, Egypt and Turkey's political influence in Syria has led to the exacerbation of relations between Syrian Maronites and Druzes, of which a dramatic effect became a massacre of Christians in Damascus (earlier Maronites helped Egyptians to suppress the Druze uprising becoming the object of their hatred). The unrest which appeared in the spring, 1860 on the Syrian province seized Damascus in summer. The slaughter of Maronites in Christian districts of Bab, Thouma and Midam accompanied by rapes, arsons and robbery started from an incident on 9th July and lasted for almost two weeks. Nobody buried mutilated bodies; they filled the streets; issued at the mercy of wandering animals and the burning sun. Because representatives of the Turkish authorities did not intervene, and even provoked riots, Abd el-Kader decided to act on his own, and with the help of his armed faithful Algerians, he rescued from slaughter more than 12 000 Christians. His house in Damascus became a shelter for the diplomats from many countries (among others consuls from France, Russia, Greece), and thousands of ordinary people, women, men and children, orphans and the Sisters of Charity caring for them. So as to discourage the perpetrators to murder, the emir even ransomed Christians from their hands. Those actions earned him recognition worldwide. Cf. A. KASZNIK, *Abd El-Kader*; A. BOUYERDENE, *Emir Abd el-Kader*.

Roughly since 18th July, when the riots had subsided, the most important French newspapers began to publish incoming witnesses of tragic events, reports of consuls, agents, representatives of the Church and ordinary travellers, and also a dithyrambic in tone articles about an Algerian hero of those days (cf. A. BOUYERDENE, *Emir Abd el-Kader*, pp. 110-113). A Polish poet Norwid also swiftly reacted. His poem *Do Emira Abd el Kadera w Damaszku* was created in just two weeks after the incident, in first days of August, 1860 (before 6.08 according to J.W. Gomulicki, cf. *Metryki i objaśnienia*, PWSz II, 367).

Even French Masons wrote a letter to Abd el-Kader in September (cf. M. KEBACHE, *Abd el-Kader et la franc-maçonnerie française: une relations controversée*, [in:] *Abd el-Kader. Un spirituel*, pp. 83-97), Saint-Simonists made him the foundation stone of the project of connection East and West (Cf. A. BOUYERDENE, *Emir Abd el-Kader*, p. 115).

¹⁶ Abd el-Kader wrote significant words to Imam Shamil from Caucasus: 'When we think how rarely we meet truly religious people, [...] defenders and masters of faith, when you see an ignorant who thinks that the rule of Islam is strictness, severity, cruelty, and barbarity, it is high time to repeat these words: 'Patience is nice, in God we put our trust' – cite from: A. BOUYERDENE, *Emir Abd el-Kader*, p. 89.

¹⁷ In 20th century, a historical work devoted to the emir, by Aleksandra Kasznik, was published (Cf. A.H. KASZNIK, *Abd El-Kader 1808-1883* Wrocław 1977). Recently published book by Zofia

This poem was a reaction to the events in Damascus, in July 1060, when the Arabic Emir saved nearly 12 000 Christians from certain death¹⁸. Ode *Do Emira Abd el Kadera w Damaszku*, whose author dared to „zażyć” himself, „bez mandatu” (*Letter to B. Zaleskiego*, PWSz IX, 366) quickly became a public and ‘thankful’ voice ‘from the Polish nation’, while the poet was the spokesman of the nation and its conscience. Norwid, with those strophes, brought the Algerian fighter for the freedom of the Arabs to his literary pantheon of the great statesmen of 19th century. He placed him next to heroic ‘citizen John Brown’ and heroic Pope Pius IX, also immortalized in his commemorative poetry. Anyway, the honourable places among the greatest of the world were awarded to the emir widely¹⁹.

In 19th century, the person was precisely presented to the Polish readers in just a few months after the famous Damascus incident. As early as in 1861, a short Polish biography of Abd el-Kader written by a well-known translator, Joanna Belejowska, was published in the fifth volume of the series *Wizerunki i Życiorysy Znakomitości Tegoczesnych Zebrane z Najnowszych Źródeł*²⁰. The publication informed its readers, among other things, about a set of philosophical and religious considerations of the emir, published in Paris in 1858 titled *Le livre d'Abd el-Kader intitulé »Rappel à l'intelligent, avis à l'indifferent«. Cinsiderations philosophique, religieuses, historiques etc.* (*Abd el-Kader's book titled «Wezwanie do rozumnego, rada dla obojętnego», Philosophical, religious, historical, etc. considerations*)²¹ encouraging to read it. In Warsaw Repertory of the famous of the

Dambek also recalls the emir in the context of Norwid's image of nobility built on the traditions of chivalry that, according to concordant voice of historians, were acquired by the Europeans during the Crusades from the Arab world. The poet wrote on the need for their restitution in the year of January Uprising, presenting the very Abd el-Kader's conduct (cf. Z. DAMBEK, *Wokół ody „Do Emira Abd el-Kadera w Damaszku”*, pp. 176-182).

‘Pisma duchowe’ by Abd el-Kader, similarly to his poetry and letters, so abundantly published in France and the USA were not even translated into Polish language.

¹⁸ Norwid certainly knew the name (and the history of imprisonment and exile) of the Arab leader of anti-French jihad in Algeria much earlier because it was placed on the front pages of French newspapers reporting the events from the African province for many years.

¹⁹ ‘Abd el-Kader drew interest since his occurrence on the scene of history. The French press and memoirs literature of that time are full of details concerning emir and people around him’. (A.H. KASZNIK, *Abd El Kader*, p. 211). The author mentions French resources from 1838 to 1850s. 19th century.

²⁰ Cf. J. BELEJOWSKA, *Abd el-Kader*, Warszawa 1861, pp. 3-46, series *Wizerunki i Życiorysy Znakomitości Tegoczesnych Zebrane z Najnowszych Źródeł*, No 5. The series was promoted by *Kurier Warszawski*, which received subscription for it.

²¹ Cf. *Le livre d'Abd el-Kader intitulé »Rappel à l'intelligent, avis à l'indifferent«. Cinsiderations philosophique, religieuses, historiques etc.*, trad. par G. Dugat, Paris 1858. On the

world, Abd el-Kader was the only representative of the Islamic world appearing next to such ‘the then celebrities’ as: Garibaldi, Victor Emmanuel, Queen Victoria, Pope Pius IX, Count of Cavour and Napoleon III’s wife – Eugénia Maria.

Poem *Do Emira...*, ‘written for Arabic translation’²² ‘and ‘in multiple copies’ taken from Norwid by his friends, on Sunday, 12th August 1860, was published on the front page of *Dziennik Poznański* (No 184²³) without Norwid’s knowledge. Norwid asked Władysław Bentkowski to send him a ‘trimmed’ clipping from the newspaper with the publication (*Letter to W. Bentkowski* PWSz VIII, 430)²⁴. On 26th August, the ode was also published by Kraków *Czas* in its literary and artistic column on page 2 (No 195)²⁵.

The author counted his poem among ‘things of political character’ where he also placed his ‘lyrical address’ to John Brown. The ode was translated into Arabic and sent to the emir in Damascus, for which the poet received written thanks from him (cf. PWSz VI, 556; *Letter to M. z Dziekońskich-Zaleska* PWSz VIII, 434)²⁶. In the letter to Michalina Zaleska, Norwid wrote:

literary works of Abd el-Kader cf. among other books: *Les poésies d’Abd El-Kader composées en Algérie et en France*, “Revue Africaine” 1932; A. BENHARRAT, *L’oeuvre littéraire de l’emir Abd el-Kader*, “L’Europe. Revue Littéraire Mensuelle” 1976 (VII-VIII), No 567-568; M. CHODKIEWICZ, *Introduction*, [in:] ABD EL-KADER, *Écrits spirituels*, trad. par M. Chodkiewicz, Édition du Seuil 1982, pp. 15-38; CH.A. GILIS, *Introduction*, [in:] ÉMIR ABD AL-QÂDIRL ’ALGÉRIEN, *Poèmes métaphysiques*, trad. par Ch.-A. Gilis, Bejrut 1996, pp. 9-17; *L’un et le multiple: pour une nouvelle lecture de la poésie mystique de l’emir Abdelkader*, présentation, trad. et notes par M. S. Dib, Edition Anep 2002.

²² Perhaps the translation was made by Władysław K. Chodźkiewicz, the member of Société Philologique and an expert of Oriental languages, who spent many years in the Middle East, and during the Crimean War, he was a translator in the headquarters of Napoleon III. Cf. *Kalendarz życia i twórczości Cypriana Norwida*, v. I: 1821-1860, ed. Z. Trojanowiczowa, Z. Dambek, in cooperation with J. Czarnomska, Poznań 2007, p. 785 (further cites *Kalendarz*).

²³ A copy of *Dziennik Poznański*, digital version available at: <http://www.wbc.poznan.pl/dlibra/publication?id=82992&tab=3> (date of access: 01.07.2016).

²⁴ I took the quotation from the following edition of Norwid’s work: C. NORWID, *Pisma wszystkie*, collection, introduction and critical comments provided by J.W. Gomulicki, Warszawa 1971-1976, v. 1-9. Roman Numeral in the footnotes means a volume number, Arabic numeral a page number.

²⁵ A copy of *Czas* available online: <http://mbc.malopolska.pl/dlibra/doccont?id=23174&dirids=1> (date of access: 01.07.2016).

²⁶ French text of Abd el-Kader’s letter to Norwid with Polish translation, cf. *Kalendarz*, v. 1 p. 790. Emir’s letter to Norwid was published in French press in September, and on 23rd October in *Dziennik Poznański*. Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 789, 793.

It was the FIRST public and thankful voice for the Emir that appeared in European dailies – daily papers in other countries reacted later. (*Letter to M. z Dziekońskich Zaleska*, PWSz VIII, 434)



Jean-Baptiste Huismans, Abd el-Kader saving Christians during slaughter in 1860 (1861)
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abdelkader_El_Djezairi#media/File:Jean-Baptiste_Huismans_1.jpg
(date of access 01.07.2016)

France, slow in action, was especially thankful. Its king, Louis IX Saint (organizer and participant of 6th and 7th Crusade) promised once, on behalf of the French Crown, to exercise perpetual care of the Maronites. As early as in August 1860, the emir received the highest French medal, National Order of Legion of Honour. Letters, gifts, medals used to come from all over the world: from Russia, Imperial Grand Cross of the Order of the White Eagle, from Greece, the oldest and the highest state award: Grand Cross of the Order of the Redeemer with the image of Christ (!), from Turkey: the Order of the Medjidie, First Class (the highest award in the times of the Ottoman Empire), beautiful and precious gifts from Great Britain and America, the Star from French Freemasons, and so on. Abd el-Kader also received Order of Pope Pius IX, which made him the only Muslim awarded for outstanding contribution to the Church by the Holy See²⁷.

²⁷ There is a constant search in the Vatican archives, so far fruitless, for the letter of the Holy Father Pius IX to Emir Abd el-Kader associated with awarding the order. Cf. A. BOUYERDENE, *Emir Abd el-Kader*, p. 113.



Emir Abd el-Kader on the photograph in 1865 (the author: Étienne Carjat)
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abdelkader_El_Djazairi#media/File:Abd_al-Qadir.jpg (date of access 1.07. 2016)

He died after 36 years of exile in Damascus in 1883, just 3 days after the death (on 26th May) of Norwid, a Polish poet, who had once paid him ‘tribute from far away’:

Więc hołd, Emirze, przyjm daleki,
Któryś jak puklerz Boży jest;
Niech łzy sieroty, łzy kaleki,
Zabłysną Tobie, jakby chrzest.

(Do Emira Abd el Kadera w Damaszku, PWsz I, 326)

Muslim, Abd el-Kader, in the ode, became a chosen instrument of Providence knight, God’s shield, God’s right hand and an angel caring Christians²⁸. Norwid was not the only one who noticed the emir in such a providential way, but also the whole European and world public opinion did. The words: ‘Providence’, ‘Saviour’, good Samaritan’ commonly powered a new hagiography of Abd el-

²⁸ J. BELEJOWSKA, *Wizerunki i życiorysy znakomitości tegoczesnych*, p. 40.

Kader²⁹. Anyway, the legitimacy of this interpretation was confirmed by the hero himself. When once asked by a journalist about the reasons for his intervention in the incidents in summer 1860, he answered: 'God commanded me to do so'³⁰. He similarly wrote in the letter to Alexander Bellemare³¹. A common belief was that Abd el-Kader, who 'according to his deeds and feelings was a Christian'³², was enlightened by 'divine rays of the Gospel'³³. Cardinal Donnet – archbishop of Bordeaux made no secret that he wanted to see the famous Arab among the covert:

'Your name is on all tongues: there are no Christian lips who do not ask God for your entering into the Catholic family, in which you are one of the bravest knights'³⁴.

²⁹ Cf. A. BOUYERDENE, *Emir Abd el-Kader*, p. 113. We are convinced that in those terrible days of slaughter and conflagration, Abd el-Kader did not only follow only his noble heart or an instigation of an idea of civilization that he perfectly developed in himself. He acted pushed by God's hand who, perhaps had chosen him to be his tool of His eternal judgement, because in a great movement of ideas and numerous worldly matters any person disappears. Similarly, both a single man and the whole nations perform the missions given to them by unfathomable ways marked the Providence'. J. BELEJOWSKA, *Wizerunki i życiorysy znakomitości tegoczesnych*, p. 42.

³⁰ Abd el-Kader, quotation from „La Patrie” from 23rd September 1860, after: A. BOUYERDENE, *Emir Abd el-Kader*, p. 121.

³¹ 'I have received your letter in which you congratulate me for what I did for Christians in Damascus. You are wrong congratulating me. I do not deserve it, because, in the midst of those events, I was only an instrument. Send your praise to Him who guided me, to the Sultan of Yours and mine. When I walked through the streets of Damascus, I saw Him walking in front of me. He told me: 'Do it', and I did it; 'Go that way', and I went; 'Save that man', and I saved him. So, I did not do anything more than listening and obedience does not deserve the praise which I was bestowed; He is due all the praises; He directed me' – quoted after: A. BELLEMARE, *Abd el-Kader*, p. 450.

³² J. BELEJOWSKA, *Wizerunki i życiorysy znakomitości tegoczesnych*, p. 41.

³³ B. POUJOLAT, *La Verité sur la Syrie*, letter 38 – quoted after: A. BOUYERDENE, *Emir Abd el-Kader*, p. 114. As early as in 1840s, and his features were emphasized with amazement: „generosity, humanitarianism, kindness, fidelity, [...] the virtues almost unknown to the Arabs and forgotten by the Koran in relation to Christians' (A. de LACROIX, *Histoire privée et la politique d'Abd el-Kader*, Paris 1845 – quoted after: A. BOUYERDENE, *Emir Abd el-Kader*, p. 114). Markiz Tomas R. Bugeaud, French general in Algeria and Marshal of France, in his letter to Count Mole, compared even Abd el-Kader's physiognomy to images of Jesus (cf. M. CHODKIEWICZ, *Introduction*, p. 16).

³⁴ *Discours de son eminence le cardinal Donnet, archevêque de Bordeaux, sur Abd el-Kader et les massacres de Syrie*, "Revue d'Aquitaine, journal historique" 1861, No 5, vol. 5, p. 141: quoted after: A. BOUYERDENE, *Emir Abd el-Kader*, p. 114.

Norwid replaced the baptismal water for Abd el-Kader with tears of women, orphans and cripples rescued by him risking his life (the poet himself was a cavalier of Malta!), recognising his evangelical act as tantamount to the acceptance of the sacrament of conversion and purification for sins. The sacrament incorporated him forever in the people of the New Covenant of Christ, that is, the community of the redeemed. This peculiar Christianization of the Arab Samaritan is accompanied by a theological contemplation in the poem: ‘Mini-treatise on God, His unity, omnipotence, omni-goodness, omnipresence’³⁵.

3

Bóg jeden rządzi z wieków w wieki,
Nikt nie pomierzył Jego łask:
Chce? – to wyrzuci z ran swych ćwieki,
A gwiazdy w ostróg zmieni blask.

4

I nogą w tęczy wstąpi strzemię,
Na walny sądów jadąc dzień;
Bo kto Mu niebo dał? – kto ziemię? –
Kto Jemu światłość dał? – lub cień?
(PWsz I, 326-327)

The presence of this theological fragment is not, as noted by Stefan Sawicki, accidental in the text³⁶. The emphasized divine attributes of the Creator were to appeal to the Muslim recipient of the poem as deeply familiar and understandable. Indeed, among 99 ‘beautiful names of Allah’, mentioned in the Koran and the Hadith, there are such attributes as: The only One (*Al-Ahad*), Merciful (*Ar-Rahman*), Compassionate (*Ar-Rahim*), Omnipotent (*Al-Aziz*), Gracious (*Asz-Szakur*), Giving security (*Al-Mu'min*), Defender (*Al-Muhajmin*), Protecting (*Al-Hafiz*), Giver of life (*Al-Muhji*), Self-sufficient (*As-Samad*). Therefore, Norwid builds religious common ground with the reader in the poem. It is a common, universal idea of the Only God (‘Only God reigns forever and ever’).

Equally suggestive must have been the picture of decisive day of judgement, on which concentrates the teaching of almost each surah of the Koran. The truth of the Day of Resurrection and the Final Judgement are one of the central issues of dogma in Islam. It is significant that this eschatological vision from the 4th strophe emerges in Norwid’s poem directly from the reflection on the boundless

³⁵ S. SAWICKI, *Religijność liryki Norwida*, p. 244.

³⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*

God's Mercy ('Nobody measured His graces') and on God's omnipotence and inscrutable autonomy of his will for man ('If he wanted he would get rid of nails from His wounds, [...] Because, who gave him Heaven? Who the earth? / Who gave Him light or shade?'). What is the meaning of the sequence in the logic of poetic imagery? These considerations seem to suggest unspoken, but explicit, bold thesis about the possibility of attaining salvation by Muslim- infidel. After all, this act rests solely in the hands of an unpredictable (for human being) God's will and his immeasurable Grace. The poet joins the emir to the community of the saved by baptism ('of water' from tears) by which he decisively breaks soteriological exclusivism at the beginning of the poem. The thesis of Norwid's ode is that 'good deeds are Acts of God, no matter who fills them'.³⁷ The hope of universal salvation in the poem deserves a special attention facing the fact that the Catholic Church as late as during II Vatican Council allowed the opportunity to achieve salvation outside Christianity. Therefore, Norwid's poetic suggestion was an universalistic and ecumenical gesture for 20th century. Theological considerations are continued in fifth strophe expressing, at this time, the truth of immanent God and man, *imago Dei*. This fragment is a logical and dogmatic complement of 'lecture' on transcendent God beyond human imagination and experience, written in the two previous strophes. After all, only both of these parts constitute full Christian Credo.³⁸

5

A jeśli w łzach gnębionych ludzi,
A jeśli w dziewic krwi niewinnéj,
A jeśli w dziecku, co się budzi,
Ten sam jest Bóg – nie zaden inny–
(PWSz I, 327)

But Norwidian poem may also suggest something more than just a recognized Christian truth of transcendent God, manifesting himself in the face of your neighbour, especially weak and aggrieved one. Since 'the only God reigns forever and ever', it becomes logical, to recipient and the reader, that God is the same One and not 'any other', God of Christian and Muslims. God in whom Norwid believes, and God whom Abd el-Kader noticed in the faces of saved by him 'oppressed people': women, the crippled, old men and children. The conditional nature of the

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ That paradoxical duality in experiencing God was also taken out in poetical romantic visions, to remind as an example a beautiful, intimate *Rozmowa wieczorna* by Mickiewicz ('Z Tobą ja gadam, co królujesz w niebie,/A razem gościsz w domku mego ducha').

first sentence is puzzling: „And what if in the tears of the oppressed people, [...] the same God is”. It is hard to imagine that Norwid uses a question mark or even hesitation in such a fundamental biblical truth of human dignity as God’s image! Rather, he initiates an extremely bold interfaith theological discourse aimed at finding common places, (‘And if [...] the same God is). Therefore, the message of the ode can be seen as follows: „if there is only one God, then we believe in the same God, transcendent and immanent, whom you saw in the faces of people you saved. For that be blessed more than king David.’

Are the quoted passages, however, only the author’s bold thesis given with the expectation that he will encounter understanding from the Muslim recipient of the poem? Not less probable is that the poet quoted Abd el-Kader’s statement that may have been known to him, and which he identified with.

Today considered as an outstanding mystic and a holy Muslim³⁹, and also one of the most erudite theologians of his era, Abd el-Kader at that time as a prisoner in Amboise, led deepened spiritual life. At that time, and during his exile in Damascus, he experienced ecstatic states similar to those experienced by Christian Saints⁴⁰. He studied both *Old* and *New Testament*, he had Tora. As early as in 1840s he tried, without success, to purchase Arabic edition of the *Gospel*⁴¹. During his stay in Europe, he visited Christian churches of Paris, Lyon and London. He even expressed his yearning for meeting Pope Pius IX⁴², and he allowed his daughter to become a Sister of Mercy⁴³. After the events of July in 1860, when the masses expected his near conversion to Christianity, he saw no need to make a dramatic decision about apostasy because he was deeply convinced of factual unity of all monotheistic religions: ‘Religia jest jedna. Tak zgodnie twierdzą prorocy’⁴⁴, he wrote. The source of the truth was the text of *Koran* for him:

109. East and West belong to the Lord, wherever you turn your face, you will find His Face. He fills the Word with His Vastness and wisdom⁴⁵. (*Koran* S. II, v. 109)

³⁹ The descriptions of his mystical states experienced by Abd el-Kader, can be found in both witnesses’ reports about his religious elation and in his own notes, e.g. in *Mawaqif 13 (Księga stacji)*. Cf. ABD EL-KADER, *Écrits spirituels*, pp. 163-165.

⁴⁰ BOUYERDENE, *Emir Abd el-Kader*, pp. 190-191.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, p. 181.

⁴² *Ibid*, pp. 188, 191; cf. also S. REIZLER, *L’émir Abd el-Kader et la papauté*, „C. R. Séances Académie des Sciences d’Outre-mer” 1958, vol. 18, No 8, pp. 329-335.

⁴³ Neither Muslim biograph nor the author of 20th century Polish work on Abd el-Kader mentions about the fact (A. Kasznik). It is only mentioned by J. Belejowska (*Abd el-Kader*, p. 42).

⁴⁴ quoted after: A. BOUYERDENE, *op. cit.*, p. XIII.

⁴⁵ Citations from *Koran* come from 19th century translation by Jan Murzy Tarak Buczacki,

45. When you shall bring the dispute with Christians or Jews, [...]say to them: We believe in the Book revealed to us, and in your writings, one and the same God is your and our God[...]. (*Koran S. XXIX*, v. 45)

He justified his conduct towards Damascus Christians whom he saved from death with the words from Sura *Stól zastawiony* (*Koran S. V*, v. 35):

Did not God say: 'A man who killed a man who did not commit the murder or spread mischief among others, acts as if he killed all the people. And a man who rescues human life acts as if he rescued all the people'⁴⁶.

However, Samaritan conduct of a Muslim towards Christians was something unusual and extraordinary in those days, as evidenced by worldwide publicity that accompanied the actions of this charismatic figure. Considering Norwid's ode, it is hard not to ask a basic question: where did the phenomenon of Abd el-Kader, Muslim mystic thinker and poet come from? He was many, many years ahead of his imperial colonial antagonized 19th century which by 'the confusion of languages' and the sanctioning (even in science!) of deep national, religious and racial divisions reminded him of the boastful and utopian Tower of Babel. What Muslim tradition bore the man to whom (according to the logic of Polish, or generally, Christian historical experiences and binding 'genealogy of the Sobieskis') Norwid – the lover of *Jerusalem liberated* by Tasso! – should have felt distance or distrust, whereas, he felt a special kinship of spirit? It is also very interesting whether the Polish poet could know the views of emir of Damascus since he quoted the essence of his thoughts?

Let us start from traditions. As Abd el-Kader's biographers unanimously admit, a substantial impact on the formation of his personality, even in his youth, had the views of his spiritual master, creator of the Muslim mysticism and the greatest Sufi theologian of the late Islam (12th/13th century) – Ibn 'Arabi⁴⁷. He was practically unknown to Europe until the beginning of 20th century,⁴⁸ today he is considered 'the greatest mystical philosopher of the Arab world. Also one of

Warszawa 1858, http://www.planetaislam.com/koran_buczacki.html

⁴⁶ Quoted after: A. BELLEMARE, *Abd el-Kader, sa vie politique et militaire*, p. 444. <https://archive.org/stream/abdelkadersavie00bell#page/n9/mode/2up> (date of access: 01.07.2016).

⁴⁷ Cf. among other books. A. BOUYERDENE, *His roots*, [in:] *Ibid, Emir Abd el-Kader*, pp. 29-30.

⁴⁸ Only A. M. Palacios's work, *La Escatologia en la Divina Comedia* (Madrid 1919) arouse interest in thought and works of Ibn 'Arabi, and was the main source of information on the Andalusian mystic for many years. Cf. J. WRONECKA, *Wstęp*, [in:] IBN 'ARABI, *Traktat o miłości*, translation J. Wronecka, Warszawa 2010, p. VIII.

the best creators of love poetry of all time⁴⁹. This thinker and Islamic saint came to the world in Andalusia in, 12th century, which experienced the unprecedented intellectual flourishing⁵⁰. After leaving Seville, he spent many years in travel: he made pilgrimage to Mecca twice (Saudi Arabia), he visited Egypt (Cairo), Iraq (Baghdad, Mosul), Syria (Aleppo, Damascus), Turkey (he stayed there in its religious centre: Konya). Then he settled in Damascus, from where he used to set off only to the Holy Land (Jerusalem) and where he died in 1240. The tomb of the mystic in Damascus (district Salihijja), after his death, was completely destroyed by the defenders of literally perceived orthodoxy. In 16th century, it was crowned by sultan Selim II with a beautiful Mosque bearing the name of Muhyi 'I-Dina until today, and is visited by crowds of devout pilgrims each year⁵¹.



4. Grave of Ibn 'Arabi in Damascus (at the background)

https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ibn_Arabi#media/File:Maquam_Ibn-%27arabi2.jpg (date of access 01.07.2016)

⁴⁹ MUHJAD-DIN IBN 'ARABI, *Droga do Pana Mocy. O wycofaniu*, translated. J. Szczepański, Poznań 2003, cover

⁵⁰ There was a special development of astronomy, medicine, mathematics and philosophy. The caliph's library in Cordoba in 10th century counted as many as 400 thousand volumes, and was only one out of seventy libraries in the city. Cf. M.R. MENOCAŁ, *Ozdoba świata. Jak muzułmanie, Żydzi i Chrzescijanie tworzyli kulturę tolerancji w średniowiecznej Hiszpanii*, Kraków 2006, pp. 94-104.

⁵¹ The temple rises below the picturesque mountain Qasioun (Jabal Qāsiyūn), where, according to a source, Ibn 'Arabi taught and was killed and which offers a spectacular view of the legendary merchant Damascus being also the place of the last shelter and death of Abd el-Kader.

The writings of Andalusian mystic, especially his guide for the spiritual improvement (*Droga do Pana Mocy*) played a huge role in the development of mystical and philosophical thought in Islam. It also had 'a huge impact on the connections of the Eastern and Western mysticism'⁵². They left their mark in both Muslim and Christian world 'testifying to the unity and common roots of these two religions'⁵³.

The essence of the intellectual, exclusive (and preached regardless of the great authorities) mysticism of Ibn Arabi'⁵⁴ was the claim coming from the doctrine of monotheistic *Koran* that everything that exists, makes unity in God, (mystical idea of the unity of existence: *tawhīd*). Since 'only God exists, and then everything that exists is God'⁵⁵. This truth he expressed in his favourite form of paradox:

⁵² Cf. J. WRONECKA, *Wstęp*, [in:] IBN 'ARABI, *Księga o podróży nocnej do najbardziej szlachetnego miejsca*, translated and commented by J. Wronecka, Warszawa 1990, p. XX. It is assumed, among other things, that Ibn 'Arabi's ideas could also affect the ideas of the unity of existence by Spinoza. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. XX-XXI.

⁵³ MUHJAD-DIN IBN 'ARABI, *Droga do Pana Mocy. O wycofaniu*, cover. It is good to know that Ibn 'Arabi's father's friend, a respectable man belonging to the Sufi brotherhood, was Averroes himself (Ibn Rushd), the greatest philosopher of Arabian Occident, bewitched by the thought of Aristotle. Thus, Ibn 'Arabi comes from the intellectual cultural circle focused on the Universalism, syncretism of thought, open to Western philosophy and kindly interested in Christianity. It can be said that his concepts arose from the common roots of the philosophy of the Orient and Occident at the times when their ways still had not diverge totally or, at least, when there was still a strong intellectual interference. Not without significance were also mentioned numerous trips of the Sufi master. He travelled all the contemporary Arab world: from its western Andalusian ends, where he had been born, throughout North Africa (countries of the Maghreb), up to the Middle East, where he finally passed away. Knowledge of many Muslim countries and Christian West and East (Spain, Portugal, and Holy Land), studying Greek philosophy and contacts with the most prominent Arab intellectuals fostered the extent of his intellectual horizons and liberated impressive spiritual richness. Travelling drew up an interesting spiritual topography of the mystic: spiritual master-to-be, Abd el-Kader, knew the main currents of Greek philosophy (Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Hippocrates, neo-Platonist), Gnostic writings and philosophy of Iran. In his concept, you can find, among other things, trace of the theory of emanation by Plotinus and the impact of the theory of illumination by Persian mystic as-Suhrawardi. Cf. J. WRONECKA, *Ibn 'Arabi – jego życie i duchowe dziedzictwo*, [in:] IBN 'ARABI, *Traktat o miłości*, pp. XI-XII.

⁵⁴ As H. Corbin writes, Ibn 'Arabi was one of those strong and rarely met spiritual individuals who are the norm of their own orthodoxy for themselves and live the best of their time because they do not belong to what is considered 'their' time or to the orthodoxy of 'their' time'. H. CORBIN, *L'imagination créatrice dans le soufisme d'Ibn 'Arabi*, Paris 1958, p. 7.

⁵⁵ J. WRONECKA, *Wstęp*, [in:] IBN 'ARABI, *Księga o podróży nocnej*, p. XVI. Therefore, while *Koran* teaches, that 'there is one God', Ibn 'Arabi claims that there is nothing but God who is everywhere'. Cf. *Ibid*: R. LANDAU, *The philosophy of Ibn 'Arabi*, London 1959, p. 27.

God is so great that no thing is like Him. And, at the same time, this thing is nothing else but Him, and even it is Him⁵⁶.

God is reflected in the countless mirrors of created beings. They are all epiphany forms of divine being, and as such, they are 'different from the Creator and, at the same time, they are the Creator'⁵⁷. With this concept of immanent God, whom all forms 'include', important anthropological consequences derive. Syncretic concept of a perfect man, proclaimed by an Andalusian mystic, being an amalgam of Islam, Manichaeism, gnosis, Neo-Platonism and Christianity (the impact of Neo-Platonic and Christian idea of Logos),⁵⁸ is based on the assertion that every human being is a Microcosm, and as a microcosm he is Theophany of God, His fullness and unity:

The essence of my being is the essence of His form [...]⁵⁹.
[...] my essence... is only God⁶⁰.

Man, in this philosophy, is 'only an aspect of God, His shadow', 'Epiphany mirror', simply a Theophany being⁶¹:

God [...] reveals himself to man by man, and, at the same time, He hides Himself through man. All the forms by which God reveals Himself to man create the real depth of man, his 'indestructible face'⁶².

⁵⁶ IBN 'ARABI, *Traktat o miłości*, p. 6.

⁵⁷ Cf. J. WRONECKA, *Wstęp*, [in:] IBN 'ARABI, *Księga o podróży nocnej*, p. XI. 'The creatures receive shadow of the divine being who throw the light of his names. [...] every being [...] reveals the essence of God individualized for each time in particular name. At the same time, however, no specific entity can be an epiphanic form of God as a whole. [...] The divine being 'descends' to individual beings and manifests himself in them while they rise to Him' (Ibid., p. XII).

⁵⁸ Cf. P. SMITH, *The Life & Times & Works of Ibn 'Arabi*, [in:] IBN 'ARABI, *Selected poems*, translation & introduction P. Smith, Book Heaven 2008, p. 13.

⁵⁹ IBN 'ARABI, *Traktat o miłości*, p. 6.

⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 93.

⁶¹ Cf. J. WRONECKA, *Wstęp*, [in:] IBN 'ARABI, *Księga o podróży nocnej*, p. XII. Many Muslim theologians were outraged by heretical, in their opinions, doctrines of the incarnation of God in man and the identification of man with God. Cf. P. SMITH, *The Life & Times & Works of Ibn 'Arabi*, p. 11.

⁶² J. WRONECKA, *Wstęp*, [in:] IBN 'ARABI, *Księga o podróży nocnej*, p. XIV.

It is not difficult to notice that the ideas of humanity fit to biblical concept of Imago Dei, fundamental in anthropological Norwid's thought:

[...] Prophet Said that God created Adam accordig to His form. [...] Man, therefore, must be shaped in the likeness of God⁶³.

In the anti-rationalist religious doctrine of Abn 'Arabi, there appeared clear inclinations to Christianity and evident common places, which were meticulously chosen, in early 20th century, by Miguel Asín Palacios. He was a prominent Arabist, translator and Spanish theologian, a precursor of the western study of Sufism fascinated by striking similarities between Christian and Muslim mysticism of which Ibn 'Arabi was the founder. That Spanish researcher considered that Sufism appeared as a result of influences of Christian monasticism on Islam; he even described Muslim mysticism of Ibn 'Arabi as 'Christianized Islam'⁶⁴. After all, Ibn 'Arabi claimed that he experienced revelation 'by Jesus' hands', the Lord of mercy' and considered Him to be his spiritual leader⁶⁵. Undoubtlessly, Jesus' teaching established religion of love preached by the Andalusian master:

The religion of Love is what I follow: whatever way the camels of Love travel this is my religion, my faith!⁶⁶

Because every being is God, you need to love God in every thing and see God in everything'⁶⁷. He regarded love as God's feature and His highest manifestation

⁶³ IBN 'ARABI, *Traktat o miłości*, p. 95.

⁶⁴ Cf. M.A. PALACIOS, *L' Islam christianisé: Etude sur le Soufisme d'Ibn 'Arabi de Murcie*, trad. B. Dubant, Paris 1982.

⁶⁵ Cf. IBN 'ARABI, *Księga o podróży nocnej*, p. 20. According to Ibn 'Arabi's writings, Jesus is not just one of prophets (as the Koran says), but he is also the Messiah who is to redeem and save humankind. He is defined as the last prophet, though after Him comes Muhammad (Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 93-94 and 125-126). In his poem, you can read:

'The Spirit of Jesus did not come from anyone else but God...' IBN 'ARABI, *Selected poems*, transl. & Introduction P. Smith, Book Heaven 2008, p. 78.

⁶⁶ IBN 'ARABI, *Selected poems*, p. 115.

⁶⁷ IBN 'ARABI, *Traktat o miłości*, p. X. Ibn 'Arabi comprised his teaching about love in his famous mystical *Traktat o miłości* (It is a fragment of his 37-volume *Objawienia mekkańskie*, bringing to mind both the verses of *Hymn of Love* by S. Paul and the stanzas of 17th century Spanish mystics and Norwidian *Promethidion*. That work grew out of many eastern and western inspirations among which the important place takes the theory of love. It was brought from the Greek philosophy (among others Plato's), stanzas of Arabic poetry from the period of *Jahiliyya* (e.g. History of love between Mağnūn and Layla), Muhammadan tradition, the *Koran* and earlier Arabian

and also as the essence of world unity and a universal principle of existence. He claimed, like Norwid, that beauty is a tangible 'shape of love':

Of course, the cause of love is beauty that accompanies God and which is loving in its essence. 'Because God is beautiful and He loves beauty'. [...] man sees in God's beauty and loves that beauty⁶⁸.

Ibn 'Arabi also stressed constant presence of God's mercy in the world⁶⁹. Within the context of Abd el-Kader's views, the most important seems to be religious universalism preached by Ibn 'Arabi ('whatever ways camels of love travel, it is my religion, my faith'), his 'all-inclusive point of view'⁷⁰:

If believer understood the meaning of saying: 'the colour of water is the colour of the container', he would recognize legitimacy, (credibility and the truth) of all religions and recognize God in every form and in every object of faith⁷¹.

It is this element of the Andalusian mystic's teaching, belief that the truth is immanent in all forms of faith⁷². It is an essential reason why Ibn 'Arabi is today

and Persian treatise of love (appearing since 9th century). Cf. J. WRONECKA, *Miłość w tradycji mistycyzmu muzułmańskiego – tasawwuf*, [in:] IBN 'ARABI, *Traktat o miłości*, pp. XII-XXIV.

⁶⁸ IBN 'ARABI, *Traktat o miłości*, pp. 25, 95.

⁶⁹ In *Traktat o miłości*, you can read: „It all comes from the merciful God and the love He feels towards his creatures.[...]. [...] Other categories of creatures experience of the punishment of purification in the fire of hell, or in the future, they will experience mercy thanks to the God's assumption of the purpose of love, even if they were to stay in fire for ever. The love that God Has for his servants has neither beginning nor the end because it does not accept, as a rule, random or accidental reality'. IBN 'ARABI, *Traktat o miłości*, p. 34.

⁷⁰ Cf. P. YOUNG, *Ibn 'Arabi: Towards a Universal Point of View*, A paper given at the MIAS Symposium, Oxford 1999, <http://www.beshara.org/principles/talks-and-articles/lectu-res-and-talks/py-ibn-arabi-towards-a-universal-point-of-view.html> (date of access: 01.07.2016).

⁷¹ IBN 'ARABI, *Fusûs al-Hikam* (ang. *Ringstones of Wisdom*), <http://www.ibnarabisociety.org/ibnarabi.html>

That masterpiece of prophetic wisdom is one of the most influential and at the same time the most controversial works in the history of Islamic civilization. Ibn 'Arabi makes distinction between 'finite' concept of God in religion and infinite God of mystics. God of religion reveals himself in various reflected forms in various religions. It depends on the ability of the believer which forms of religion he accepts. While the mystical God includes all his forms acceptable without selectivity, only by open receptive heart. Therefore, mystical God does not need to be Muslim, Christian, Buddhist, Jewish or pagan God Cf. R. LANDAU, *The philosophy of Ibn 'Arabi*, pp. 27- 28.

⁷² The orthodoxy of Ibn 'Arabi still arouses disputes. Many researches of his thoughts draw attention to the fact that applying mystical Western categorizations (Monism, Pantheism) of his

considered as a great visionary of the future. It is also the cause of the huge unabated interest in his spiritual legacy, both in the East and in the West in the second half of 20th century and at 21st century⁷³.

The works of Ibn 'Arabi⁷⁴ were known and widely commented in Arabian world over the next centuries. They also circulated in numerous copies, abstracts and summaries, sometimes compelling admiration, sometimes arousing outrage among orthodox theologians. Their translations into Western languages appeared relatively late, not before the first half of 20th century,⁷⁵ because they scared off

philosophy leads to distortion of research perspective and misunderstanding (cf., e.g. H. CORBIN, *L'imagination*, p. 8). Moreover, as noted above, the need is emphasized to distinguish between his concepts of ideas concerning mystical religion from the concepts that are used in relation to 'official religion', based on rules and the law (ibid.).

⁷³ 'Only God knows future, but perhaps the greatest part of Ibn 'Arabi's legacy is to come. But this does not mean a discovery of new and important manuscripts, or translations of what is in other languages, or commentators and comments or other things like that. I rather mean the development of the essence of his legacy, which can be briefly called knowledge of the unity of existence and the possibility of achieving universal perspective. [...] Could not the idea become a true hallmark of the age in which we live, its guiding principle and light, where it functions? If so, it would be the greatest resolution in general social awareness that has ever taken place in the short history of the human race. [...]

'It is neither Judeo-Christian nor Muslim perspective, but the one that enlightened and created the line of Abraham and all the spirituality everywhere'. P. YOUNG, *Ibn 'Arabi: Towards a Universal Point of View*, <http://www.beshara.org/principles/talks-and-articles/lectures-and-talks/py-ibn-arabi-towards-a-universal-point-of-view.html> (date of access: 01.07.2016).

⁷⁴ Ibn 'Arabi is the author of about 300 works. Cf. among other works.: IBN 'ARABI, *Księga o podróży nocnej do najbardziej szlachetnego miejsca*; Ibid., *Droga do Pana Mocy*, transl. J. Szczepański, Poznań 2003; IBID., *Traktat o miłości*; IBID., *Selected poems*, ed. 2., Book Heaven 2012; IBID., *The Meccan Revelations*, transl. W.C. Chittick, J.W. Morris, v. I, II, Pir Pubns 2002.

⁷⁵ Except Spanish translations made at the beginning of 20th century by A.M. Palacios (*La Escatologia en la Divina Comedia*, Madrid 1919), the copies of Andalusian mystic's writings appeared also in Great Britain (*The Tarğumān al-ašwāq*, transl. R. Nicholson, London 1911) and the Netherlands (*Kleinere Schriften des Ibn 'Arabi*, ed. H.S. Nyberg, Leiden 1919). However as late as at the second half of 20th century brought a wave of translations, including translations of Ibn 'Arabi's works into Polish language. Polish translations of selected writings come from 1990s. 20th century (*Księga podróży do najbardziej szlachetnego miejsca* (1990); chapter of *Objawienia mekkańskie* titled *Traktat o miłości* (1995), *Droga do Pana Mocy* (2003)). The publications of Polish authors on Ibn 'Arabi's works are few and far between: cf. J. BIELAWSKI, *Muhyi ad-Dīn Ibn 'Arabi, moniste arabe musulman du XII-XIIIe s. et sa conception de l'unité de l'être (wahdat al-wuğūd – ou l'unité de l'existence*, „Miscellanea Mediaevalia”, Veröffentlichungen des Thomas Instituts der Universität zu Köln”, Berlin 1981, pp. 738- 745; J. WRONECKA, *Ibn 'Arabi i jego doktryna jedności istnienia (wahdat al-wuğūd)*, „Euhemer” 1986, No 2(140), pp. 33-42; Ibid, *Le Kitāb al-isrā ilā al-maqām al-asrā d' Ibn 'Arabi*, „Annales Islamologiques”, v. XX, IFAO Le Caire 1984, pp. 15-27.

European Orientalists with their esotericism and scholastic terminology⁷⁶. They were also disregarded due to the fact that, as it was erroneously supposed, they did not have a direct impact on Europe⁷⁷. That is why Norwid could not know Ibn 'Arabi's writings from direct reading. However, in a sense, he had an indirect contact with them due to Dante, whose Magnum Opus (*the Divine Comedy*) translated and studied in depth by the Polish poet, was probably heavily influenced by the mystical thought of the Andalusian Sufi master⁷⁸.

The purpose of this inquiry, however, is not proving the dependence or direct influences of Arabian mystics on Norwid (although interesting parallels are, of course, perfectly possible). Such a thesis, though tempting, would be too strong and certainly greatly exaggerated in the absence of evidence. However, such a purpose may be only to outline the intermediate affinity and spiritual atmosphere of Arabian religious and cultural environment, with which the Polish poet, in Paris (or from Paris), had a mental contact (which was artistically recorded in the literature). In such a circle, an intellectual, spiritual and almost ecumenical en-

⁷⁶ Cf. *Ibn al-Arabi*, [in:] *Arabowie. Słownik encyklopedyczny*, ed. M. Dziekan, Warszawa 2001, p. 185.

⁷⁷ The publications from 20th century, however, like Palacios's or above all, of Henry Corbin's (1958) and Toshihiko Izutsu's (1966) studies contradicted the thesis about the lack of the impact. They caused that Ibn 'Arabi was considered a comprehensive and a highly original thinker who had made a great contribution to philosophy. His impact on Dante and the Catalan Franciscan Blessed Raymond Lull (13th/14th c.), who called himself a Christian Sufi, was especially emphasized. This medieval *Doctor Illuminatus*, a missionary, philosopher, poet, theologian worked to convert Muslims, probably even suffered a martyr's death being stoned in Tunis. As a condition for effectiveness of his mission, he considered the knowledge of Arabic language and Arabic philosophy (so as to show erroneous assumptions in averroism). His rationalism was also of mystical character.

The proof of the enormous interest in Ibn 'Arabi in 20th century was calling two associations with his name: in Oxford The Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society (established in 1977), operating also in the USA, and independent Spanish Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society Latina (MIAS Latina), established in Murcia (the mystic's birthplace) in 2011. Cf. <http://www.ibnarabiso-ciety.org/ibnarabi.html> (date of access 01.07.2016).

⁷⁸ The relation between both creators was found in the first half of 20th century by already mentioned Miguel Asín Palacios, fascinated by the relations of Christian and Muslim culture, in his famous, though controversial, treatise published in Madrid in 1919. It was titled *La Escatología musulmana en la „Divina Comedia”* (*Eschatologia muzułmańska w „Boskiej Komedii”*). In the light of the facts and hypotheses, Maestro Dante appears to be an indirect 'secret' kind of link between Norwid and Ibn 'Arabi (or more broadly, tradition of Muslim mysticism). If Palacios's theses are correct, inevitably, also Dante's metaphysics of light and mystical vision of love shining through in the works of Norwid are distant (though unintended, and of course even not realized) reference to visions and ideas of the Arabian philosopher from Andalusia.

counter of Christianity and Islam was possible in 19th century. The knowledge of the context brings much to the literature cited in the introduction of the 'Arabian ode' of Norwid, primarily, puts the personality and spirituality of the addressee of this poem, Abd el-Kader, in the brighter light. Ibn 'Arabi's universal legacy resulted not only in Dante's great medieval summa close to the Polish poet. In 19th century, it was, above all, resurrected in deeds, poetry and religious and philosophical treatises of the emir from Damascus, the recipient of Norwid's poem⁷⁹.

Relations of Abd el-Kader with Ibn 'Arabi were multifold,⁸⁰ Andalusian philosopher patronized mostly the emir's spiritual and intellectual life⁸¹. In religious and philosophical concepts of Abd el-Kader, all the most important ideas of his teacher from Seville found reflections, e.g.: 'religia miłości' (religion of love) and mystic vision of the Creator being pure love; the concept of God; *coincidentia oppositorum*, in which contrasts and opposites are combined; the concept of 'unity of existence'; the idea of countless epiphanies of the Creator in created beings⁸²; the vision of a man having a reflection of the 'divine face'; the concepts of 'new creation' and of creatures returning to Allah; the mystical attitude of contemplation of God and ways to perfection under the guidance of the spiritual master;

⁷⁹ Emir's all biographers draw attention to the fact.

⁸⁰ Already in his boyhood, to-be national hero of Algeria made pilgrimage with his father to Damascus tomb of the Sufi master and spent his time reading his writings. According to the family tradition, he took over spiritual Akbarian 'investiture' (from Arab. *al-shaykh al-akbar* – the greatest shaykh) after Ibn 'Arabi (*khirqā akbariyya*), becoming a follower and an apostle of his work. When, after many years, he arrived in Damascus (in 1855), he directed his steps precisely to the mausoleum of the Andalusian mystic (where they later would bury him). In 1856, he began writing a *Book of Station (Kitāb al-mawāqif)* retaining full doctrinal compatibility and intellectual coherence with the teachings of the medieval Sufi master, which is an original interpretation of selected fragments of *Objawienia mekkańskie* of Ibn 'Arabi (cf. French edition: ABD EL-KADER, *Le livre des haltes*, [in:] Ibid., *Écrits spirituels*, prés. et trad. del'arabe par M. Chodkiewicz, Paris 1982; English transl.: *The Spiritual Writings of Amir Abd el-Kader*, trans. by a team under the direction of J. Chrestensen and T. Manning, New York 1995). Also the house where Abd el-Kader lived in Damascus, given to him to use by Izzet Pasha, was the same house where six centuries earlier the Andalusian mystic, Ibn 'Arabi, had died (cf. M. CHODKIEWICZ, *Introduction*, pp. 20-21).

Abd el-Kader was not only a commentator but also an editor of his works. On the initiative of the emir in years 1857/1858 the first edition of *Objawienia mekkańskie* (on the basis of manuscript from Konya) was published in Cairo, of course in Arabic. He also covered the full costs of edition. Cf. J. WRONECKA, *Wstęp*, [in:] IBN 'ARABI, *Traktat o miłości*, p. XVIII (here footnote 50).

⁸¹ Cf. e.g. É. GEOFFROY, *Foreword*, [in:] A. BOUYERDENNE, *Emir Abd el-Kader*, p. XIII.

⁸² Cf. among other works D. GRIL, *La théophanie des Noms divins, d'Ibn 'Arabi à Abd el-Kader*, [in:] *Abd el-Kader. Un spirituel*, pp. 153-172. God (Allah) is 'not manifested Principle of all manifestations, Reality of all realities'. ABD EL-KADER, *Ma-wqif 220*, [in:] Ibid., *Écrits spirituels*, p. 46.

mystical symbolism of light;⁸³ the idea of Muhammadan reality and Muhammadan 'perfect man', and so on. Reaching the oldest and finest traditions of Muslim universalism, Abd el-Kader introduced the doctrine of Ibn 'Arabi for his project of modernity, combining spirituality with modern technological progress and balancing the activity of contemplation. He owed his openness of mind, tendency to think in terms of universal, cross border, universal human and certain religious syncretism to Ibn 'Arabi. Shown intellectual compounds explain, to a great extent, the possibility of coming closer to the western world (including Christianity) by the emir, going beyond the contemporary narrow orthodoxy and ethnocentrism. Just such a face of Islam: universalistic and deeply humanistic aroused Norwid's deep respect and admiration. Paying homage to Arabian Samaritan from Damascus, the Polish poet bowed to tradition of which emir was depositary. Abd el-Kader himself was Norwid's second (after Dante) potential tangent point with Arabian philosophy and mystics⁸⁴.

In 19th century, the emir tried to pass the fascinating legacy of Ibn 'Arabi to the Europeans, who had deprived him of freedom and homeland :

[...] when Abd el-Kader understood that French power colonized his land in a material way, he started to colonize the heart of Frenchmen, giving the testimony of Islam and Sufi in that country⁸⁵.

The Polish poet could get to know some elements and traditions of religious and philosophical Muslim thought at the emir, of course, provided that he had read his writings, and that those were not just superficial French newspaper articles about him. Certainly, he had never read, dating from the time of his stay in Damascus, Arabic spiritual writings of the emir, i.e. the mentioned commentary on the Ibn 'Arabi's works: *Kitab al-Mawaqif – Księga stacji (the Book of Station)*⁸⁶,

⁸³ Cf. ABD EL-KADER, *La Lumière des cieux et de la terre*, [in:] Ibid, *Écrits spirituels*, pp. 116-121.

⁸⁴ At present, Abd el-Kader is regarded as the outstanding representative of the Muslim esotericism, a restorer and the follower of universalistic Akbarian sciences and also an initiator of Renewal of Akbarian movement in 19th century. Cf. M. CHODKIEWICZ, *Introduction*, pp. 34-36.

⁸⁵ É. GEOFFROY, *Foreword*, [in:] A. BOUYERDENNE, *Emir Abd el-Kader*, p. XI.

⁸⁶ Fully appreciating the value of intellectual knowledge and speculation encountered by the emir in France, Abd el-Kader. However, he changed from horizontal attitude to vertical one in Damascus, intensifying his exploration of what is beyond rational by metaphysical reading reality. A. BOUYERDENE, *Emir Abd el-Kader*, p. 159. The zenith of his spiritual: mystical and ascetic experience, or period of spiritual fullness, falls at the time of exile. Written from God's inspiration *Księga stacji* is an esoteric work, where the influence of Ibn 'Arabi's thought was strongly marked. It is Kader's spiritual testament, a record of his mystical experience and a kind of his spiritual au-

published as late as about 20 years after Abd el-Kader's death, and containing apart from considerations, 19 metaphysical poems⁸⁷. However, one of the earlier philosophical and religious works of this Algerian hero was fully made available to the European public in French language in 1850s. It was the book about which J. Belejowska informed Polish readers in 19th century. *Rappel à l'intelligent, avis à l'indifférent. Considération Philosophiques, Religieuses, Historique... (Wezwanie do inteligentnego, rada dla obojętnego. Rozważania filozoficzne, religijne, historyczne...)*⁸⁸. During his stay in Paris in September 1855⁸⁹ Abd el-Kader offered the manuscript to the president of distinguished *Society asiatique*, Joseph T. Reinaud (who worked in the department of Eastern manuscripts of Bibliothèque Royale), expressing, by this gesture, gratitude for the warm welcome and admitting him as a member of this prestigious society. Great interest in and fame of the author induced another member of the *Société*, Gustav Dugat to make translation of the treatise into French language. It was published in 1858.

tobiography. The structure of the book reflects the mystical movement upward– journey through following stations (spiritual states).

⁸⁷ Cf. ÉMIR ABD AL-QÂDIR L' ARGÉRIEN, *Poèmes métaphysiques*, trad. de l'arabe et prés- entés par Abd ar-Razzâq Yahyâ (Chares-André Gilis), 2. éd., Beirut 1996. Those poems express various aspects of emir's 'metaphysical realization' on the spiritual way of Akbarian initiation. Those are a record of his esoteric, ecstatic experiences, a poetic expression of mystical 'madness of love'. Philosophical terminology was framed in beautiful poetic language and clothed in fine form.

⁸⁸ Cf. G. DUGAT, *Introduction du traducteur*, [in:] ABD EL-KADER, *Rappel à l'intelligent, avis à l'indifférent. Cinsiderations philosophique, religieuses, historiques etc.*, p. IX. The book includes very interesting translator's notes. He mentions, among other works, the most important French works from the first half of 19th century on Arabian philosophy (in note 4). Cf. ABD EL-KADER, *Rappel*, pp. 201-203.

⁸⁹ The emir visited the world exhibition in Paris and met Napoleon III from who he obtained an official permission to settle down in Damascus. Another stay in Paris was in 1865. At that time, Abd el-Kader spent in the capital of France almost 2 months. He held the meeting at the headquarters of *Compani Universelle du Canal Maritime de Suez*, he was entertained by Napoleon III, he visited Louvre and Sorbonne. Eminent Parisian Photo studios solicited for his sessions to which he readily agreed. But it was a brave gesture for his part because iconoclastic Muslim orthodoxy forbids preparing images (including photographs) of living creatures But for the emir, photograph was a form of Theophany, apart from that, at that time again he showed his appreciation for modern technical solutions (cf. É. GEOFFROY, *Métaphysique et modernité chez Abd el-Kader: la photographie comme théophanie*, [in:] ABD EL-KADER, *Un spirituel*, pp. 141-151). From Paris, he went to London with a short visit, where he admired Westminster Abbey, the Parliament, the British Museum, National Gallery and other places. His last visit to France took place in 1867. The Emir received an official invitation to Paris World Exhibition from Napoleon III.

The French somewhat familiar with Arabian philosophy thanks to numerous oriental publications, including famous works of Renan⁹⁰, had the opportunity to become familiar with the newest Arabian thought and to get to know their contemporary *homme de lettres* of the East, Arabic erudite, intellectual and poet⁹¹, devoted to studies and religious meditation⁹²:

[...] since famous Muslim, the most enlightened and famous representative of Islam from 19th century directed his philosophical thought to France, we thought it our duty to repeat it in the language of the nation always ready to recognize nobility of courage and sublimity of the soul at others, even at old enemy⁹³.

⁹⁰ Renan also wrote about Abd el-Kader (in his *Études d'histoire religieuse*, Paris 1862, p. 89). He called him the most eminent representative of the Semitic race of those days, 'A religious man of meditation and strong passions, and in no way a soldier'. We know that Norwid was interested in Renan's work. It could have been an additional encouragement to read *Rappel...*

⁹¹ Abd el-Kader is recorded in monographs within the field of the history of Arabic literature as one of 'the pioneers of the Arabian Revival of Algerian Literature'. He left a literary legacy: poetry (in form of Qasida), and philosophical treatises, socio-political and religious and mystical written prose. His poems 'speak of glory, war, freedom, of specific events, express longing for the desert as well as religious and mystical thoughts'. J. BIELAWSKI, J. KOZŁOWSKA, E. MACHUT-MEUDECKA, K. SKARZYŃSKA-BOCHEŃSKA, *Nowa i współczesna literatura arabska 19 i 20 wieku. Literatura arabskiego Maghrebu*, Warszawa 1989, pp. 80-81. Gen. E. Dumas included the poems of Abd el-Kader in his work from 1858, devoted to the Arabian horses (*Les chevaux du Sahara et les mœurs du desert par le général E. Dumas, Directeur des affaires de l'Algérie, avec des commentaries par L'Émir Abd-el-Kader*; newer edition: E. DAUMAS, *Les Chevaux du Sahara*, Paris 1998). Out of 20th century publications of poetry, letters and monographs of Abd el-Kader, these are worth mentioning: *Les Poésies d'Abd-el-Kader composées en Algérie et en France*, par H. Pérès, Alger 1932; *Autobiographie: écrite en prison en 1849 et publiée pour la première fois*, trad. del' arabe par H. Benmansour, Paris 1995; *Correspondance de l'Emir Abdelkader avec le Général Desmichels et documents relatifs à l'époque d'Abdelkader*, Alger 2003; *Lettre aux Français: notes brèves destinées à ceux qui comprennent, pour attirer l'attention sur des problèmes essentiels*, trad. intégrale sur les manuscrits originaux par R.R. Khawam, Paris 1977. Chosen poetic fragments were also placed in the monograph *L'Emir Abdelkader*, Alger 1970.

⁹² The most important philosophical and religious works of Abd el-Kader: *Rappel à l'intelligent, avis à l'indifférent. Considération Philosophiques, Religieuses, Historique...* (ed. In French t. *Le Livre d'Abd-El-Kader intitulé „Rappel à l'intelligent, avis à l'indifférent: considérations philosophiques, religieuses, historiques..."*, trad. par G. Dugat, Paris 1858); *Kitâb al-Mawâqif* (French ed. t. *Livre des haltes*, trad. et ann. par M. Lagarde, Leiden 2000-2001); *Poèmes métaphysiques* (trad. de l'arabeet présentés par Abdar-RazzâqYahyâ (Charles-André Gilis), Paris 1983). Collection of texts extracted from *Kitâb al-Mawâqif* with commentary was published in France: ABD EL-KADER, *Écrits spirituels*, prés. et trad. del'arabe par M. Chodkiewicz, Paris 1982.

⁹³ G. DUGAT, *Introduction du traducteur*, [in:] ABD EL-KADER, *Rappel à l'intelligent*, p. XX-IX-XXX. A French translator presented Abd el-Kader as a contemporary representative of spiritual Arabian philosophy showing Greek, especially platonic affinity. However, the debate raised various

It is possible that Norwid had in his hand the work of Abd el-Kader recommended by Paris Asian Society. After all, he was an avid reader and interested in world, with ease moving through areas of different cultures. Since his meeting with Weżyk (Norwid's close friend), he lived and breathed with dreams of East-bound travelling and drank in various publications on the Orient, and at late 1850s. When the book was published he had already visited America and lived in Paris for good. He could reach for that famous treatise without any problems. And, though, in preserved legacy after the poet, there are no records of such a book; still a great fame of the Algerian national hero increased by the event in 1860, it makes it very probable. It would be, for Norwid, a great guide to the intellectual and spiritual world of the emir. It would create a unique opportunity for in-depth knowledge on that greatest hero of Arabian East and West of that time.

What, therefore, would Norwid find if he reached for the French edition of Abd el-Kader's work? Could the ideological and philosophical stand of the author expressed in the book have an effect on form and message of the literary tribute of the Polish poet dedicated to the emir two years later? By all means, I think so. Let us have a look at the work.

Rappel... is an example of Arabian wisdom, philosophical literature, drawing from many old sources and traditions both eastern and western ones⁹⁴. It is also a peculiar recapitulation of the state of knowledge and consciousness of Arabian intellectual and moral elites in 19th century. It reflects the spirit of that Muslim East and includes author's very interesting observation on European civilization, its components and status. It is also a polemical work undertaking a dialogue with European modern model of recognition, the western vision of progress, humanity and culture. It brings, at the same time, a fascinating project of consolidation of the Orient and Occident in common values of which the most important is a monotheistic religion. Abd el-Kader's publication, of course, deserves the attention of the readers of Norwid's ode; after all, it undertakes similar themes. Especially interesting is chapter *Rappel...*, where characteristic words of the core unity of all religions are uttered⁹⁵:

issues, not only philosophical and religious, but also economic, philological, historical and ethnographical ones. It was divided into two parts: *Philosophy-religion* and *Writing, history, ethnology*.

⁹⁴ The translator of Abd el-Kader's debate saw parallels between his views and thoughts of various European philosophers, among others Plato, Pascal, and even Kant. He admired the emir's erudition and eclecticism, who freely quoted Ptolemy, Galen, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Zarathustra, Manes, Al Firdausi, Avicenna, and many other Muslim thinkers and poets.

⁹⁵ Abd el-Kader draws attention to the fact that specific laws given by prophets only differed in details due to the fact that they were addressed to people living in different times and conditions. They simply had to meet the needs of the people living at that time. But the essence of monotheism

When it comes to the foundations and principles of religion, there is no disagreement between the prophets from Adam to Muhammad: All call others to praise the unity of God, [...] to belief that all things in the world are His work; that He is the cause of all beings, His existence has no cause, and that He is the teacher of how to keep soul, mind, procreation and All the goods in him. There is no controversy among the prophets, and all the Law of God is unanimous in these five principles[...]⁹⁶.

In chapter 28 of *Book of Station*, written in 1860s in Damascus and, certainly, unknown to Norwid, because it was still in the form of an Arabic manuscript, Abd el-Kader submitted a theological and philosophical justification of the conviction derived from Ibn 'Arabi's teaching that every worshipper, whoever the object of his adoration would be, in reality, gives worship to the only God (Allah).

The basis of the plurality of cults and objects of adoration is infinite multiplicity of divine names and inexhaustible variety of their Theophany⁹⁷. Stressed in *Koran* absolute transcendence of God to the world, according to the thinker, brings to mind a conclusion that, in reality, God also transcends all human imagination and religious doctrines ('jakże [...] niedoskonałość stworzeń mogłaby Go objąć?'⁹⁸). Each religion gives worship only to one chosen aspect (aspects) of divine Being because it is impossible to worship each of them. Multiplicity of cults does not affect the uniqueness of God⁹⁹:

God is not contained in any of the various cults or doctrines [...]. God is not limited by what comes to your mind, i.e., your Credo or closed in a doctrine that you declare.

(general law), remained unchanged since Moses. The Law of Moses, according to Abd el-Kader, was mostly practical, Jesus teaching, spiritual, the benefit of teaching of Muhammad combined both of the aspects. Cf. ABD EL-KADER, *Rappel*, pp. 99-104.

96 ABD EL-KADER, *Rappel*, pp. 96-97.

97 Cf. M. CHODKIEWICZ, *Introduction*, and p. 35.

98 ABD EL-KADER, *Écrits spirituels*, p. 130.

99 In one of Abd el-Kader's poems, you can read:

„There is, in me all the expectation and hope of people:

For those who want it, «Koran», [...]

[...] For those others «Gospel», [...]

For the person who wants it, «synagoga», for him, who wants it,

«dzwon» i «krzyż».

For the person who wants it, Kaaba [...]”.

Émir Abd al-Qâdir l'Algérien, *Poèmes métaphysiques*, trad. de l'arabe et présentés par Abd ar-Razzâq Yahyâ (Ch.-A. Gilis), 2 é., Bejrut 1996, p. 53.

Whatever comes to your mind about God, you should know that He is this and that He is different than this! [...]

If you think and believe that it is what you declare and what they believe in all the Muslim schools; He is this and He is different than that! If you think He is that in what they believe in different communities: Muslims, Christians, Jews, Mazdaism followers, polytheists and others.

He is like that and He is different than that! And if you think and believe in what declare experts *par excellence*: prophets, saints and angels, He is that! And He is different than that! [...]

None of his creation honour all of His aspects; no one is unfaithful to Him in all of His aspects. No one knows Him in all of His aspects; no one is deprived of the knowledge of all His aspects. [...]

Each of His creatures gives him worship and knows Him only in some ways and at the same time they do not know Him in other. [...] Of necessity, we all know Him only in some aspects and praise that one chosen of His aspect. Consequently, a mistake does not exist in this world; only relatively. [...]

He includes the beliefs of all His creatures and His mercy encompasses them all. [...] He is the essence of all cult, and [...] in some ways each worshiper worships Him.

Our God and the God of the Christians, Jews, Sabaeans, and other sects is one, so as He told us. However, He revealed himself to us through theophanies other than that in which He manifests himself in His revelation to Christians, Jews and other sects¹⁰⁰.

The conclusion of considerations in *Rappel...*¹⁰¹, derived from Ibn 'Arabi's studies and unusually bold in its religious universalism is perhaps the most frequently cited Abd el-Kader's response:

¹⁰⁰ *The Spiritual Writings of Amir Abd al-Kader*, trans. par J. Chrestensen, T. Manning, New York 1995, pp. 127-131. Abd el-Kader thought that even naturalists and materialists declaring atheism worship God, though unconsciously. „Niewierność nie istnieje w świecie, jedynie w sposób relatywny”. Ibid, p. 134.

¹⁰¹ The second part of the French book of Abd el-Kader was devoted to philological, historical and ethnological issues. The discussion of the role of writing takes much space in the book. It would be impossible to transfer the knowledge, the development of philosophical thought and passing the Word of God without it. Writing determines the development of religion and social development of human being. The following subsections were devoted to history of Persian, Arabic, Syriac, Hebrew, Latin writings and Muslim scientific and philosophical traditions, including Arabian and Greek philosophy. The last part of the book presented civilization and cultural achievements and religions of various peoples and nations, e.g. Indians, Persians, Greek, Romans, Franks, Arabs, Hebrews, Egyptians, Slavs (though, Abd el-Kader did not have good opinion of the latter!).

But religion is one, as unanimously admit Prophets. They differ only in details; they are like people who have one father but different mothers. [...]

If Muslims and Christians wished to listen to me, I would put an end to the differences between them, and they would become brothers in every respect, but they ignore my words. The wisdom of God chose that they were not united in common belief. Messiah himself will make that their antagonism will disappear when he comes; he will not unite them with word only, despite the fact that he resurrects the dead and heals the blind and the lepers, he will unite them by sabre and fight¹⁰².

Emir repeatedly expressed his deep conviction that the ultimate destiny of mankind is supraconfessional brotherhood and the unification of the great human family around universal values, and that consolidation into a harmonious community is possible only on the spiritual path¹⁰³. He was a visionary forerunner of intercultural and interreligious dialogue¹⁰⁴. He had considerably broader horizons and was much more culturally advanced than many modern people. His idea of complementary cultures mutually enriching and being a basis of new mankind exceeded patterns of thinking contemporary to him:

Deeply attached to his culture, but open to pluralistic humanism that was characteristic of him. He was embodied ideal of humanism free of taboos and social and cultural compulsion. [...] he was of free and universal mind¹⁰⁵.

The emir believed and proved by deeds that a synthesis of two different civilizations combining significant values of both cultures: European and Islamic was possible¹⁰⁶.

Ecumenical ceremony of opening of the Suez Canal, realized 'Utopia' by Ferdinand Lesseps, in which the emir participated and in which he was a sort of a patron. He seemed symbolically to initiate the realization of that great project¹⁰⁷.

¹⁰² ABD EL-KADER, *Rappel*, pp. 104-105.

¹⁰³ Cf. A. BOUYERDENE, *Emir Abd el-Kader*, p. 139.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., *Un avant-gardiste du dialogue*, [in:] ABD EL-KADER, *Un spirituel dans la modernité*, pp. 31-35.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 24.

¹⁰⁶ A.H. KASZNIK, *Abd el-Kader*, p. 192.

¹⁰⁷ 'His interpretation of the events was eschatological, and he noticed the project of the unification of two seas as a harbinger of the new era when the meeting of two entities, geographical and metaphysical would bear new humankind'. A. BOUYERDENE, *Abd el-Kader*, p. 142.

Goethe, in *West Eastern Diwan* (1819), expressed his belief in the necessity and inevitability of spiritual and cultural fusion of the Orient with Occident on the basis of a balanced symbiosis (though not unification).¹⁰⁸ In Abd el-Kader's thought, cultural pluralism is not only called for, but it is also deeply metaphysically justified¹⁰⁹. No wonder that the French translator of *Rappel...* finally shared his significant reflection, which arose in him during communing with the Arabian work, that:

'moral and religious ideas of peoples are not so different. As it generally seems they appear in this way through the prism of ignorance or prejudice; when they are given by superior mind, they expose the illusory barriers between races making impossible to unite people in the 'communion of feelings'¹¹⁰.

When you read 'Arabian' poem of Norwid treating of transcendental immanent God and about man as His image, you are also struck with a different analogy of these verses with Abd el-Kader's reflections included in the fragments 149 and 193 of *Book of Station* titled by publisher:¹¹¹ *God's Face* and *Transcendence and Immanency*. From two (and adjacent) paragraphs of *Pisma duchowe* emerge questions of theological and anthropological character identical with Norwid's message. First, the basic truth about God's transcendence with respect to the creatures:

[...] no created creature, whether they are among those whose knowledge is the fruit of mind, or among those whose knowledge comes from theofany, do not know God truly.

¹⁰⁸ „Kto siebie sam i drugich zna,
Pojmie umysłu władzę,
Że Wschód i Zachód, światy dwa,
Już się rozdzielić nie dadzą!
Jak na dwu ramionach wagi
Szukać mądrej równowagi
Między Wschodem a Zachodem,
Zachowując złoty środek!”.

J.W. GOETHE, *Kto siebie sam*, transl. J. Sztudynger, [in:] *Ibid*, *Wybór poezji*, ed. Z. Ciechanowska, Wrocław 1955, pp. 402-403.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*. ABD EL-KADER, *Un spirituel dans la modernité*, p. 12.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*. G. DUGAT, *Introduction du traducteur*, [in:] ABD EL-KADER, *Rappel*, p. XXIX.

¹¹¹ Individual considerations of Abd el-Kader from *Księga stacji* does not have any titles, but they start with quotations from *the Koran*.

[...] In what way could a finite creature get to know Him, who is free from all relations or limit? [...]¹¹².

This message is immediately complemented by a thought about the constant presence of God in the world. The lack of the latter truth is considered misconception by the author, and even harmful because it ignores the existence of two names of Allah: *Az-Zahir* (Evident, Extrinsic) and *Al-Batin* (Hidden, Intrinsic). According to the Arabian thinker, an obstacle in seeing the Creator in another person is an attachment to the concept of transcendent God and the human tendency to 'measure' the Creator with one's own imperfect measure:

I really am the One who says, hidden behind the veil of every created form. Consider the case of Moses [...]. When he heard the calling coming from the burning bush, he knew that the one who spoke was Allah. [...]

If they are unable to perceive God in the forms through which He manifests himself, [...]if their eyes are covered with a veil which prevents them from remembering Him at any time, when they perceive the form manifested; if they are unable to hear his words, it is because of their exclusive devotion to divine transcendence which created their intellects without consent to reduction of transcendence by immanence which is inseparable from it according to the Holy Law¹¹³.

Equally significant and fraught with consequences is Theophany vision of a man emerging from Damascus 'spiritual writings' of Abd el-Kader (*Twarz Boga/Face of God*):

God, in fact, does not take into account your external form but only your heart, which is 'the divine face' proper to each one of you, and it is 'the divine face' which in you includes God, in spite of the fact that His heaven and earth cannot take in Him. [...]

God's words refer to the face of God: „Oh Adam's son, I was ill and you did not visit me. I was hungry and you did not feed me, I was thirsty and you did not give me water...”

[...] in fact, the very face of God is adored in every creature: fire, sun, star, animal or angel. Respect for the face is essential in each act religious or not. [...]

Wherever you are, in the fulfilment of the works of adoration or in acts of daily life, contemplate Him, in what you eat, what you drink, in those whom you marry, always knowing that He is,

¹¹² *The Spiritual Writings of Amir Abd al-Kader*, p. 133.

¹¹³ *Ibid*, pp. 109-110.

all at the same time, Contemplating and Contemplated¹¹⁴.

The emir recalled the words of his Master Ibn 'Arabi:

If you say that God is beyond you
Your sacred Law but confirms that He is within your reach,
It also confirms His transcendence.
Be aware of those two things
Despite the weaknesses of your intellect¹¹⁵.

It is noticeable that Abd el-Kader quotes the Hadith referring to a fragment of the Gospel of Matthew telling about fulfilment of works of mercy for your neighbours with the awareness of immanence of the image of God in the other person (Mt 25, 41-45). At this point, the tradition of Christians and Muslims met together in Abd el-Kader's thought, actually, neither for the first nor the last time. As Michel Chodkiewicz, a French translator and commentator of evoked Emir's *Pisma duchowe*, aptly noticed, man who took care of Damascus Christians during Druze revolt in 1860, proved in this way something more than his nobility and courage. He demonstrated full compliance between what he did and what he preached¹¹⁶.

What is astonishing, above all, is the fact that Norwid, in his poetic tribute sent to Syria, discussed the very essence of religious and mystical meditations of Abd el-Kader (and his mystic leader, Ibn 'Arabi), recorded in the pages of *Księga stacji* which had been composed from the moment of settling its author in Damascus in 1856 (so, parallel to the Syrian slaughter). Was it a coincidence? Or, is it a flawless work of spiritual intuition of Norwid? And maybe the Polish poet simply knew Abd el-Kader's writing? Anyway, the ode sent to Damascus must have astonished the addressee how accurately he touched the essence of his own views derived from the most universalistic tradition of Islam that had ever appeared, i.e. from the teaching of Sufi Ibn 'Arabi from Andalusia.

Let us get back to the poem of Norwid. The universalism of extensive and religious vision that could encompass the Orient and Occident was stressed even more in the last two verses of the ode. They evoke the mysteries of Epiphany, i.e. a revelation of God to man, which the Church, as early as in the first centuries of Christianity, honoured by the holiday of Epiphany. The story from Gospel of St Matthew (Mt 2.1-12) about the Wise Men who came from East to Bethlehem to

¹¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 106-107.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 111.

¹¹⁶ M. CHODKIEWICZ, *Introduction*, p. 35.

worship the Child, has a deep symbolism: it is announced recognition of the pagan world in Christ, the Saviour of all nations. The magicians represent different parts of the world, different races and nations; that is, the mission of the saviour is universal, worldwide, covers the entire human family.

In *Notatki z mitologii*, (*Notes from Mithology*) the poet wrote:

246. Wise Men: according to the Psalmist were the kings of Arabia, Tars and Saba. (PWsz VII, 285)

In ode *Do Emira...*, he experiences the theophany as the first from ‘pagans’ ‘Emperor of Arabia’ (A French anonymous pamphlet granted such a title to Abd el-Kader¹¹⁷):

Bo, z Królów-Magów trzech, Tyś pierwszy,
Co konia swego dosiadł w czas!
(PWsz I, 327)

The ode becomes, then, a poem about Revelation experienced by a Muslim. The truth of the Epiphany shows that it was addressed to all nations, and is not the exclusive domain of Christians.

Norwid’s attitude towards that Arabian 19th century hero, at first, enthusiastic and glorifying, also became more reserved, and, in his eyes, the emir’s image became trite and disheroized (cf. *Letter to J. Kuczyńska*, PWsz IX, 180). However it does not change the fact that it was Norwid’s poetry, where in Polish literature was initiated – mounted on a solid metaphysical foundation and universalist premises emerged from both traditions: occidental and oriental – a true dialogue of western world with Arabian East immeasurably greater in its depth and substance than any superficial fashion and oriental styling of the era. Norwid and Arabian emir from Damascus not only unanimously pointed to the same threats from erroneous cultural civilization assumptions of European modernity, they also wanted to remodel it according to a more perfect pattern. They, together, closed the old epoch of Eurocentrism and religious exclusivism in their writings so as to open a new era of world humanism.

Translated by Bogdan Malec

¹¹⁷ Cf. A.H. KASZNIK, *Abd el-Kader*, p. 201.

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„TEN SAM JEST BÓG”. NORWID – ABD EL-KADER – IBN 'ARABI

S u m m a r y

The main message of Norwid's poem *Do Emira Abd el Kadera w Damaszku* [To Emir Abd el Kader in Damascus] of 1860 reveals his remarkable affinity for the ideas expressed by Abd el-Kader in his French work *Rappel à l'intelligent, avis à l'indifferent. Considerations philosophiques, religieuses, historiques etc.* [Call to the intelligent, warning to the indifferent. Philosophical, religious, historical and related considerations] (Paris 1858). It is highly probable that Norwid was familiar with the text by the Algerian national hero, a mystic and an Islamic saint. The spiritual and intellectual closeness of these two remarkable thinkers of the 19th century is striking.

The source of the religious universalism in Abd el-Kader's thought is the legacy of his own spiritual master – the founding father of Muslim mysticism and the most famous Sufi theologian of late Islam – Ibn 'Arabi.

Norwid's poetry introduced an idea of authentic dialogue of the West with the Arabic East to Polish literature. This dialogue rested on sound metaphysical foundations and on the universalist premises emerging from both traditions – occidental and oriental. In its weight

and depth, this dialogue surpassed all the superficial fads and oriental stylisations typical of the epoch. Norwid and the Arab Emir of Damascus expressed unanimously their anxiety about the dangers that the European contemporaneity faced as a result of the false cultural and civilizational assumptions it decided to rest on. They both strove to reconstruct it in accord with a more promising model. They both believed as well that the reconstruction must begin with closing down (first mentally, then historically) the old time of Eurocentrism and religious exclusivism, to open a new era of global humanism.

Key words: Norwid; Abd el-Kader; Ibn ‘Arabi; 19th-century orientalism; the Orient; Romanticism; Islam; Muslims.

Słowa kluczowe: Norwid; Abd el-Kader; Ibn ‘Arabi; orientalizm XIX-wieczny; Orient; romantyzm; islam; muzułmanie.

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