tried to address a warning to a crazy world rushing toward a catastrophe. That a catastrophe was imminent I heard from him, but also I heard from him that the great conflagration he predicted would be merely a part of a larger drama to be played to the end.

He saw deeper causes in an erroneous direction taken by science in the eighteenth century, a direction which provoked landslide effects. Not unlike William Blake before him, he announced a New Age, a second Renaissance of imagination now polluted by a certain type of scientific knowledge, but, as he believed, not by all scientific knowledge, least of all by the science that would be discovered by men of the future. And it does not matter to what extent I took his predictions literally: a general orientation was enough.

Oscar Milosz, like William Blake, drew inspiration from the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg, a scientist who earlier than anyone else foresaw the defeat of man, hidden in the Newtonian model of the universe. When, thanks to my relative, I became an attentive reader of Swedenborg, interpreting him not, it is true, as was common in the Romantic era, I did not imagine I would visit his country for the first time on such an occasion as the present one.

Our century draws to its close, and largely thanks to those influences, I would not dare to curse it, for it has also been a century of faith and hope. A profound transformation of which we are hardly aware, because we are a part of it, has been taking place, coming to the surface from time to time in phenomena that provoke general astonishment. That transformation has to do, and I use here words of Oscar Milosz, with "the deepest secret of toiling masses, more than ever alive, vibrant and tormented." Their secret, an unavowed need of true values, finds no language to express itself, and here not only the mass media but also intellectuals bear a heavy responsibility.

But transformation has been going on, defying short-term predictions, and it is probable that in spite of all horrors and perils, our time will be judged as a necessary phase of travail before mankind ascends to a new awareness. Then a new hierarchy of merits will emerge, and I am convinced that Simone Weil and Oscar Milosz, writers in whose school I obediently studied, will receive their due. I feel we should publicly confess our attachment to certain names because in that way we define our position more forcefully than by pronouncing the names of those to whom we would like to address a violent no. My hope is that in this lecture, in spite of my meandering thought, which is a professional bad habit of poets, my yes and no

are clearly stated, at least as to choice of succession. For we all who are here, both the speaker and you who listen, are no more than links between the past and the future.

[Translated by C.M.]