

Summary

**MICHAEL BRÖTJE/ *Vir heroicus sublimis* by Barnett Newman.
Creation – suffering and reconciliation**

In his analysis of Barnett Newman's *Vir heroicus sublimis* the author takes into his consideration many aspects of the work hitherto neglected, and he also polemises with hitherto interpretations. In result he places it within the tradition of European altar painting and treats it as the most radical, "unsurpassable version which transforms the stage stations of the passed-away times into a pure transcendent experience". The starting point for the interpretation is deciding on the reference to Christ included in the title, the result – ascertaining the work as a visual analogon of the essence and mission of this figure. The basic means of building the painting's meaning is the colour of red, whose area is identical with the shape of a picture. Thanks to which the red is a sensual representation of this intransgressible to each pictorial representation, absolute instance, manifestation, which at the same time evokes irresistible associations with life and – because of "bloodness" – also with death. The next step is to recognise the semantics of five vertical strands, which emerge from the area of red and parallelly refer to a viewer in front of the painting, by corresponding with his vertical attitude. The author, by contradicting the hitherto interpretations, which suggest their accidental arrangement, proposes to see in this disposition "a logical consequence" and recognise both the distances between them and their colours as – clear in a spiritual experience – visualisation of the most important stages of Christ's way on Earth. In the sequence read from left to right, the Crucifixion has a central place, and it ends with a strand at the left edge of the painting where "the ruling up to this point horizontal time progress in the life's way from left to right changes suddenly into directing upwards, an allusion to *an ascent*".