
JÓZEF TISCHNER'S PHILOSOPHY OF DRAMA

Sylwia Górzna*

*The Institute of History and Political Science, Pomeranian University in Słupsk,
Arciszewskiego 22A, Słupsk, Poland*

(Received 20 March 2014, revised 13 June 2014)

Abstract

In this paper the author presents Józef Tischner's philosophy of drama, which derives from three sources: phenomenology, the philosophy of dialogue and existentialism. For the philosophy of dialogue the dialogue itself becomes a target, and an encounter and conversation constitute the issue and the principle of all Philosophy. The author points out that in his works Tischner repeatedly alluded to the representatives of this philosophy, such as Emmanuel Lévinas and Martin Buber. She also has stated that Tischner's philosophical views clearly harmonise with the personalistic view of Pope John Paul II, who repeatedly referred to Tischner's 'thinking in values'. In the work 'The philosophy of drama', Tischner presented a man as a dramatic entity, he was considering the philosophy of human drama, the event of encounter. Thinking about the man, whom Tischner sees as a free being, and whose drama takes place between Good and Evil, occupies a special place in his philosophy.

Keywords: philosophy of dialogue, values, philosophy of drama, Emmanuel Lévinas, John Paul II

1. Introduction

Józef Tischner (born 12 March 1931 in Stary Sącz, d. 28 June 2000 in Cracow) was a philosopher, ethicist, creator of Polish philosophy of drama, a Catholic priest. He studied at the Jagiellonian University and the Academy of Catholic Theology in Warsaw. His philosophical output includes several works devoted to philosophical anthropology, axiology, social ethics, and above all, the philosophy of encounter (the original version is the philosophy of drama). He has lectured at the Pontifical Faculty of Theology in Cracow [1].

Tischner's philosophical thought, primarily as a philosophy of drama, stems out from three significant sources of philosophical conditions: phenomenology, philosophy of dialogue and existentialism [2]. It could be also said that Tischner's philosophy is a philosophy of hope, as he repeatedly stressed the importance of the issue of hope in his own philosophical reflection [3].

*E-mail: sylwiagorzna@wp.pl

2. Philosophy of dialogue

The philosophy of dialogue, also called the philosophy of encounter, has emerged as a distinct trend after World War I (1920s). Its central category is the category of the relationship between 'I' and 'You'. According to Tischner, this philosophy extends the framework of traditional thinking about man. It opens new perspectives and provides new tools, which are useful when trying to understand and describe man as a religious entity [4].

His philosophical output includes several works devoted to, in whole or in part, the problems of dialogue. In 'The Ethics of Solidarity' Tischner emphasizes that dialogue means people came out of 'hiding', that is they approached one another and started a dialogue. The place of conversation is not a hideout, in which man is alone with his fear, but a place of meeting. The dialogue is like admitting light into the darkness of a basement, and the rising light reveals the truth that restores things and matters to their proper appearance [5]. It assumes primary community, rooting in what is more fundamental than many other distinctions by which men seek the answer to the question asked by German philosopher, Immanuel Kant (1724-1804): „Who is man?“ [6].

The dialogue with another man, the understanding of another man in both senses of the world, can become a source of self-comprehension, can be an answer to the question about the sense of life [7, 8]. According to the philosopher, a condition of every dialogue is the ability to „empathize with the other's point of view“, because the other „has always a point“ [9]. It is important to experience separateness and otherness, which has two sides: similarity and dissimilarity. Facing the other we 'see' the similarity in impossibility and vice versa. Some time the accent falls on the similarity, sometimes on dissimilarity. The experience of otherness is growing just as a continuous transition from one perspective to the other [10].

It should be added that Tischner referred to the representatives of the philosophy of dialogue, including: Emmanuel Lévinas (1906-1996) and Martin Buber (1878-1965). Buber's name appears several times in two Tischner's books: 'The Philosophy of Drama' and 'The controversy over Human Existence'. Tischner argued that Buber's concept, proclaiming the view called by Tischner genetic subjectivism (the transition from Thou to I) was flawed. In Tischner's work, as in Buber's, we find three basic relationships: the relationship with nature, with people and with spiritual beings [11, 12].

Tischner dealt with the inner drama of the entity, and not, as in the philosophy of dialogue, the drama in the 'I-Thou' area. He believed that any external drama, everything that happens between a human and a human, is reflected inside man. He pointed to the base of Anthropology and he did so in the simplest way. His philosophy was directed towards building of axiology, which assumes that a goal of man is maturing to authenticity, which is equated with the desire for God. The path which leads to this goal is the discovery of a stage, the drama of existence and understanding the importance of values [13].

3. Thinking according to values

The starting point of Tischner's considerations was the ethical experience, which is primarily the experience of values. Ethics is thus axiology first, the study of values [1]. „Values are values because they are something for a person and because of a person. (...) Man serves values – realizing them, values serve man - saving him.” [14]

Agathological experience concerns being in the light of the good, the axiological - events in the light of the values. Starting from the agathological experience, it gives the axiological 'I' axiological sense. In his deliberations, Tischner focused on what values are and what they can be for a man. Man lives in a world of values, which in the creation of the world refers to this world. Values are revealed in an encounter with the other man, then they take a particular shape. A man discovers the values while confronting himself with fears of the man standing in front of him, seeking help to solve problems.

Tischner distinguished basic values from the highest ones. Truth is the most important fundamental value. According to Tischner truth is the result of encounter and the result of dialogue: „(...) the encounter is the source of experience of truth in a more fundamental dimension than the dimension of attitude towards things. Attitude to things is mediated through dialogue with the other man. Therefore, frontal experience of truth must be sought in encounter with the other, not in contact with the thing.” [15]

Freedom is a prerequisite for realizing the value of the 'axiological I' [1, p. 489]. Freedom obliges us to take responsibility for ourselves and others and it enables us to meet another man authentically [16]. In man Tischner saw an entity of drama, as incapable to truly avoid his freedom, which in the face of the other and God must make genuine choices [6]. According to Tischner: „In addition to truth, freedom is the second value that Christian personalism considers indispensable for the existence of humanity and its development in man. Just as truth is for man the key to the world, as freedom is the key that lets values into man.” [17]

4. Philosophy of drama

According to Tischner drama occurs between individuals, as well as between man and God, in the horizon of good and evil. The drama takes place on the stage - the world, which has its own specific time running between question and answer. A man takes part in the drama, that is why he is a drama entity. The time, in which he is immersed, is called the time of drama. „To understand the drama means to understand that man is the entity of drama. (...) Perhaps to be the entity of drama means to live the time given, with other people around and the earth as a stage under the feet.” [18] Dramatic time is „the time that happens between us as participants in one and the same drama. Dramatic time binds me with you, and you with me, and binds us to the stage where our drama takes place.” [18, p. 8] The stage of the drama „is a place of dramatic

action. The stage consists of: things, objects, landscapes, as well as other people, present in experiences of intentional type.” [18, p. 182]

The thinker treated an encounter as the foundation of humanity, meeting every day with people from different communities in his pastoral and public work. In his view, the experience of associating with another human being is an encounter only when highest values are revealed and realized in it, i.e.: the good, truth, love, freedom, responsibility. According to Tischner: „Some drama with starts with an encounter. The drama takes its time, its place, it also has its primary and secondary characters. This means that the drama has a hierarchy. Each meeting is threatened by parting, in each parting attenuated memory of the encounter lives. Inability to cut off radically the one from the other is one of the sources of the tragedy that pervades human communion.” [15, p. 483]

The question begins the drama, opening the possibility of a value. „At the beginning of the drama the question arises: who are you? At the end two opposing possibilities appear: the cursed or the blessed. Man’s drama takes place among these possibilities. What do they mean? This is what we do not know for sure. Anyway, this ignorance does not hinder us from living among them, thinking by them, evaluating others and ourselves according to them. If one day they disappeared from sight and ears, we would stay on the world stage helplessly, like the words that forgot about the rules of grammar which makes the speech out of them.” [18, p. 312] To answer the question of what it means to be the essence of the entity of drama, it is necessary to enter the level of religious thought, to open up to God. There are no two identical human beings, so everyone goes their own way to salvation.

An encounter is the starting point for Tischner’s philosophy of drama. It is an event which opens a new horizon of interpersonal experience – an ‘agathological’ horizon (in Greek *agaton* – the good, *logos* - what is intelligent, wise, comprising a driving force) [1, p. 420]. According to Tischner the world is entering the drama, transforming itself into a stage of drama, when it becomes the scene of the struggle between good and evil. Thanks to freedom a man enters the area of good and evil, assimilates good and evil, and the world of values is determined by the limit of our freedom. Human freedom is realized in the choice between good and evil. Depending on the choice of a positive or negative value, ‘I’ can be either the existence of good or the existence of evil. The encounter is an event in which a man experiences the other in his tragedy.

According to Tischner, the source of encounter and drama is the revelation of the face. The key to capture the essence of what is happening in the space of drama, is the experience of the face of the other. The only way I can save myself is to answer a call from You. The experience of encounter reveals axiological tension that is caused by a contact with the face, and its dramatic character is determined by the coexistence of good and evil. „For the philosophy of the drama it is obvious that people have faces, and things appearances.” [18, p. 83] According to Tischner the face is the truth about man and the truth about the values as well, and the meeting is a source of the deepest truth. The face is a

trace, a trace encourages to follow it. Reading the meaning which appears in the face of the other man requires staring at it, following this trace.

Tischner referred to the representative of the philosophy of dialogue - Emmanuel Lévinas - whose thought exerted an enormous influence on his philosophy of drama. When the face is unveiled, then the encounter is possible. A face can be covered with a veil, and then shame will be a motive of covering. Worse is when the face is covered with a mask, because a veil hides only, while a mask, according to Tischner, lies. The first fundamental word that comes from the face of the other is 'do not kill', as in Lévinas' [8; 18, p. 31; 19]. For Lévinas an encounter with the other is the primary and fundamental fact, and for Tischner it becomes a testimony [20].

Describing a man, Tischner sometimes used the term 'a monad', which means a human substance or a man closed in himself, who does not establish a contact with the environment, especially with other people. He spoke of the monad with 'no windows' who never opens to the other. This situation takes place when we consider man in the category of separation. Mutual being 'windowless monads' is governed by the word 'beside', as it is possible to exist side by side for a long life, with no apparent outcomes [19, p.116]. The condition for dialogue is an experience of our own otherness.

The main concern of Tischner's considerations was the coexistence of good and evil and the subsequent drama of human existence. Good is the supreme value. In addition to good - a value - Tischner distinguished 'transcendental' Good, which is a priori and universal condition for the emergence and functioning of values in the human world. Man choosing good, builds himself. The good is good because it has been adopted by man in freedom. Good is not 'good' due to the fact of being a value. Although invisible, it can be learned by the values, whose place and importance in the axiological reality it continually justifies [21].

Evil can be made present during encounters, so Tischner introduced the problem of evil in the centre of the dialogic relationship. Evil is a ghost, is something that occurs between entities, in the space of human encounter and dialogue. According to the philosopher, contemplating evil in a human-human relationship goes beyond the ontological plane of the study of evil, because the ontological approach is generally trying to bring evil to the concepts that derive from being. He wanted to show that the true face of evil does not appear in the world of objects, but in the world of people. It appears in the dialogue. For him, the dialogical evil is a phantom, which is more dangerous than being a thing [2, 22].

Drama, that is human life, may end up either as a triumph or tragedy, because it is for a man to decide what he will do with his freedom. In the drama evil has an advantage over good, and man is not able to make good bring triumph of over evil unaided. The drama ends with a condemnation of man. According to Tischner a man, however, longs for saving, nurses goodness inside him and defends himself against evil.

While for Lévinas evil was the logic of being, belonged to the world of beings, for Tischner it was beyond ontology, existence [11, p. 140]. According to Tischner: „Hence, evil is not originally inside neither me nor you, but it is between (Buber’s Zwischen) me and you” [18, p. 215]. Evil can only occur where there is a man and in a dialogic relationship: a man to a man.

Wherever Tischner approached the problem of man, at the same time he dealt with the problem of God. The human drama is not possible without God. God is a person, and His relation to the world is a relation of interpersonal relationship. Criticizing the Thomistic conception of God, he came to conclusion that the only source of knowledge of God is revelation, while learning from man’s side - experience [10]. „The question about God is an important question of man as a dramatic entity. It is the drama itself. (...) Among the various opinions and conjectures one is particularly noteworthy. Actually there is only one drama - the drama with God. Any other drama and other dramatic thread is only a fragment of this drama.” [18] Tischner believed that we can have the way to God open only through encounter. He alluded to Lévinas, who stressed that „the divine dimension opens up, starting with a human face (...), God rises to his highest presence accordingly to the justice, which we give to people.” [15, p. 485] According to Tischner, encounter with a face is also encounter with God, who is present in man.

The philosopher emphasized that from God’s point of view different religions are ways of salvation, which does not mean that it is so for man, because a man who voluntarily changes religions, does not enter into another way of salvation, but he goes astray [23]. He agreed with Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005), who spoke of ecumenism (means relations between believers of the Christ, bringing closer to other Christian denominations), comparing truth to a ball. Followers of different religions stand in its various points, and the deeper they dig into the surface in the place where they are, the closer they get to each other. Ecumenism can be unity at some fundamental level, while preserving the differences in other areas, and it is important that the differences do not become opposites [23, p. 46-47]. Tischner believed that „the distance that separates Christian religion from other faiths and religions is greater than the distance which separates those religions and faiths from utter disbelief” [24]. He emphasized that God is not the enemy of differences, but respects them. Pluralism „is the multiplicity in unity, unity in diversity. Recognizing the necessity of differences it creates unity. We say: pluralism lies in the fact that other people recognize their right to differences.” [24, 25]

5. Józef Tischner and Pope John Paul II

Tischner repeatedly in his works alluded to the teaching of Karol Wojtyła - Pope John Paul II (pontificate 1978-2005). Karol Wojtyła’s philosophical investigations, as Tischner’s, are associated with the drama of human existence. Care and responsibility for a human were at the core of their philosophy. Tischner’s philosophy is consistent in its conclusions with the teaching of the

Pope and the Catholic Church. Papal documents, among others, influenced Tischner's philosophy of drama, which was in line with religious thought, were, among others, Papal documents.

Karol Wojtyła, similarly to Tischner, carefully analyzed the values that give meaning to human existence. We should agree with a philosopher Władysław Stróżewski (born 1933), who emphasizes that John Paul II during his first pilgrimage to Poland in 1979, in Warsaw, referred to the 'thinking according to values' by Tischner. That time the Pope stressed that we need deep reflection on what really matters, called for developing the culture of wisdom, proper hierarchising of values, bearing in mind the most important one – 'truth' [26].

Tischner emphasized that „With a good analysis of the texts of John Paul II, we see that for him truth is hermeneutic, not dogmatic. It is above all the truth of a man, who comes to himself, becomes more human.” [27] In 'The thinking according to values' Tischner referred to the Pope's first encyclical *Redemptor hominis* (1979), which reads: „You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free, make you free. These words contain both a fundamental requirement and a warning at the same time. It is a requirement of an honest relationship to truth as a condition for authentic freedom.” [15, p. 210]

Like the Pope, Tischner, stressed the importance of freedom: „ (...) Man should be himself in his deeds. Where there is no freedom, man is not himself - even doing everything required.” [5, p. 49] In his work „In the land of an ailing imagination” Tischner noted that „John Paul II says freedom is “the measure of human dignity and multitude”. He also says that it is “a big challenge for the spiritual growth of man”. However, he also speaks of “the need for responsible use of freedom” [28].

Tischner stressed that „the idea of solidarity is not in his (John Paul II's – added by S.G.) independent doctrine. It derives from a deeper principle – the principle of human dignity.” [29] In 'The Ethics of Solidarity' Tischner described the wrongs which created the impetus for the birth of Solidarity (1980) and aspirations and hopes tied to the movement. Tischner presented two levels of solidarity: in the first instance we are talking of a solidarity deeply grounded within existing relations and the second instance is concerned with a solidarity that exceeds such relations. The essence of solidarity depends upon a calling to „carry one another's burdens” [30]. It is significant that this sentence was uttered also by John Paul II, among others, during his homily at Victory Square in Warsaw, June 2, 1979.

Tischner's work 'In the land of an ailing imagination' states: „A huge role in lightening and developing the concept of human dignity has been played by John Paul II's reflections. Both the doctrine of the Council (Vatican II - added by S.G.) and the teaching of John Paul II (especially his encyclicals) close some era in Catholic thinking about social ethics and open up a new one.” [28, p. 33] For Pope John Paul II and Tischner, the value of the human person was the highest, primary and absolute.

Karol Wojtyła in 'Person and Act' [31] wrote of the fulfilment of the human person, which means that man fulfils himself in acts which can be good or bad, so the fulfilment can be in good or evil. This idea is close to the philosophy of Józef Tischner [32]. To explore the truths of human existence is not enough 'to know and understand', but also what Tischner emphasized 'involved knowledge' [33]. Such knowledge is a consequence of the 'rule of participation', which Wojtyła wrote in the study mentioned above [33].

It should be noted that Tischner's 'Philosophy of drama', whose starting point he made the experience of good and evil, is thus a combination of the two poles - reason and faith, between which all the 'knowledge towards the contemplation of truth' is stretched and on which is based. With these words the Pope started his encyclical *Fides et Ratio* (1998). We should, however, agree with the philosopher John Galarowicz, who emphasises that there is a fundamental difference between Wojtyła's antropodrama and Tischner's philosophy of drama: Wojtyła focused on the moral drama, and Tischner described the interpersonal drama - between a man and a man and between man and God [34].

It should be emphasized that in August 1983 in Castel Gandolfo (a summer residence of popes), in the presence of the host, John Paul II, a symposium entitled 'Man in Modern Science' was held, which was the first meeting of the Scientific Council of the Vienna Institute for Human Sciences, founded in 1982. The meeting was aimed particularly at delimiting the horizon of future work of the Institute. Józef Tischner became a member of its bard [35].

In the work 'Memory and Identity' John Paul II returned to the main topics of conversation, which took place in Castel Gandolfo in 1993. The founders of the Institute, Józef Tischner and Krzysztof Michalski, proposed to the Pope to carry out a critical historical philosophical analysis of the two dictatorships: nazism and communism. In this work, the Pope explores the issues of coexistence of good and evil. It says: „ (...) man is divided in himself, hence all of human life, whether individual or collective, turns out to be a dramatic struggle between good and evil, between light and darkness” [36].

On 26 October, 2002, during his audience, John Paul II met representatives of the Institute, which celebrated its 20th anniversary, along with the Principal Krzysztof Michalski. In his speech, the Pope recalled, inter alia, President and founder of the Institute, Józef Tischner, „sincerely devoted to the work of developing and spreading the dialogue on the future of Europe, open to the voices of both the East and West” [37]. Noteworthy is the fact that until 2002 the Institute organised eight scientific symposia in Castel Gandolfo, in which Pope John Paul II participated [37].

6. Conclusions

The author chose this philosopher not only because of his Polish origin, but also because, as Pope John Paul II, Tischner focused his teaching on man

open to God, on the dimension of human life, dealt with the issue of truth, freedom, solidarity and relations of Philosophy with Theology.

Tischner dealt with man, posed questions about his nature, was interested in the issue of time as an anthropological category, took over reflection on the space of encounters. According to the thinker, a man should derive the meaning of his life realizing values that are constantly threatened by evil. For Tischner the face is a phenomenon in which the essence of man appears. The other, who is the face, is also a trace of God. Drama of dialogical openness to encounter with the other, especially with God, is the beginning of philosophy of drama, and the need to select values creates drama. He stressed that man exists in the horizon of good and evil.

Without a doubt, the Pope had an impact on the way of Tischner's research. Both Tischner and the Pope were sensitive to the events of the modern world, fought for man, his existence, they saw man open to God.

References

- [1] P. Dutkiewicz, *Tischner Józef*, in *Filozofowie współcześni. Leksykon*, J. Szmyd (ed.), Bydgoszcz, Cracow, 2003, 488.
- [2] M. Manikowski, *Filozofia dialogu*, **3** (2005) 189.
- [3] I. Strapko, *Filozofia dialogu*, **1** (2003) 87.
- [4] K. Święcicka, *Transcendentalizm Husserla a filozofia dialogu*, Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN, Warsaw, 1993, 5.
- [5] J. Tischner, *Etyka solidarności*, Wydawnictwo Znak, Cracow, 1981, 15.
- [6] W.P. Glinkowski, *Odra*, **4** (2002) 29.
- [7] B. Zeler, *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, **2(8)** (2013) 89.
- [8] L. Pyra, *Annalecta Husserliana*, **104** (2011) 236.
- [9] J. Kwapiszewski, *Filozofia ks. Józefa Tischnera jako źródło dialogu*, Wydawnictwo Uczelniane WSP w Słupsku, Słupsk, 1998, 70.
- [10] T. Gadacz, *Znak*, **3** (2001) 34.
- [11] J. Baniak (ed.), *Człowiek z przełomu wieków w refleksji filozofii dialogu*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu im. A. Mickiewicza, Poznań, 2002, 70.
- [12] M. Buber, *Ja i Ty. Wybór pism filozoficznych*, IW PAX, Warsaw, 1992, 41.
- [13] J. Tischner, *Spotkanie*, A. Karoń-Ostrowska (ed.), Wydawnictwo Znak, Cracow, 2003, 136.
- [14] P. Lisicki, *Arcana*, **4(5)** (2004) 159.
- [15] J. Tischner, *Myślenie według wartości*, Wydawnictwo Znak, Cracow, 2002, 519.
- [16] A. Bobko, *The Tischner Institut Journal of Philosophy*, **1** (2007) 12.
- [17] J. Tischner, *Świat ludzkiej nadziei*, Wydawnictwo Znak, Cracow, 1994, 65.
- [18] J. Tischner, *Filozofia dramatu. Wprowadzenie*, Wydawnictwo Znak, Cracow, 2001, 7.
- [19] J.A. Kłoczowski, *Filozofia dialogu*, Wydawnictwo Polskiej Prowincji Dominikanów W Drodze, Poznań, 2005, 116.
- [20] S. Barszczak, *Chabry wolności. Studium myśli Józefa Tischnera*, Wydawnictwo Garmond, Częstochowa, 2005, 132.
- [21] W.P. Glinkowski, *Więź*, **10** (1999) 76.
- [22] S. Barszczak, *Social and Human Disciplines*, **2** (2013) 47-48.

- [23] J. Tischner, *Przekonać Pana Boga*, D. Zańko & J. Gowin (eds.), Wydawnictwo Znak, Cracow, 2000, 42-43.
- [24] J. Tischner, *Zrozumieć własną wiarę*, Wydawnictwo Znak, Cracow, 2006, 40.
- [25] J. Tischner, *Nieszczęsny dar wolności*, Społeczny Instytut Wydawniczy Znak, Cracow, 1993, 151.
- [26] W. Stróżewski, *Więź*, **5(6)** (2005) 71.
- [27] J. Tischner, *Mysli wyszukane*, W. Bonowicz (ed.), Wydawnictwo Znak, Cracow, 2000, 70.
- [28] J. Tischner, *W krainie schorowanej wyobraźni*, Wydawnictwo Znak, Cracow, 2002, 147.
- [29] J. Tischner, *Etyka solidarności oraz Homo sovieticus*, Wydawnictwo Znak, Cracow, 1992, 186.
- [30] C. Taylor, *The Tischner Institute Journal of Philosophy*, **1** (2007) 68-69.
- [31] K. Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn oraz inne studia antropologiczne*, T. Styczeń, W. Chudy, J.W. Galkowski, A. Rodziński & A. Szostek (eds.), Wydawnictwo Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, Lublin, 1994.
- [32] K. Parzych, *Filozofia dialogu*, **4** (2006) 191.
- [33] J. Wal, *Ateneum Kapłańskie*, **1** (2005) 10.
- [34] J. Galarowicz, *Paradoks egzystencji etycznej. Inspiracje: Ingarden – Wojtyła – Tischner*, Wyd. Naukowe Papieskiej Akademii Teologicznej w Krakowie, Cracow, 2009, 202.
- [35] K. Michalski, *Człowiek w nauce współczesnej. Rozmowy w Castel Gandolfo*, Editions du Dialogue, Paris, 1988, 11, 13.
- [36] Jan Paweł II, *Pamięć i tożsamość. Rozmowy na przełomie tysiącleci*, Wydawnictwo Znak, Cracow, 2005, 7.
- [37] Jan Paweł II, *L'Osservatore Romano* (wyd. pol.), **1** (2003) 36.