

The discovery of electricity in the eighteenth century brought European nations to leap into modernity. Nevertheless, before that, electricity had been investigated and harnessed in examination rooms by the scientists called then natural or experimental philosophers. The scientific practices of that time included experiments with plants, animals and human bodies. Thus, in many conceptions, for instance in theory by French scholar Jean-Antoine Nollet, electricity was figured as a universal force organizing the whole universe, starting from minerals and ending on planets. Electricity was described according to great chain of being (*scala naturae*), which was characteristic for contemporaneous state of knowledge of the eighteenth century. Nevertheless strict hierarchy of beings had started to collapse – discovered electricity permeated all beings and social classes. In such a way electricity not only contributed to the beginning of modernity, but also indicated as a metaphor some affairs of rough historical moment of the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century.

New forms of dissemination – growing amount of books and magazines, new-grounded institutions, public performances – makes knowledge seep from examinations rooms to popular circles. Electricity founded new representations, the most popular of which connected with vitality and health curations. Institutional knowledge came into collision with the popular one. A good illustration of this process are mesmerism controversy, where French Academy tangled with proponents of animal magnetism. Such disputes was common for the entire Europe. In Vilnius, for instance, the main organ that tangled with mesmerism was the Towarzystwo Szubrawców [The Wastrel Society]. Simultaneously in Vilnius studied Adam Mickiewicz. The impact of contemporaneous state of knowledge about electricity we can now discover in metaphors he used in his utterances. In his early stage of work Mickiewicz participated at the Towarzystwo Promienistych [The Radiant Association] founded by Tomasz Zan, but also in his mature work, that is in letters and philosophical writings after 1830, we can find the representations of electricity underlying some of his important beliefs.

So the problem here is the impact of scientific practices, which are essential to production of knowledge, on popular imagery about electricity in the press and Polish messianism. The aim of the project is complex investigation of specialist physics literature (1750-1830) in order to reconstruct scientific practices connected with electricity. It allows me to examine the process of knowledge circulation between institutional and popular science practices. Accordingly I will do my research into the popular science press (1815-1850) in order to determine the metaphors used in discourse about electricity. The last part of project include investigation of electric imagery in works of Polish messianists (1800-1850). Contributed research will provide recognition of the function of scientific practices and electricity for philosophical conceptions of the first half of the nineteenth century.