

Zbyszek Dymarski

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3637-2661>

University of Gdańsk

On a would – be dispute. The problem of human freedom in the works of Józef Tischner and Leszek Kołakowski¹

Introduction

For Józef Tischner, an encounter with the other was not the only source of significant philosophical inspiration – he considered debates another important means of arriving at the truth. He treated them not so much as one more way of propagating his beliefs (as is often the case in the world of politics), but as a challenge to organize his own views and clarify them in the face of his opponents' arguments. He wanted both the participants of the debates and those who follow them to be able to understand his reasons and arguments behind them.

Zbyszek Dymarski, an assistant professor at the Institute for Research of Culture at the University of Gdańsk. He is a graduate of the Gdańsk University of Technology, the Pontifical Academy of Technology in Cracow, and the Higher School of Social Communication in Gdynia. He conducts research in the fields of philosophical anthropology, anthropology of religion and urban anthropology. He is the head of the Laboratory of the Philosophy and Anthropology of the European City. He is the president of the Pomeranian Society for Philosophy and Theology, and the deputy editor-in-chief of "Karto-Teka Gdańska." His publications include, among others: *Dwugłos o zlu. Ze studiów nad myślą Józefa i Tischnera i Leszka Kołakowskiego* [A dialogue about evil. Studies of the thought of Józef Tischner and Leszek Kołakowski] (2009) and *Człowiek i miasto. Gdańszczanie między starą a nową tożsamością* [Man and the city. Gdańsk inhabitants between the old and new identity] (2017).

¹ The fund was supported by Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education (Grant No. 11H 13 0471 82).

In fact, Tischner conducted two debates. One with Thomism developed by the representatives of the so-called “Lublin school.” He continued it throughout the 1970s, mainly in the scientific and opinion-forming magazines published by lay Catholics, such as “Znak” and “Tygodnik Powszechny.”² Its end was associated with the emergence of Solidarity and his interest in new challenges, brought during the heated sixteen months of its first existence. Tischner started his second debate with Marxism in his book *Polski kształt dialogu*, published in an underground edition in 1979. After that, he also published other, yet less extensive texts. The Marxist response came from minor philosophers such as Włodzimerz Lebieździński³ and Józef Kwapiszewski.⁴ The polemics were not as inspiring as in the first debate and the dispute faded out fairly quickly.⁵ I would like to focus on the third debate, which was “in preparation.” It seems that it would be a dispute with liberalism and the way it treated freedom.

After the collapse of the communist system in Poland (as well as in other countries of Central and Eastern Europe), Marxism ceased to be a significant political force. The ideas it used to justify its right to a monopoly of power also lost on their importance and popularity. Together with the decline of Marxism, liberalism was gaining in importance, in economic, political (not so much social) and cultural aspects. However, intellectual elites of Poland regaining its independence did not consider

² The authors who wrote on the subject were, among others: K. Tarnowski, *Tomizm a obecność filozofii*, “Znak” (1978) nr 2, pp. 198–212; Z. Dymarski, *Debata księdza Józefa Tischnera ze szkołą lubelską*, “Logos i Ethos” (1998) nr 1, pp. 235–245; M. Jawor, *W stronę egzystencjalnego oblicza filozofii*, Olsztyn 2019; S. Dąbrowski, *Polemika Józefa Tischnera z tradycją tomistyczną jako spór o kształt współczesnej edukacji religijnej w Polsce*, “Forum Pedagogiczne” (2019) nr 2, pp. 93–105.

³ I have in mind two books by Włodzimerz Lebieździński: *Tischnerowska metoda krytyki socjalizmu*, Warszawa 1987 and *Socjalizm w krzywym zwierciadle Józefa Tischnera*, Warszawa 1985.

⁴ J. Kwapiszewski, *Filozofia ks. Józefa Tischnera jako źródło dialogu*, Słupsk 1998.

⁵ The debate has not been analysed so far. A few remarks were made by J. M. Ruszar, *Wokół “Polskiego kształtu dialogu.” Polskie filozofowanie*, “Rzeczpospolita” 16.02.2002 dodatek Plus Minus nr 7, p. D4 and S. Konstańczak, *Józefa Tischnera krytyka marksizmu*, in: S. Konstańczak, *Polska XIX i XX wieku w filozoficznym zwierciadle*, Kraków 2017, pp. 293–316. I have mentioned some of the issues in my essay entitled *Józef Tischner wobec marksizmu. Wstępne rozpoznania*, „Karto-Teka Gdańska” (2020) nr 1, pp. 116–130.

an analysis or search for comprehending its essence to be an important and interesting challenge. At that time, they simply admired liberalism. The important factor was that it came from the West, where it was very successful bringing economic and cultural development unparalleled anywhere else in the world.

Liberalism places the issue of freedom at the very centre of its interests.

Józef Tischner and Leszek Kołakowski were also concerned with the questions of freedom, its nature, sources, scope, and its limits (with regard to the cause of man). However, their answers differed from each other. In my view, those differences could have been the major subject of a dispute between philosophers, should it have taken place. There were numerous reasons why this intellectual duel did not materialize. It seems that they were partly of practical and partly social nature. In the 1990s both philosophers were deeply involved with the current political and intellectual life. As personages of broad intellectual horizons, they were often asked to comment on the current situation or to participate in discussions on current affairs. Unfortunately, they often accepted these invitations, which cost them a lot in terms of time and creative energy. They also shared similar views on several issues, which weakened rather than strengthened their determination to enter into fundamental disputes. Besides, at that time the philosophers were respectful and friendly to each other, and intense thinking about differences in understanding some philosophical issues did not seem so important in this situation.

Freedom is a word used in various contexts. I think that from the anthropological point of view, the most important distinction made by Leszek Kołakowski was between external (which he also called legal) and internal freedom.

1. External freedom is about the scope of freedom to act in social sphere, so here the understanding of freedom is connected with collective life. The range of free action in this domain is determined by the type of culture, i.e., by customs, political tradition, social policy implemented by authorities and by enacted laws. The smaller the restrictions (e.g. in travelling, speech, publications, public activities...) imposed on a citizen – a member of a given community – by the political power and the

community in which he lives, the more freedom he has.⁶ Such freedom may be graded – the more decisions regarding one's life and the possibility of influencing the functioning of the state and local communities remain in the hands of the citizens themselves, the greater it is.⁷

Such is the meaning of freedom when we rate political systems as more or less liberal. In this sense, complete (though practically non-viable) freedom would take place if the authority did not order or forbid people anything. On the other hand, Stalinist Russia and North Korea should be regarded as countries where the scope of such freedom is the smallest. It is also worth noting that for the authorities of many countries (not only the above mentioned ones) limiting such freedom is often (but not always rightly) motivated by the need to ensure security for people.

2. In the case of internal freedom, which is of greater interest to us, it is the authorship of the decisions made that matters. It is therefore an extremely important issue for human subjectivity. The answer to the question – to what extent a man is the author of his decisions and to what extent some other factors beyond the control of his consciousness – determines the way of viewing human nature. Therefore, recognizing what Kołakowski describes as “spiritual conditions of choice”⁸ is of great significance for determining the nature of human agency. Is man the author of his actions, or is he just a transmitter of powers over which he has no authority? The dispute over such freedom is somewhat similar to the dispute over universal determinism; however, it is not the same.

Therefore, recognition of Kołakowski's and Tischner's views on the nature of human inner freedom must be preceded by the recognition of the “spiritual side of man.”

⁶ “In the broadest sense, we refer to «power» as anything that allows us to influence the environment – natural or human – in the desired direction” (L. Kołakowski, *Mini wykłady o maxi sprawach* [Mini lectures on maxi matters], t. 1, Kraków 1997, p. 7).

⁷ Kołakowski wrote some interesting remarks on such freedom in his essay *Gdzie jest miejsce dzieci w filozofii liberalnej?*, in: L. Kołakowski, *Moje słuszne poglądy na wszystko*, Kraków 2000, pp. 170–185.

⁸ L. Kołakowski, *Mini wykłady o maxi sprawach*, op. cit., p. 83.

Man and freedom according to Leszek Kołakowski

Describing who man is, Kołakowski points to five aspects of personal identity. These are: the core of personality, memory, anticipation, body, and awareness of the beginning.⁹

For centuries, up to Cartesian times, it was obvious that the **soul** – related to the body in various ways by philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle or Descartes – constituted personal identity.¹⁰ In his critical thought, David Hume questioned this view pointing to the non-empirical nature of the category of substance. In light of his criticism, the soul could only have the status of a metaphysical postulate. However, Kołakowski was convinced that the arguments of the Scottish empiricist did not rule out the possibility of the existence of the term I as designatum.¹¹

He believed that there are three essential reasons for the existence of a **personality core**. They are related to internal experience, personal responsibility and the irreplaceability of a person. Kołakowski was convinced that the certainty of the existence of the self is achieved by every human being through internal experience. It just knows that “I am I.” Secondly, the existence of a personality core is a condition for the existence of personal responsibility, both in the sense of criminal

⁹ L. Kołakowski, *O tożsamości zbiorowej*, in: *Tożsamość w czasach zmiany*, red. K. Michalski, Kraków 1995, pp. 45–48.

¹⁰ Personal identity is a relatively young category. To think of yourself as someone who determines for yourself who you want to be is the fruit of the modern era. According to Charles Taylor: “Talk about «identity» in the modern sense would have been incomprehensible to our forebears of a couple of centuries ago” (Ch. Taylor, *Source of Self. The Making of the Modern Identity*, Cambridge 1989, p. 28).

¹¹ It is also worth noting that in Polish philosophical (and not only philosophical) literature there are many terms to define what is peculiarly human, unique and giving character to humanity, such as, for example, the self, subject, personality, human person, I, self. Kołakowski himself is not consistent here. For example, in his essay *Odpowiedzialność*, in: L. Kołakowski, *Moje słuszne poglądy na wszystko*, op. cit., he sometimes uses the term of personality (p. 203, p. 206) and at other times subjectivity (p. 209), Ego (p. 211) and “Human person” (p. 206).

liability as well as participation in social life.¹² And thirdly, only its existence guarantees the irreducibility of individuals to social and historical conditions.¹³

Memory is another aspect of personal identity. According to Kołakowski, it is a condition of continuity. Like Augustine, Kołakowski considered memory to make the past present.¹⁴ Recent past is still part of the present, and distant past is recalled once again. By recalling the past, it makes man aware of the path he has travelled in life, where his ancestors come from and who his neighbors are. Cultivating memories and learning the history of distant times, therefore, conditions the continuity of consciousness.¹⁵ Kołakowski noticed that the past which is made present can be built in layers, by building one layer over another. So it can grow in a similar way like the rings of a tree grow from year to year. It can also change like a living organism that grows disproportionately but keeps up its initial structure as it grows. Which of these views was closer to him, he did not definitively disclose. More important than deciding which concept is true seems to be what is common to both of them, i.e. the belief that man is not only from the present. The important thing is that he is a “historical man” and not a “nihilistic” man.¹⁶

¹² “Belief in an irreducible and unique core of personality is certainly not a scientifically provable truth [...], but the notion of personal dignity and human rights is an arbitrary invention without this belief, suspended in a vacuum, indefensible, easy to ignore” (L. Kołakowski, *Polityka i diabeł*, in: L. Kołakowski, *Moje słuszne poglądy na wszystko*, op. cit., p. 256).

¹³ The existence of the core of the personality guards the specificity and uniqueness of man and falsifies the thesis proclaimed by Karl Marx about the interchangeability of human individuals. It was “the principle – practiced in a different way from that directly preached – according to which human individuals are completely interchangeable, and the life of individuals matters only insofar as they are tools of the general issue, i.e. the state [...]” (L. Kołakowski, *Komunizm jako formacja kulturalna*, in: *Moje słuszne poglądy na wszystko*, op. cit., p. 365).

¹⁴ St. Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. A. C. Outler, Philadelphia 1955, XI, 28.

¹⁵ Charles Taylor has a similar view on this issue. For example, he wrote: „as a being who grows and becomes I can only know myself through the history of my maturations and regressions, overcomings and defeats. My self-understanding necessarily has temporal depth and incorporates narrative” (Ch. Taylor, *Source of Self*, op. cit., p. 50).

¹⁶ L. Kołakowski, *Czy “człowiek historyczny” umarł i czy powinniśmy jego zgon oplakiwać?*, in: *Moje słuszne poglądy na wszystko*, op. cit., pp. 100–115.

It should be recognized that part of this memory – although Kołakowski mentioned it as a separate aspect of personal identity – is the **awareness of the beginning**. I think he brought it out of the ocean of events related to consciousness and emphasized its importance for two reasons. Firstly, because man remembers only a few of his initial experiences, so that when recreating them, he is supported by his imagination and later knowledge about what this beginning looked like in the eyes of others, who are younger than him (and, therefore, whose development he can already consciously observe). And therefore the awareness status of his beginning is slightly different from the status of the experiences he remembers as undoubtedly happening. And, secondly, because he believes that “the moment and place of the starting point” are extremely important. Possessing awareness of the beginning means that the person is not out of nowhere. He is not like an object or a spare part (which can be used to repair many different devices) but a unique and exceptional being, and, therefore, rooted in the culture of the place and time of his birth from the very beginning. He is also connected with other people, in this case his parents, who called him into this world.¹⁷

The next aspect of personal identity mentioned by Kołakowski – which is, in a sense, on the opposite pole of memory (in relation to the awareness of the beginning) – is man’s **orientation towards the future**. It is not a bold calculation, based on the judgement of strengths and

¹⁷ The importance of the memory of the beginning is evidenced by the interviews of Anna Herbich in the book *Dziewczyny ocalone*, Kraków 2020. Her interlocutors – Jewish women who survived World War II in Polish families when they were children, not knowing their roots, not knowing their biological families – long for their Jewishness. They miss the other part of their identity. Anna Herbich said: “these people longed for Jewishness, they felt that it was their identity, their story, their pre-war life. So they were torn apart. They wanted to blend in with society, but on the other hand, they did not want to cut themselves off from their roots” (A. Herbich, A. Sobańda, *Dziś mają dzieci, wnuki i prawnuki. W ten sposób pokonały Hitlera* [Today they have children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. This way they defeated Hitler], <https://kultura.dziennik.pl/ksiazki/artykuly/6477152,dziewczyny-ocalale-zyd-zydowka-wojna-holocaust-anna-herbich-wojna-sprawiedliwi.html> [6.10.2020]).

possibilities, but a swing of consciousness – with certain fears, but also with hope and joy¹⁸ – towards what is to come.

The last aspect of personal identity in Leszek Kołakowski's theory is the **body**. He wrote “body,” but the characteristics presented in the essay concerned body awareness more than the body itself. Probably, by using the term “body,” Kołakowski wanted to express the view that personal identity cannot be separated from the body, that particular body. Kołakowski made bodily awareness a component of personal identity in order to emphasize his different position in relation to John Locke's ideas. The English philosopher allowed for the possibility of consciousness transfer between bodies.¹⁹ According to Kołakowski, thanks to the awareness of the body, man is constantly in a close relationship with his body. Despite the observed and experienced changes in his body, he is convinced that it is his body. He experiences that it is only through this particular body that he is (continuously) connected to the world.

It should be noted that the components of personal identity described above, i.e. awareness of the beginning and orientation towards the future, as well as memory, are part of **awareness in a broader sense**. It can therefore be said that Leszek Kołakowski was close to the concept of man, which should be defined as connected with awareness. The already mentioned “personality core” occupies a central place in it, and the awareness of the beginning, focus on the future, and memory are its aspects.

In ancient Greece such a broadly understood “core of personality” was equated with the soul. And then, over the centuries, its understanding evolved. Kołakowski, however, did not reveal what it might be in the light of contemporary research. Nor did he write much about his views on this subject.

The characteristics of personal identity presented in the essay *O tożsamości zbiorowej* [On collective identity] was of a structural nature

¹⁸ Unlike Gabriel Marcel and Józef Tischner, Kołakowski defined them only as emotions.

¹⁹ J. Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Oxford 2008, 2.27.12. I am completely ignoring the actual neurological and biological feasibility of such an operation on humans.

and did not provide grounds for stating what would be the nature of the most important content, around which identity would be built-up. One clue was provided only by the statement that “there is an area of personal realities that must be defined in moral, and not biological terms.”²⁰

However, I think that Kołakowski’s views on this issue are very important for understanding his philosophy, and therefore an attempt should be made to reconstruct them. A reference to Aristotelian philosophy and that of John Locke’s might be helpful. According to Aristotle, there is a connection between a person’s inborn predispositions and the actions he carries out. Man develops those virtues that are based on his natural disposition most effectively. In contrast, John Locke respected the Cartesian vision of man as a combination of thinking substance and extended substance but rejects the existence of innate ideas. According to Locke, man is primarily a thinking substance, i.e. consciousness. Its activity is related to the identification of goals (the most important of which is happiness, often associated with pleasure) and taking actions to achieve them.

Not one’s own predispositions, but the best results become a signpost here. In order to achieve the desired goals, **consciousness** (and therefore the centre of man) is ready to take very radical actions, even to transform itself. It is possible because the identity of an individual is based on reason (understood instrumentally) and not on following innate predispositions. Real subjectivity, then, exists only as the power to embody the order it chooses. We may say it is the power to manipulate things. John Locke wrote: “A power to direct the operative faculties to motion or rest in particular instances is the will.”²¹ In order to emphasize this libertarian (that is, not related to any fixed features or values) nature of consciousness in Locke’s terms, Charles Taylor introduced the term “punctual self.”²²

²⁰ L. Kołakowski, *Bałwochwalcstwo polityki*, in: *Moje słuszne poglądy na wszystko*, op. cit., p. 259.

²¹ J. Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, op. cit., 2.21.71.

²² C. Taylor, *Source of Self*, op. cit., p. 171.

Leszek Kołakowski also wrote several times of great importance of freedom in the “construction” of man.²³ For example, in his mini-essay *O wolności* [On Freedom] he stated that “freedom is [...] given to people together with their humanity, it is the foundation of this humanity, it creates man as something distinguished among all beings.”²⁴ Thus, according to the philosopher, the libertarian character of man’s spiritual centre is based on experience and the fact of human dignity. Kołakowski believed that freedom is an “elementary experience”²⁵ of a human being and that everyone who makes decisions experiences it. And, following Locke, he added that it is “so **elementary** that it cannot be broken down into parts that could be analysed separately.”²⁶ Therefore, he admitted that although being free cannot be demonstrated in an analytical way, but the feeling of being the perpetrator of the actions carried out is so clear and strong that there is no reason not to trust this experience. He also believed that freedom is the condition of man’s uniqueness. On the threshold of the modern era, it was expressed by Giovanni Pico della Mirandola in his *Oration on the Dignity of Man*.²⁷

Thus, according to Leszek Kołakowski, freedom plays a significant role in the construction of the “spiritual centre of man,” but it is not its only “component.” Consciousness is not only a manipulating force (in a broad sense of the word). It is therefore a punctual source. So, according to him,

²³ However, it should be noted that in the description of personal identity in the essay *On collective identity*, Kołakowski did not mention freedom. Why? I think the reason is the self-evident nature of freedom.

²⁴ L. Kołakowski, *Mini wykłady o maxi sprawach*, op. cit., p. 81.

²⁵ L. Kołakowski, *Mini wykłady o maxi sprawach*, op. cit., p. 80.

²⁶ L. Kołakowski, *Mini wykłady o maxi sprawach*, op. cit., pp. 80–81.

²⁷ According to Pico della Mirandola, God said to the first man: “The nature of all other creatures is defined and restricted within laws which We have laid down; you, by contrast, impeded by no such restrictions, may, by your own free will, to whose custody We have assigned you, trace for yourself the lineaments of your own nature. [...] We have made you a creature neither of heaven nor of earth, neither mortal nor immortal, in order that you may, as the free and proud shaper of your own being, fashion yourself in the form you may prefer. It will be in your power to descend to the lower, brutish forms of life; you will be able, through your own decision, to rise again to the superior orders whose life is divine” (G. Pico della Mirandola, *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, trans. A. R. Caponigri, Chicago 1956, pp. 7–8).

consciousness is not radically different from the surrounding reality. It is not an island of “spirit” in a sea of “matter.” It is related to culture, that is, to the artefacts of people who lived before him and those who are living around him today. “Personality, however, is not only an «existential» phenomenon, but also a cultural one.”²⁸

Cultures abound in symbols and values. But, for various reasons, such as, for example, lifespan, openness to other cultures, or finally their own fundamental assumptions, some of them do not form any coherent systems. Such cultures are rich in various specific contents and values, the coherence of which is dynamic and in a continuous process of negotiating the conditions of coexistence. Our European civilization may serve as an example. Thus, being born and then growing in some kind of culture, a person inherits certain values as a result of being born and then growing in this culture, and chooses other values independently. According to Kołakowski, the nature of the choice is related to a person’s individual existential situation.²⁹ And through their individual choices people have a greater or lesser influence on the way the values are adjusted and changed within the culture.

Kołakowski emphasized that humanity and freedom (understood as ability to make free decisions) are inseparable. In his opinion, being free does not influence the content of those choices. His view that man is free regardless of whether he chooses evil or good, stands in opposition to such thinkers as Immanuel Kant, Augustine and Józef Tischner. The very fact of making a choice and not its content is a decisive factor here. The view that denies man freedom when he chooses evil or falsehood “destroys the idea of personal responsibility for our own lives that each of us should have.”³⁰ And man is man because he is free; to deny him the agency of his actions would be to deny him humanity.

²⁸ L. Kołakowski, *O tożsamości zbiorowej*, op. cit., p. 48.

²⁹ I wrote about certain elements and conditions of those decisions in my essay *Człowiek jako rozumna wolność. Droga Leszka Kołakowskiego do filozofii człowieka*, in: *Rozum i przestrzenie racjonalności*, red. A. Chmielecki, Gdańsk 2010, pp. 81–98.

³⁰ L. Kołakowski, *Odpowiedzialność*, op. cit., p. 203.

Man is a rational and conscious being – when acting in the world he is guided by his reasons. They come from his knowledge, orientation in the world and his plans. The greater his knowledge the more competent and more likely to be executed is his decision. The lesser is his knowledge, the less relevant it is. But it is his (human) choice, and therefore a free choice. And it is him – its originator – who is responsible for the consequences of his decisions.

Leszek Kołakowski explains exactly what kind of responsibility he has in mind. It is not in the sense of an **obligation to care for** or supervise something (e.g. a ship, workplace), or in the sense of the **perpetration** of a work or the **agency** of an act (both constructive and destructive). Instead, he is responsible for the **consequences** of his decision and the resulting act. Someone has acted and is morally **guilty** (even if the law does not mention it). He realizes that what he does or has done will have certain, always concrete, consequences (or, in other words, effects) for his environment, for the world and for himself.³¹

According to Kołakowski, guilt, i.e. moral evaluation of decisions and related actions, is not culturally unchangeable. The criteria of what is good and what is bad are related to the fundamental principles of the civilisation in which man lives. The religion that contributes to this civilization (in the case of Europe it is Christianity) does not only provide explanations of the true nature of reality and the significance of human existence, but based on these diagnoses, it states what is good and what is evil. The concept of *sacrum* based on myths defines the border between good and evil.³² The transgression of the taboo (i.e., the reverse, more dangerous side of *sacrum*) means that man questions his status in the cosmic order (that is, also in the social order) and violates stability and, consequently, the very existence of the universe itself. It also breeds guilt.³³

³¹ L. Kołakowski, *Odpowiedzialność*, op. cit., pp. 202–211.

³² In my article entitled *Gdzie jest zło? Rola religii w lokalizacji zła w ujęciu Leszka Kołakowskiego i Józefa Tischnera*, "Humaniora" (2017) nr 2, pp. 41–61, I attempted to explain where – according to Kołakowski – this line is in highly secularized communities.

³³ Experience of guilty "is not an intellectual performance but an act of questioning one's own status in the cosmic order [...]; it is not a fear of revenge but a feeling of awe in the face of one's

Kołodkowski believed that the consequences of evil-doing apply both to the order of the universe and to the evil-doer himself. However, this does not mean that man is somehow incapacitated by his perpetration. Man's choice of evil, i.e. the sin (in Christian terms), makes the evil one a sinner, but does not destroy him internally or does not incapacitate him. Kołodkowski did not believe that sin, or disobedience to God's recommendations and orders (based on the nature of reality) somehow tie the human will. So the sin does not exclude the freedom of following decisions. Kołodkowski wrote that he did not think that "when we do not obey the truth in this sense, we lose the freedom to take an independent decision, that we do not use our freedom to make a choice when we do evil."³⁴ This declaration proves that within the ancient dispute between Pelagius and Augustine, the philosopher took a moderate, semi-Pelagian position.³⁵

Leszek Kołodkowski repeated that man is free, that is, able to choose between different options and to be creative.³⁶ According to him, such freedom is the **foundation of humanity**. It distinguishes man from other beings and gives him a special position in the universe. But this is not without an exception.

Man happens to act in such a way that he can no longer be called a man. My thesis is based on analyzes carried out by Kołodkowski and later included in his essay entitled *Wychowanie do nienawiści, wychowanie do godności* [Education for Hate, Education for Dignity]. Making a speech in Frankfurt am Main, in October 1977, at the ceremony of awarding him a peace prize by German booksellers,³⁷ he shared his

own action which has disturbed the world-harmony" (L. Kołodkowski, *Religion: if there is no God... on God, the Devil, sin and other worries of the so-called philosophy of religion*, Oxford 1982, p. 193).

³⁴ L. Kołodkowski, *Prawda i wolność, co pierwsze?* [Truth and Freedom, Which First?], "Znak" (1994) nr 3, p. 72.

³⁵ Kołodkowski wrote directly about it: "the man writing this, having some sympathy for the semi-Pelagian heresy" (L. Kołodkowski, *Prawda i wolność, co pierwsze?*, op. cit., p. 72).

³⁶ Kołodkowski believed that in this approach to freedom it is about "our own spiritual conditions for choice and creating, about the very fact that we are empowered to choose and create, although our ability does not assume anything about the range of goods among which we can actually choose" (L. Kołodkowski, *Mini wykłady o maxi sprawach* op. cit., p. 83).

³⁷ W. Chudoba, *Leszek Kołodkowski: kronika życia i dzieła*, Warszawa 2014, p. 309.

reflections on national and political relations in Central Europe with the audience (mainly German). He recognized that the peace prize is a good opportunity to talk about hatred – with regard to the history of this region and his own experiences during the war and the post-war period.³⁸

Man builds up his inner self in agreement with other people. He requires friendship, trust and kindness for his proper development; hatred, according to Kołakowski, is a kind of energy that destroys interpersonal relations. Thus, it does not allow for internal integration of man. A spiritually incapacitated person ceases to be thinking and controlling his words and behaviour. Hatred “destroys [...] internally those who hate [...] it fills the **entire spiritual sphere** of man.”³⁹

To some extent, hate is similar to love: man in love is blind about its object. The hater, on the other hand, is blind both with regard to the object of his feelings and towards himself. To be critical means to be able to distinguish and evaluate; hatred deprives man of such abilities. And that is why Kołakowski notices that haters are easily manipulated by governments that set themselves evil goals. Hatred breeds hatred, which is why it is “more than the drive for destruction. Similarly to love, it contains a kind of infinite lack of satisfaction. It does not just aim at destruction, but rather unending suffering, and therefore is equal to the desire to become a devil, whose nature is that he can never be satisfied with his work of destruction.”⁴⁰

This means that it is possible for man to be dominated by forces over which he has no power – such states should be described as extreme. They rule over man if he allows them to. Then he no longer wants or needs to make his own decisions. A conviction arises in his consciousness that he cannot do otherwise and, therefore, gains the certainty that he has to hate.

³⁸ L. Kołakowski, Z. Mentzel, *Czas ciekawy. Czas niespokojny*, t. 1, Kraków 2007, pp. 39–82.

³⁹ L. Kołakowski, *Wychowanie do nienawiści, wychowanie do godności*, in: L. Kołakowski, *Czy diabeł może być zbawiony i 27 innych kazań*, Londyn 1984, p. 143.

⁴⁰ L. Kołakowski, *Wychowanie do nienawiści, wychowanie do godności*, op. cit., p. 142.

In light of this a question arises if the belief that man is free (i.e., always able to take free decisions), is not part of an Enlightenment myth?

Józef Tischner's definition of free man

According to Józef Tischner, recognizing the issue of freedom should also be preceded by clarifying the issue of man.

Numerous thinkers have tried to find an answer to the question of the essence of being a man. According to Tischner, neither Plato (the concept of the soul trapped in the body), nor Aristotle (form and matter together creating a human being), nor Descartes (consciousness ruling the body), nor Nietzsche (the element of corporeality trying to free itself from the oppression of the spirit) were able to truly grasp what man is essentially. Their explanations often brought out only some aspect of humanity, diminishing or sometimes even neglecting others. According to Tischner, a drawback of the above and many other proposed solutions was also the use of distinctions and conceptual categories developed in the study of objects to describe what is exclusively human.

Aware of the difficulties and of what is peculiarly and essentially human, trying not to be limited to concepts, he tried to find a perspective of looking at a person that would allow him to grasp what is specifically human in a coherent way. He thought it should be associated with such characteristic human features as autonomy, self-reliance, rationality, uniqueness, transience, relation to the environment, "leaning towards," but also corporeality and sensuality.

For Tischner, the existential perspective, among others favoured by Thomism, seemed inadequate from the start.⁴¹ For some time he was inspired by Edmund Husserl's phenomenology and the related concept of the "transcendental self,"⁴² yet he also abandoned it relatively soon

⁴¹ J. Tischner, A. Michnik, J. Żakowski, *Między Panem a Plebanem*, Kraków 1998, pp. 78–79.

⁴² Two articles resulted from it: *Czym jest "ja" transcendentalne?*, in: *Szkice filozoficzne Romanowi Ingardenowi w darze*, Kraków–Warszawa 1964, pp. 349–364 and *Ja transcendentalne w filozofii Edmunda Husserla*, "Studia Theologica Varsoviensia" (1964) n r1–2, pp. 349–364.

because he found a more adequate perspective. He decided that the concept of “axiological self” inspired by Max Scheler’s theory of value, was the approach he was looking for; he worked on it for several years. Its first description can be found in the essay entitled *Impresje aksjologiczne*.⁴³ Then he developed it in *Myslenie według wartości* and in *Filozofia dramatu*. However, with time, he found that this perspective also had some drawbacks connected with the difficulties in capturing the phenomenon of evil. Extensive parts of *Filozofia dramatu* are a testimony to this struggle. A few years after the publication of the book, Tischner came to the conclusion that it would be most appropriate to apply an agathological perspective⁴⁴ to capture the essence of man, that is, from the perspective of good, understood not as a being or a feature of being, but being in a dynamic process of self-propagating. Although good was as important to him as it was to Plato, he treated it in a different way. For him, it meant movement, leaning out, transcending oneself, going-out, “it was what tends to exist by its very nature.”⁴⁵

Tischner outlined his concept of man built on such understanding of good in his last philosophical book, *Spór o istnienie człowieka*. Man is a conscious being immersed in a dynamic life-world; he spiritually “feeds” on the events that it “suggests” to him. As a result, “man first of all «lives by what he experiences»”⁴⁶. This experience should be placed on a higher level than instincts but lower than fully self-conscious self-awareness. The nature and orientation of a person’s life are what happens to him (i.e. to a person who lives his life). It doesn’t go away with the passing of time but rather lasts through man and thanks to man. Man “«lives with good thoughts,» «lives by hope,» «lives by love».”⁴⁷ Tischner

⁴³ J. Tischner, *Impresje aksjologiczne*, “Znak” (1970) nr 2–3, pp. 204–219.

⁴⁴ It is evident from the article *Sprawa osoby – wstępne przybliżenie*, published as early as in 1992 (“Logos i Ethos” (1992) nr 2, pp. 5–19) that he started to think in terms of agathology. Another evidence of this transformation was his essay *Zło metafizyczne czyli wejście w otchłań*, “Znak” (1993) nr 3, pp. 13–28.

⁴⁵ J. Tischner, *Filozofia dramatu*, Paris 1990, p. 55.

⁴⁶ J. Tischner, *Spór o istnienie człowieka*, Kraków 1998, p. 278.

⁴⁷ J. Tischner, *Spór o istnienie człowieka*, op. cit., pp. 278–279.

co-thought there with Lévinas, who also believed that man lives by experiences. For example, he lives by “good food, air, light, views, work, ideas, sleep, etc.”⁴⁸. This way of being in the world was described by Emmanuel Lévinas with the term *jouissance*. Man lives by his activity, that is, by what he does, how he experiences it and how he understands what he is doing.⁴⁹

According to Józef Tischner, most important experiences are connected with meeting other people, where one meets the other in his misery. The face of the other tells us about this misery.⁵⁰ The truth of man happens on his face. Tischner symbolically describes the man in a difficult situation as a foreigner, a widow or an orphan; the one who meets them may pass by remaining indifferent, he may “not want” to notice them but he might also notice their misery and try to help.

According to Tischner, the event of helping the needy one has a certain structure. It consists of two phases, the first of which can be described as “negative” and the second as “positive.” First, the person who meets the other discovers that something that should not have happened is happening before his eyes. The other is in a difficult position and is being harmed. Tischner calls this an agathological experience. On the basis of this observation, the meeting person plans activities that will lead to the elimination of perceived misery. This, in turn, is an axiological experience. “An axiological experience and the resulting axiological thinking are focused on one basic goal – designing an event that can remedy the development of a tragedy.”⁵¹ The meeting person first sees the lost man, then helps him find his way. First, he meets a poor woman,

⁴⁸ E. Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity. An Essay on Exteriority*, transl. A. Lingis, Pittsburgh 2007, p. 110.

⁴⁹ Emmanuel Lévinas also wrote: “One does not only exist one’s pain or one’s joy; one exists from pains and joys. Enjoyment is precisely this way the act nourishes itself with its own activity.” And he adds: “We live from acts-and from the very act of being, just as we live from ideas and sentiments” (E. Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity. An Essay on Exteriority*, op. cit., p. 111 and 113).

⁵⁰ Józef Tischner wrote about ways of revelations of the face in *Filozofia dramatu* (p. 58–70).

⁵¹ J. Tischner, *Myslenie według wartości*, Kraków 1982, p. 491.

then he helps her find a job; first he notices an orphan, and then takes steps to find him a carer.

Tischner did not analyze events other than the encounter, such as, for example, spring field work, building a tiled stove, repairing a car, mending shoes. He probably considered the encounters to be most important, for he believed that, in fact, they are all ways of conducting an interpersonal dialogue.⁵² After all, the farmer sows the field so that the corn grows, from which the baker will bake bread to the hungry. The stove fitter builds a stove to keep people warm on cold days. The mechanic repairs the car so that the doctor can get to the sick person quickly. The shoemaker repairs shoes so that the poor can wear them in winter.

As one can see, every act changes something on the recipient's side. It affects the way he lives and his consciousness changes. The recipient will not only be grateful for the help, but will probably also regain his faith in other people. He will hope again that life and interpersonal relationships may improve.

Tischner noticed that good-doing produces another effect of a spiritual nature. The benefactor (I will call him the Gift-Giver) also "gains" something: his spiritual life changes as a result of turning towards the Other, noticing his poverty and helping him. According to Tischner, the human inner self is of agathological nature, so the ongoing change has a non-ontological character. As I wrote, every event that we have an influence on is associated with an experience of some specific value.⁵³

Values brought into existence by man co-create his area of uniqueness. This space is an equivalent of what in classical philosophy was called the soul. However, according to Tischner, it is not of substantial but

⁵² Defining man, Tischner referred to the category of drama. For example, he wrote that "man is a dramatic being" (J. Tischner, *Filozofia dramatu*, op. cit., p. 11) and "We are like our drama" (J. Tischner, *Spór o istnienie człowieka*, op. cit., p. 219).

⁵³ When describing the structure of the inner space of consciousness, the philosopher used the terms experience and value interchangeably. He did so because they are two sides of the same experience. At the same time, when using the term **experience**, he drew more attention to its genesis, and the term **value**, to emphasize its ethical importance.

agathological nature.⁵⁴ In his opinion, ontological categories may not grasp the nature of this space: “it is an area that extends completely beyond «being and not being» – in which what there is may not be what it is, and what does not exist is subjectivity itself. Subjectivity is that special «place» in which the game of Good with itself is manifested.”⁵⁵

Tischner did not describe the structure of this inner space in detail but I think it can be reconstructed from several of his statements. What I mean here are his commentaries to Henri Bergson’s doctoral dissertation and Max Scheler’s axiological concepts, as well as a passage from an interview included in his book *Przekonać Pana Boga*.

In his opinion, the human inner self is aptly described by Henri Bergson in *Time and Free Will. An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness* Tischner found the chapter *The Organization of Conscious States. Free Will* of particular significance, The French thinker’s description of human depth was considered very truthful by Tischner. Bergson wrote: “But, just in proportion as we dig below the surface and get down to the real self, do its states of consciousness cease to stand in juxtaposition and begin to permeate and melt into one another, and each to be tinged with the colouring of all the others. Thus each of us has his own way of loving and hating; and this love or this hatred reflects his whole personality. Language, however, denotes these states by the same words in every case: so that it has been able to fix only the objective and impersonal aspect of love, hate, and the thousand emotions which stir the soul.”⁵⁶

Like Henri Bergson, Tischner believed that the internal space is not homogeneous; there is the surface and the depth in it. The surface of the

⁵⁴ Józef Tischner emphasized this insubstantiality in, for example, the polemic with Mieczysław A. Krąpiec and his book *Ja-człowiek*: “The soul is an element that exists beyond space and time. We have a purely negative view of it: non-time, non-space. But what is it in positive terms? The author is unable to give an answer” (J. Tischner, *Myslenie według wartości*, op. cit., p. 334).

⁵⁵ J. Tischner, *Spór o istnienie człowieka*, op. cit., p. 253.

⁵⁶ H. Bergson, *Time and Free Will. An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, transl. F. L. Pogson, London 1912, p. 164 (Tischner, quoted this excerpt in his book *Świat ludzkiej nadziei*, Kraków 1994, pp. 110–111).

inner space is “inhabited” by experiences strongly marked by meaning, nature and sequence (the role of time) of the events that evoked them. This is why the surface “experiences are arranged side-by-side”⁵⁷ as if reflecting the events that caused them.

Far away from the surface the situation is different: the deeper it is, the more typical for the self the experience becomes and the less important is the time of its occurrence. Thus, regarding the essence of the inner depth, Tischner did not relate to Kant’s concept (categories of time organizing the interior) nor to the approach of association psychology (the interior consists of separated components).

According to Max Scheler different values bear different significance. There are higher values and lower values.⁵⁸ Józef Tischner, referring to Scheler’s belief that “the higher the value [...] the deeper it is experienced,”⁵⁹ claimed that human self is not only what is the most tame but also the most valuable. These highest values build the human centre. Their character most strongly influences the structure of the agathological space of consciousness.

Giving an interview (and thus having to speak briefly and figuratively) to Jarosław Gowin and Dorota Zańko, Józef Tischner compared the human inner space to a cave. He said “the soul is a vast cave [...] it is a space that catches God’s voice and turns it into an echo.”⁶⁰ Thus he confirmed the previously expressed conviction about the spatial nature of the human inner self and also drew attention to its connections with the world. The phrase “God’s voice” can of course be treated only as a poetic metaphor, but it can also be seen as an indication of what is most important in this space, i.e. God. However, it should be remembered that, according to Tischner, God does not speak directly, but through the face of a man in misery. The face of the other is a trace of the infinite. Tischner wrote

⁵⁷ J. Tischner, *Spór o istnienie człowieka*, op. cit., p. 277.

⁵⁸ For example, Scheler wrote: “the fact that a value is «higher» than another value is grasped in a particular act of getting to know the value, which is called «preferring»” (M. Scheler, *Maturalne a priori w etyce*, przeł. A. Węgrzecki, “Znak” (1967) nr 12, p. 1518).

⁵⁹ J. Tischner, *Spór o istnienie człowieka*, op. cit., p. 312.

⁶⁰ J. Tischner, D. Zańko, J. Gowin, *Przekonać Pana Boga*, Kraków 1999, p. 93.

elsewhere: “God does not give an order in any way other than through people for the sake of whom one must act.”⁶¹

This inner space consists of values that are a result of human activity in the world. Their axiological “weight” varies. Therefore, the interior they “inhabit” is not isomorphic (and even less point-like); its structure is varied. The human inner space is most strongly affected by values associated with encounters with other people.⁶² The value created as a result of the most significant encounter (or several encounters) determines, to the greatest extent, the character of the interior of the one “who meets.”⁶³ Other, less significant values “build up” to this basic value. It may also be said in a visual way that the “colour” of the inner space is determined to the greatest extent by the “colour” of the most important value. Other values “present” in this space, only complement this “basic colour.” Aligned in this order, values create a hierarchical structure of the space, which constitutes the good of a person. Man identifies with it and loves it.

Freedom in Józef Tischner’s perspective

Only the recognition of the inside of a person allows one to comprehend the description of freedom by Józef Tischner.

It is impossible to understand human freedom either in ontological or epistemological terms. Using categories such as power, cause, and effect suggests that the one who has more power to carry out his will is the freer one. Such freedom would entail the possibility of self-confirmation in what is different.⁶⁴ This is not how Tischner understood freedom.

⁶¹ J. Tischner, *Filozofia dramatu*, op. cit., p. 43.

⁶² Emmanuel Lévinas seems to have thought the same. For example, he wrote: “The self is the very fact of being exposed under the accusation that cannot be assumed, where the ego supports the others, unlike the certainty of the ego that rejoins itself in freedom” (E. Lévinas, *Otherwise than Being, or Beyond Essence*, transl. A. Lingis, Pittsburgh 1998, p. 118).

⁶³ J. Tischner, *Filozofia dramatu*, op. cit., p. 60. If this interior has already been specified in a way then this new value makes it (i.e. this interior) change its character (J. Tischner, *Spór o istnienie człowieka*, op. cit., p. 315).

⁶⁴ This is, for example, what Descartes wrote: freedom consists in “that we can do or not do the same (i.e. confirm or deny, follow or avoid it), or rather, that we proceed to confirm or to deny it,

In his opinion, applying such a principle in practice would soon lead to the denial of the idea of freedom. Knowledge and understanding of reality are not enough to be free either nor is freedom just an act of reason.

It should also be added that the freedom described by Tischner is not postulative. It is not the right to freedom – as supported, for example, by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted in 1948 in Paris – but freedom itself that is important. The right to freedom is the right to independent, unauthorized, and empowered human activity. This right is or should be guaranteed by the community.⁶⁵ Tischner, on the other hand, wanted to recognize the nature of the freedom that man actually lives by.

Human freedom is not another name for randomness or unpredictability. “The fact that certain events cannot be predicted does not imply that they are «free»; freedom and randomness are two different things.”⁶⁶

Tischner was convinced that when studying human freedom one should remember that it affects not only what is different, what is outside, but it also influences the agent himself, helping to define him. Therefore, he believed that freedom is “first and foremost the matter of acting directed at the inside of man and doing with himself something that seems impossible.”⁶⁷ The term “impossible” refers to the situation of looking at a person from an external perspective. It seems impossible that a person voluntarily gives up being what he has been until now: “How is it possible

that is, to follow or avoid what the intellect proposes to us, in such a way that we feel that no external force is making us do so” (R. Descartes, *Medytacje o pierwszej filozofii*, tłum. M. and K. Ajdukiewicz, Warszawa 1958, p. 6).

⁶⁵ Many, convinced that man has the unquestionable “right to freedom,” express it with the phrase “man is free.” However, these are two different issues. Isaiah Berlin also pointed to it in his famous essay from 1958 *Two Concepts of Freedom*, in: I. Berlin, *Liberty*, Oxford 2002, pp. 166–217. It is also worth noting that no community allows a situation where its members have absolute freedom. Certain limitations are needed for the sake of a community as the community. They give the community a certain shape. These limitations apply to many areas, ranging from understanding who the other person is, the nature of interpersonal relations, the structure and method of the emergence of power and ending with determining the relationship to the natural world.

⁶⁶ J. Tischner, *Spór o istnienie człowieka*, op. cit., p. 309.

⁶⁷ J. Tischner, *Spór o istnienie człowieka*, op. cit., p. 295.

that a being which «as being» is identical with itself «gives up» its acquired identity in favour of «splitting» and a mirage of a different identity?»⁶⁸

Looking for a solution, the author of *Świat ludzkiej nadziei* [The World of Human Hope] found an inspiration in Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialist philosophy.⁶⁹ Being himself is possible only when man chooses freedom in the name of being himself, that is, being freedom itself. For Sartre, **being free** is the fundament of humanness.

Sartre (like Tischner) was in opposition to St. Thomas Aquinas, for whom freedom was only one of man's appetitive powers. According to the medieval philosopher, man is a being that possesses will which has the right to freedom. Freedom is naturally oriented towards good. Jean-Paul Sartre thought, in turn, that man is freedom rather than has freedom. When he gives up his freedom, he disappears as man. He ceases to be a being-for-itself and becomes a being-in-itself. "A being which is what it is cannot be free."⁷⁰ But for Sartre, freedom is a source of negation. To be free is to be able to do something new at any moment. To give up yourself as you used to be and choose yourself as someone else, someone new.⁷¹

To be free is to be able to choose from oneself as pure freedom, that is, from someone completely new, from what is not there yet.⁷² As being is, being free means to choose from what is not there yet, from non-existence. According to Tischner, this reasoning is the starting point for thinking about freedom as negativity.

⁶⁸ J. Tischner, *Spór o istnienie człowieka*, op. cit., p. 295.

⁶⁹ Several attempts have been made to indicate the philosophies that inspired Tischner (for example, in the book *Pytając o człowieka – myśl filozoficzna Józefa Tischnera*, red. W. Zuziak, Kraków 2002). Georg Hegel, Heidegger, Lévinas, Kierkegaard and Scheler have been mentioned. However, no one has yet explored the influence of Jean-Paul Sartre's philosophy on Józef Tischner's thoughts.

⁷⁰ J.-P. Sartre, *Byt i nicłość* [Being and Nothingness], tłum. J. Kielbasa at al., Kraków 2007, p. 542.

⁷¹ For him, "freedom is nothingness that *exists* inside a human being, forcing the human-reality to *create itself*, instead of just *being*" (J.-P. Sartre, *Byt i nicłość*, op. cit., p. 542).

⁷² For "for the human-reality to be is to choose oneself: nothing comes to it from outside or inside that it could receive or accept" (J.-P. Sartre, *Byt i nicłość*, op. cit., p. 542); similarly Hegel: "Freedom is negativity in itself, and as such it must appear before us" (G. Hegel, *Fenomenologia ducha* [The Phenomenology of Spirit], tłum. A. Landmann, Warszawa 1964, p. 234).

The creative aspect of human freedom was extremely important for the Polish philosopher. However, he did not believe that being free is related to the “nothingification” of man. He did not agree with such understanding of the consequences of freedom where a man, in the name of freedom, must deny himself. He believed that a person makes a decision not for the very act of deciding but in order to achieve something. By living and, consequently, making decisions, we always mean something.⁷³

Understanding and overcoming this aporia is impossible in ontological terms, where one has to choose between two extreme options, between being and non-being. A better way to understand the complexities of freedom comes from moving to the sphere of agathology.

Tischner’s exploration of the problem was based on the conclusion that freedom – although it is “beyond being and non-being”⁷⁴ – does not detach us from reality and our own past. What is also important is that it works in two directions or, rather, that it acts in two areas: it has an impact on the world and on the agent himself. In the external aspect, it affects the environment, changes it by acting with power, “like what is «higher» affects what is «lower».”⁷⁵ In the internal aspect, it acts on the agent himself, defining him either for good or for evil.

The reconstruction of Tischner’s concept of the interior of a person carried out in this text showed that it is not “empty” or, in Locke’s language, “point-like.” It is inhabited by values of different importance: some more valuable, others less valuable. Together, these values create a certain (always specific, related to a specific person) structure, the shape (or better, colour) of which is largely influenced by those values that are rated as higher by this person. Although to a different degree, they all build the good of the person.

⁷³ Already in the 1970s, Tischner noted that “We don’t choose in order to choose. We choose to put something into practice, and what we do is always of some value” (J. Tischner, *Świat ludzkiej nadziei*, op. cit., p. 157).

⁷⁴ J. Tischner, *Spór o istnienie człowieka*, op. cit., p. 298.

⁷⁵ J. Tischner, *Spór o istnienie człowieka*, op. cit., p. 298.

Man comprehends himself through the awareness of this good. He is what he has – and he has what he thinks is good. According to Tischner, “the idea of consciousness is connected in a special way with the idea of good.”⁷⁶ The reality of a person’s interior is described by the philosopher as the agathological sphere of consciousness.

Freedom is expressed and realized through making decisions. In Tischner’s texts, we can find descriptions of two types of choices. From the perspective of the researcher (as a person actively participating in life does not know what situation he is currently “entering”), the first type can be described as **stably-developing**, and the second as **revolutionary** (unstable).

In order to present the first type of decisions, it should be noted that the study of the inner sphere of a person (unlike the study of the sphere of external actions) leads to the discovery that the decision is not an act of expression with unknown roots, but is related to the agathology of the person. Going out to the world, living, acting, a person chooses from among the feasible values those that are in harmony with the nature of his agathological sphere of consciousness. Their realization causes “being more” yourself. The self⁷⁷ is more itself the more it chooses itself.⁷⁸

The decision to realize a particular value is not an arbitrary decision without any grounds. The way it is connected with man is best observed by looking at the inside of a person. In an act of decision man puts the value more important to him over the value that is of lesser importance. This action is chosen, the implementation of which will generate a value that is in greater agreement with the good that builds the inside of the chooser. Tischner used the term adoption. “Adoption is an «act» that appears in the agatological order.”⁷⁹

⁷⁶ J. Tischner, *Spór o istnienie człowieka*, op. cit., p. 287.

⁷⁷ “The self means «possessing.» It is more fundamental than being. The self grows up ‘maturing in possessing’ (J. Tischner, *Spór o istnienie człowieka*, op. cit., p. 332).

⁷⁸ Bergson looked at the situation in a similar way. “It is the whole soul, in fact, which gives rise to the free decision: and the act will be so much the freer the more the dynamic series with which it is connected tends to be the fundamental self” (H. Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, op. cit., p. 167).

⁷⁹ J. Tischner, *Spór o istnienie człowieka*, op. cit., p. 305.

As a result of adopting a new value “related” to the values making the human inside, a certain change takes place,⁸⁰ a modification (or one could say enrichment) of the “colour” of the internal good. A new, modified shape of freedom is also emerging. Tischner described it as follows: „Freedom enters into an intimate relationship with experiences, especially with axiological ones, and thanks to them, it creates a **preferential space** in which it is possible to choose one and neglect the other.”⁸¹

One of the basic theses of Tischner’s human philosophy was the belief that “freedom [...] is the way in which good exists.”⁸² It means that the shape of a person’s good determines the shape of his freedom. As a result of assimilating a new value, a person “goes out” towards the world in a new, modified way.⁸³ And when another new situation and challenge appear he tries to solve this problem in a slightly modified way. Tischner also noticed that over time freedom, as a way of building good through the implementation of specific values, “develops” certain methods, so to speak patterns of actions. He described them as “structures of dramatic space.”⁸⁴

The key to understanding what I have identified as **revolutionary** is different. It is not initiated by the achievement of some spiritual or intellectual maturity (which was a Platonian idea) but by an external event.

Man realizes his freedom in accordance with his inner good until something occurs that disturbs his current way of understanding good. Tischner pointed to the situation of meeting a man suffering from misfortune (widow, orphan) or exposed to human evil (Christ persecuted by Saul of Tarsus).⁸⁵ The moment the meeting person discovers that the

⁸⁰ “It is impossible to indicate any moment from which «adoption» began. And yet it is not «eternal,» it is not «synchronous» with the existence of the I” (J. Tischner, *Spór o istnienie człowieka*, op. cit., p. 255).

⁸¹ J. Tischner, *Spór o istnienie człowieka*, op. cit., p. 299.

⁸² J. Tischner, *Spowiedź rewolucjonisty*, Kraków 1993, p. 35.

⁸³ “The freedom that makes a decision not only assimilates what it chooses, but also assimilates a specific form of freedom” (J. Tischner, *Spór o istnienie człowieka*, op. cit., p. 306).

⁸⁴ J. Tischner, *Spór o istnienie człowieka*, op. cit., p. 299.

⁸⁵ Unlike for Sartre, for Tischner others are not the hell, but a challenge. The first challenge is the poor, lost and lonely person.

person he meets is in danger is a turning point. The miserable (or fearful) face does not let him pass by with indifference. He concludes that “this cannot go on.” The agitation or, more strongly, the shock suffered by the meeting person is so overwhelming that it causes defiance and quickly turns into disagreement with the situation. The next stage is the need to help the other; it seems more important than the need to continue the old ways of behavior – and let us add: not any way of behaviour, but the one resulting from the understanding of good and the freedom related to it.

Does this mean that one should sacrifice one’s freedom in the name of helping the needy? Emmanuel Lévinas, who was an important thinker for Tischner, was convinced of the primacy of responsibility over freedom. “Responsibility for another is not an accident that happens to a subject, but precedes essence in it, has not awaited freedom, in which a commitment to another would have been made.”⁸⁶

Tischner agreed with this statement only to some extent.⁸⁷ He **agreed** that in this case the responsibility for the vulnerable person is more important than the freedom of the meeting person. But it should be noted that it is about the freedom currently exercised. On the other hand, the author of *The Philosophy of Drama* believed that in the face of meeting of a suffering and lost man, sticking to the current way of being would be no longer the realization of freedom, but an ensnaring, hence his **disagreement** with Lévinas. In the light of the encounter that is taking place it would mean limiting oneself to what turns out to be incomplete or even to falsification of good. Good is the sense of the encounter and the foundation of humanity, and man is responsible for good.

The meeting person discovers that the truer good (I am aware of the imperfection of this phrase, but I cannot find a better one) is at risk. He also realizes that the understanding of good so far has been incomplete. According to Tischner, good is never fully given to man. Life

⁸⁶ E. Lévinas, *Otherwise than Being, or Beyond Essence*, op. cit., p. 114.

⁸⁷ A. Hernas, *Tischner i Lévinas. Księdza z rabinem spór o człowieka*, “Logos i Ethos” (2004) nr 2, pp. 224–236.

is the art of revealing real goodness.⁸⁸ The other man (most often the one in whom this good is at risk) is a guide on the way from one good to the next.

If the meeting person decides to help the Other and actually does so, then two changes take place. First, there is a change in the existential situation of the Other, and second, this event carries some value. It also enriches the Helper himself. Its “weight” is so serious (after all, it has undermined the existing axiology of the Helper) that when it “enters” the Helper, it does not “consent” to assimilating to the already existing set of values, but questions and changes it. As a result, the values located in it (i.e. man’s inside) are rearranged; some gain in importance, others lose it. Therefore, the existing system of values is replaced with a new one and this situation creates new good.⁸⁹ “Good «is born» as a result of a combination of external and internal conditions.”⁹⁰ It also gives a new shape to the freedom of the Other. “**Abstract freedom**, separated from the drama, «freedom as freedom» exists only theoretically.”⁹¹

Human life is not a monotonous, peaceful existence. It is about getting lost and finding the way again. It is entrusting and getting disappointed. It is a search full of hassle and stumble. “A person who «goes through the world,» «goes» from confiding to confiding and from entrusting someone to entrusting himself to someone else.”⁹² On the way to building one’s true good, man also experiences encounters with evil people. It so happens that the person he encounters only pretends to be an aggrieved person or even a friendly person, and in fact he is an evil-doing person.

⁸⁸ I wrote about it in an essay on the art of ethics in more detail, see: Z. Dymarski, *The art of ethics as the art of wise life in the concept of Józef Tischner*, “Studies in East European Thought” (2019) no 71, pp. 375–385; doi.org/10.1007/s11212-019-09339-0.

⁸⁹ “The deeper we go into subjectivity, the more clearly the other who inhabits it appears to us” (J. Tischner, *Spór o istnienie człowieka*, op. cit., p. 252). This means that man as a man is not out of himself. Others influence the way he is. And that is why Tischner adds: “Subjectivity is this special «place» where the game of Good with itself manifests itself” (*Spór o istnienie człowieka*, op. cit., p. 253).

⁹⁰ J. Tischner, *Spór o istnienie człowieka*, op. cit., p. 200.

⁹¹ J. Tischner, *Spór o istnienie człowieka*, op. cit., p. 299.

⁹² J. Tischner, *Spór o istnienie człowieka*, op. cit., p. 187.

In the encounter, he takes on a mask of human misery or a weary wanderer, in fact, being someone else. In his works, Tischner dwelt in detail on the description of ways in which the evil man tends to dominate the other person. Referring to examples of characters taken from Shakespeare's plays, he explained how temptation, threat, and betrayal work. In his opinion, people who act like that do not aim at forcing another person to act but at making him accept what the evil one offers him. In other words, the evil-doer wants another man to believe him, consider the offered values as true and valuable and begin to live according to them. Thus, he wants him to rebuild his own interior and become another advocate (by word and deed) of the cause of evil.

According to Józef Tischner, involvement in the cause of evil is graduable. The philosopher distinguishes two (and with a certain interpretation even three) possible levels of involvement in evil (it is difficult to talk about closeness and friendship here). These can be defined as the retaliation stage, the demonizing stage, and the demon stage.⁹³

In the first case, it is about the fact that the humiliation, deception or betrayal that a person bears makes him feel grieved. He is convinced that a balance in the world has been disturbed and he must take action to restore it. According to Tischner, such a man is not completely evil as he wants to inflict evil in the name of a specifically understood justice, and not for the sake of evil itself. "Retaliation emerges from general «anger at the world»."⁹⁴

The second case is related to the selling one's soul to the evil. At this stage, man becomes convinced that evil is the principle of the world, and that good is to serve it as a servant. Good exists for the evil to have something to "feed on." This is a denial of the Augustine's idea that everything is good, and that evil results only from a temporary lack of good. Therefore, characterizing this stage, Tischner noticed that it is the Manichean

⁹³ I discuss these categories very briefly here. I wrote more about them in the article *Człowiek w horyzoncie rozpaczy*, in: *Wobec Dobra i Prawdy w dialogu z Tischnerem*, red. A. Bobko, M. Karolczak, Kraków 2013, pp. 220–241.

⁹⁴ J. Tischner, *Spór o istnienie człowieka*, op. cit., p. 98.

understanding of reality which he understood as “a radical reversal of the sense that binds good and evil, conceivable only on the plane of human drama.”⁹⁵ In a world where evil is the principle of reality, it is the one who does evil that is rational, and the irrational one is he who opposes this principle. For the sake of this a person becomes a blackmailer, tempter, one filled with hatred, liar, traitor ... It is doubtful whether such an individual still deserves to be called a human being. Tischner described such a person with the term an “apparent man”⁹⁶.

He, too, becomes another link in the great chain of evil-doers and takes action to drag others to the side of evil. Filled with it, he does not respect either the good or the freedom of the other. He wants to force him to submit, to accept what he is offering. The evil that comes in the form of threats, temptations or betrayals does not try to negotiate or persuade; it doesn't create a space of choice by saying, for example, “You can decide to do it, but you don't have to.” It wants to force the other to submission. It convinces, coerces, commands, threatens, cheats and offers no possibility of refusal. Using threats, it often blackmails: “I will kill you, unless you do as I order you.”⁹⁷

It is different with good – there is no good but freedom. The starting position of man is not “blank;” he “comes into the world enslaved in many ways.”⁹⁸ Being good is a task, not an actual situation. Tischner associated it with the search for such good that is most true and worth living for.⁹⁹ “By nature man is not as he should be; only through transformation does he come to the truth.”¹⁰⁰

Man builds his inner good walking on a bumpy road and its shape changes in the course of his life. Tischner was convinced that man

⁹⁵ J. Tischner, *Spór o istnienie człowieka*, op. cit., pp. 14–15.

⁹⁶ J. Tischner, *Spór o istnienie człowieka*, op. cit., p. 17.

⁹⁷ J. Tischner, *Filozofia dramatu*, op. cit., p. 158.

⁹⁸ J. Tischner, D. Zańko, J. Gowin, *Przekonać Pana Boga*, op. cit., p. 161.

⁹⁹ Tischner also drew the perspective of looking at human activity from the point of view of the absolute identical with Good. From this perspective, human pursuit of good appears as a gradual breaking through from twilight to light. The light source, although invisible itself, makes it possible to see. But the description of this would require a separate text. So here I stop.

¹⁰⁰ J. Tischner, *Spór o istnienie człowieka*, op. cit., p. 169.

is looking for himself. He associates being himself with good. He wants good to become his good. “Self” means «possessing.» «Possessing» in a person is more basic than being. The self matures by «maturing in possessing».¹⁰¹ In a way, the people one encounters are his guides in a pursuit of authenticity.¹⁰² They are the ones who “have the ability” to lead people to good.

Due to the initial situation (i.e., a situation of imperfection) of man and the abrupt dialectical nature of approaching good, Tischner believed that we should rather talk about liberation than freedom. “Freedom is given to man as liberation, that is, the path to freedom.”¹⁰³

By doing evil, man does not possess himself, because he is in the service of evil. Consequently, it has power over him and not vice versa. That is why Tischner believed that man possesses himself only when he resigns from possessing another. By letting another be (in the broad sense of the word), he experiences his own freedom. And that means he can be himself in a deeper sense.

Summarizing thoughts

In this text I tried to outline a potential confrontation between the liberal and Christian paradigm within the issue of freedom. It seems extremely important for understanding the intellectual and spiritual situation of the contemporary world and, therefore, we may only regret that it never took place. It is difficult to summarize a dispute that, despite the chance of its occurrence, did not happen. It is difficult to predict which way it would go. The starting positions have been outlined, so I will express a few thoughts on the subject. If such a discussion had taken place, for sure, both Tischner and Kołakowski would have agreed on several issues.

¹⁰¹ J. Tischner, *Spór o istnienie człowieka*, op. cit., p. 332.

¹⁰² “Good is born as the fruit of fertilization that comes from outside” (J. Tischner, *Spór o istnienie człowieka*, op. cit., p. 199).

¹⁰³ J. Tischner, *Filozofia dramatu*, op. cit., p. 50.

For both of them it was important what happened in terms of understanding of the human position in space in modern times. In this regard, they are close to Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, Rene Descartes and Immanuel Kant. None of the philosophers believed that man is self-sufficient and can be thought of as a being without its environment, which was possible for Descartes. During a potential debate both of them would probably also emphasize the importance of the environment (especially human) to define who man is. They would probably support the thought (so important for Jean-Paul Sartre and Gabriel Marcel) that freedom is the fundament of humanity. The subject of the dispute would be the nature of freedom and its relationship with good and evil. Difficult, but certainly very inspiring, would be their polemics about the influence of human decisions on the shape of human freedom. When discussing this point, they would certainly have to take account of the question of responsibility. They would also have to confront their faith in goodness and man's independence with the views of Augustine, who believed that when a man follows his own will, he focuses on himself and makes a wrong choice. Therefore, he should subdue his will to God's will, and then he would really be free.¹⁰⁴

Perhaps this dispute would also be an opportunity for Kołakowski to explain what is the relationship between his conviction (proclaimed in many texts) that man is free, regardless of whether he chooses good or evil, and his view from the essay on education (mentioned above) where he stated that man is blinded and incapacitated by hatred. We may only regret that the polemics on the nature of human freedom and the human condition between Kołakowski and Tischner did not take place.

¹⁰⁴ Augustine wrote that "our freedom is submission to this supreme truth" (Augustyn, *O wolnej woli* [On free will], in: Augustyn, *Dialogi filozoficzne*, tłum. A. Trombala, Kraków 1999, p. 563).

Bibliography

- Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Albert C. Outler, Philadelphia 1955.
- Augustyn, *O wolnej woli*, tłum. A. Trombala, in: Augustyn, *Dialogi filozoficzne*, Kraków 1999, pp. 493–649.
- Bergson H., *Time and Free Will. An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, trans. F. L. Pogson, London 1912.
- Berlin I., *Two Concepts of Freedom*, in: I. Berlin, *Liberty*, Oxford 2002, pp. 166–217.
- Chudoba W., *Leszek Kołakowski: kronika życia i dzieła*, Warszawa 2014.
- Dąbrowski S., *Polemika Józefa Tischnera z tradycją tomistyczną jako spór o kształt współczesnej edukacji religijnej w Polsce*, “Forum Pedagogiczne” (2019) nr 2, pp. 93–105.
- Descartes R., *Medytacje o pierwszej filozofii*, tłum. M. i K. Ajdukiewiczowie, Warszawa 1958.
- Dymarski Z., *The art of ethics as the art of wise life in the concept of Józef Tischner*, “Studies in East European Thought” 71 (2019) Issue 4, pp. 375–385; doi.org/10.1007/s11212-019-09339-0.
- Dymarski Z., *Człowiek jako rozumna wolność. Droga Leszka Kołakowskiego do filozofii człowieka*, in: *Rozum i przestrzeń racjonalności*, red. A. Chmielecki, Gdańsk 2010, pp. 81–98.
- Dymarski Z., *Człowiek w horyzoncie rozpaczy*, in: *Wobec Dobra i Prawdy w dialogu z Tischnerem*, red. A. Bobko, M. Karolczak, Kraków 2013, pp. 220–241.
- Dymarski Z., *Debata księdza Józefa Tischnera ze szkołą lubelską*, “Logos i Ethos” (1998) nr 1, pp. 235–245.
- Dymarski Z., *Gdzie jest zło? Rola religii w lokalizacji zła w ujęciu Leszka Kołakowskiego i Józefa Tischnera*, „Humaniora” (2017) nr 2, pp. 47–61.
- Dymarski Z., *Józef Tischner wobec marksizmu. Wstępne rozpoznania*, “Karto-Teka Gdańska” (2020) nr 1, pp. 116–130.
- Hegel G., *Fenomenologia ducha*, tłum. A. Landmann, Warszawa 1964.
- Herbich A., Sobańda A., *Dziś mają dzieci, wnuki i prawnuki. W ten sposób pokonały Hitlera*, in: <https://kultura.dziennik.pl/ksiazki/artykuly/6477152,dziewczyzny-ocalale-zyd-zydowka-wojna-holocaust-anna-herbich-wojna-sprawiedliwi.html> (6.10.2020).
- Hernas A., *Tischner i Lévinas. Ksiądz z rabinem spór o człowieka*, “Logos i Ethos” (2004) nr 2, pp. 224–236.
- Jawor M., *W stronę egzystencjalnego oblicza filozofii*, Olsztyn 2019.
- Kołakowski L., *Gdzie jest miejsce dzieci w filozofii liberalnej?*, “Znak” (1993) nr 10, pp. 11–21.
- Kołakowski L., Mentzel Z., *Czas ciekawy. Czas niespokojny*, Kraków 2007.

- Kołodkowski L., *Mini wykłady o maksy sprawach*, t. 1, Kraków 1997.
- Kołodkowski L., *Moje słuszne poglądy na wszystko*, Kraków 2000.
- Kołodkowski L., *O tożsamości zbiorowej*, in: *Tożsamość w czasach zmiany*, red. K. Michalski, Kraków 1995, pp. 44–55.
- Kołodkowski L., *Prawda i wolność, co pierwsze?*, "Znak" (1994) nr 3, pp. 69–73.
- Kołodkowski L., *Religion. If there is no God... On God, the Devil, Sin and other Worries of the so-called Philosophy of Religion*, Oxford 1982.
- Kołodkowski L., *Wychowanie do nienawiści, wychowanie do godności*, in: L. Kołodkowski, *Czy diabeł może być zbawiony i 27 innych kazań*, Londyn 1984, pp. 140–145.
- Konstańczak S., *Józefa Tischnera krytyka marksizmu*, in: S. Konstańczak, *Polska XIX i XX wieku w filozoficznym zwierciadle*, Kraków 2017, pp. 293–316.
- Krąpiec M. A., *Ja-człowiek*, Lublin 1974.
- Kwapiszewski J., *Filozofia ks. Józefa Tischnera jako źródło dialogu*, Słupsk 1998.
- Lebiedziński W., *Socjalizm w krzywym zwierciadle Józefa Tischnera*, Warszawa 1985.
- Lebiedziński W., *Tischnerowska metoda krytyki socjalizmu*, Warszawa 1987.
- Lévinas E., *Otherwise than Being, or Beyond Essence*, trans. A. Lingis, Pittsburgh 1998.
- Lévinas E., *Totality and Infinity. An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. A. Lingis, Pittsburgh 2007.
- Locke J., *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Oxford 2008.
- Pico della Mirandola G., *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, trans. A. R. Caponigri, Chicago 1956.
- Pytając o człowieka – myśl filozoficzna Józefa Tischnera*, red. W. Zuziak, Kraków 2002.
- Ruszar J. M., *Wokół "Polskiego kształtu dialogu."* *Polskie filozofowanie*, "Rzeczpospolita" 16.02.2002, dodatek Plus Minus nr 7, p. D4.
- Sartre J.-P., *Byt i nicość*, tłum. J. Kielbasa et al., Kraków 2007.
- Scheler M., *Materialne a priori w etyce*, tłum. A. Węgrzecki, "Znak" (1967) nr 12, pp. 1512–1543.
- Tarnowski K., *Tomizm a obecność filozofii*, "Znak" (1978) nr 2, pp. 198–212.
- Taylor Ch., *Source of Self. The Making of the Modern Identity*, Cambridge 1989.
- Tischner J., *Czym jest "ja" transcendentalne?*, in: *Szkice filozoficzne Romanowi Ingardenowi w darze*, Kraków–Warszawa 1964, pp. 349–364.
- Tischner J., *Filozofia dramatu*, Paryż 1990.
- Tischner J., *Impresje aksjologiczne*, "Znak" (1970) nr 2–3, p. 204–219.
- Tischner J., *Ja transcendentalne w filozofii Edmunda Husserla*, "Studia Theologica Varsoviensia" (1964) nr 1–2, pp. 349–364.

- Tischner J., Michnik A., Żakowski J., *Między Panem a Plebanem*, Kraków 1998.
- Tischner J., *Myslenie według wartości*, Kraków 1982.
- Tischner J., *Spór o istnienie człowieka*, Kraków 1998.
- Tischner J., *Spowiedź rewolucjonisty*, Kraków 1993.
- Tischner J., *Sprawa osoby – wstępne przybliżenie*, "Logos i Ethos" (1992) nr 2, p. 5–19.
- Tischner J., *Świat ludzkiej nadziei*, Kraków 1994.
- Tischner J., Zańko D., Gowin J., *Przekonać Pana Boga*, Kraków 1999.
- Tischner J., *Zło metafizyczne czyli wejście w otchłań*, "Znak" (1993) nr 3, p. 13–28.

Abstract

On a would – be dispute. The problem of human freedom in the works of Józef Tischner and Leszek Kołakowski

In the 1970s, a very interesting debate took place between Tischner and the Thomist philosophers. In the early 1980s, Tischner started a dispute with Marxism. According to the author of the article, there were many indications that at the end of the 1990s he would fight another intellectual war against liberalism, and in particular with its way of viewing human freedom. For many reasons, this dispute did not happen. The author of the article believes that Leszek Kołakowski could have been the main adversary in this dispute.

The majority of contemporary intellectuals would agree that freedom is fundamental to human existence. This view was shared by both Leszek Kołakowski and Józef Tischner, therefore the dispute would concern the nature of internal freedom rather than the external one. Either of the adversaries saw it, in a different way. Kołakowski was close to the liberal approach to freedom. In turn, Tischner's view of freedom was closer to the way St. Augustine had understood it. In this text, the author introduces both these concepts of freedom. He also believes that an attempt to measure the validity of the arguments of both adversaries could be made in relation to the essence of man.

Keywords

freedom, man, personality core, awareness, consciousness, agathological space of consciousness, good-doer, evil-doer