

# The Place of the Other in Józef Tischner's Philosophical Anthropology



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## INTRODUCTION

If we are to outline the place of the other in Tischner's philosophy we have to start with a question: How does he understand the philosophy of man? Only in this context does the place and the role of the other become visible. It seems that this question is not univocal, as in many of his texts Tischner approaches this issue in many different ways. Importantly, anthropological themes are always at the heart of his philosophy, but his views crystallized over a long period of time. Polemical questions are significant, especially the polemic with Thomism and its followers, as well as the controversy over man with the Marxist philosophy through which the author of *Filozofia dramatu* [The Philosophy of Drama] shaped his distinct views. It has to be remembered, however, that these stands were not the only point of reference, as the naturalist and ontological presentations of man were also the subject of his critical

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12 analyses. Therefore, it would be appropriate to say that Tischner's philosophy of man has become part of the controversy over man, in its broadest sense. This is one of the most important controversies of the twentieth century, taking place in many disciplines: from the natural sciences, through the social sciences, to philosophy itself. It is common knowledge that in some contemporary schools of philosophy a number of theses have been put forward and have focused on the crisis of humanity, the end of humanism, and even the "death of man." Thus, Tischner's controversy of man has to be put precisely in this context.

This is not, however, the only point of reference. Another derives from various ancient and modern thinkers — among the authors I have in mind are Plato, Saint Augustine, Descartes, Hegel, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Sartre, and Marcel, but most of all Husserl, Heidegger, Scheler, Lévinas — with whom Tischner debated from the beginning of his work. In this complex process, where inspirations and assimilation go hand in hand with criticism and the modification of views, an original and independent concept of the philosophy of man emerges. This approach is combined with the method Tischner adopted. Let us ask what method this is. It is unique in that, on the one hand, Tischner carries out the phenomenological analyses of the phenomena that interest him, but on the other hand, these analyses are in the sphere of historical polemics with their own long tradition. In this way, phenomenology embedded in experience is combined with hermeneutics, which investigates the issues from a historical perspective.

For the sake of this paper I will divide the work of the Polish philosopher into two periods. The first involves such texts as: *Świat ludzkiej nadziei* [The World of Human Hope] and *Myślenie wobec wartości* [Thinking in Values]. Interestingly, at the time Tischner developed a philosophy of man significantly connected with axiology, with the axiological-I and the related problematics. It is worth adding that already at the time, precisely in the mid 1970s, the strongly delineated theme of the other emerges. It is clearly visible in such texts as: *Etyka wartości i nadziei* [The Ethics of Values and Hope] (1976) and in the article "Fenomenologia spotkania" [Phenomenology of the Encounter] (1978). In the second period of his work, which started in the late seventies and the early eighties, he published *Filozofia dramatu* [The Philosophy of Drama] and *Spór o istnienie człowieka* [The Controversy over the Existence of Man], which place the other at the heart of their philosophical reflections. Furthermore, through reflections on intersubjectivity, Tischner arrives at a metaphysics of the good rooted within the Platonic tradition. To see his evolution, we need to make more in-depth analyses.

## The Philosophy of Man in Tischner's Early Views

We shall begin with a question: What is the philosophy of man in the early development phase of Tischner's views? While attempting to answer

this question, we need to mention the views already present in his doctoral thesis, and especially in his post-doctoral thesis.<sup>1</sup> In these writings Tischner considers different aspects of the consciousness of the “I” and finally reaches the conclusion that the human “I” is directly connected with values. In other words, they are the basis of the human ethos. As we know from the meaning of the Greek word, *ethos* boils down to the environment, home, or dwelling of any living being. Tischner refers precisely to this meaning of the word. In his view, in order to live, develop and be himself, man needs this ethos and this environment. Yet, the question arises: What is man’s typical environment? For Tischner it is values. In “The Ethics of Values and Hope” he emphasizes: “Man... lives amid the values toward which his aspirations, thoughts and actions are directed” adding further: “ethics as science aims to be, above all, the science of values... Therefore, it is a science of the ‘human musical score’ which, like an invisible background, appears in front of and beyond man, inspiring him in action and at rest.”<sup>2</sup> Thus, it is impossible to adequately describe human ethos where there is neither good nor evil, neither values nor anti-values, and where the conditions do not allow for objective thinking. Yet, man is a person, and so a being-for-himself, a being that “builds himself as a value — a special value called I”<sup>3</sup> while referring to values that exist beyond him. In this respect Tischner presents the view that his philosophy of man — apart from being an objective science of values understood as the human environment — is also a theory of man perceived as “material” for values: “Man is material [...] shaped by values.”<sup>4</sup>

Therefore, the significant spheres in the philosophy of man could thus far be divided into two parts: the first would be the objective sphere of values and its investigation, whereas the subject of the second would be the theory of man. But this is not all. We must also ask: What is the origin of human sensitivity? What makes man open to values? In view of the above, Tischner proposed a solution which went on to play a significant role, becoming an axis for his views. He saw the origin of human sensitivity in a particular type of experience which opens us to good and evil, to values and anti-values. This is the experience of the other. Tischner frequently emphasizes the uniqueness of this experience: “We are not able to experience anything, any object, any landscape or any animal, in the same way we experience the other. Therefore, this experience can be the origin of our ethical self-knowledge. The basic ethical values find their

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<sup>1</sup> J. Tischner, “Fenomenologia świadomości egotycznej” [The Phenomenology of Egoistic Consciousness], in: *Studia z filozofii świadomości* [Studies from the Philosophy of the Consciousness], Study and introduction: A. Węgrzecki, Krakow 2006. Chapters IV and V, along with the conclusion, are particularly important in this respect. See: *Fenomenologia świadomości egotycznej*, pp. 351–417.

<sup>2</sup> J. Tischner, “Etyka wartości i nadziei,” in: D. von Hildebrand, J. Kłoczowski, J. Paściak, J. Tischner, *Wobec wartości* [On Values], Poznań 1984, pp. 57–58. This text was written in the mid-seventies, and it is one of the first to address the role of the other.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

14 foundation within it.”<sup>5</sup> Tischner believes that values, and ethical ones in particular, emerge as what determine my attitude toward another human being. Consequently, the other seems to be significant, even indispensable, someone who makes it possible, as such, to fully discover the axiological dimension of reality. It is clear that the earlier axiological issues were supplemented with one important aspect which would become the main axis of Tischner’s analysis in the future.

To such questions as: what are values, what are their characteristic features, what is their mode of existence etc., Tischner replies much like other representatives of axiology developed on the basis of phenomenology. Philosophers such as M. Scheler, N. Hartmann, and R. Ingarden believed in the objective existence of values; they and their followers, emphasized the pluralism of values and their hierarchy. As such, Tischner’s stand was a reference to, not to say took advantage from, what the classic scholars of the twentieth century axiology had said before him. It has to be added, however, that some of Tischner’s comments, especially in the conclusion to *Fenomenologia świadomości egotycznej* [The Phenomenology of the Egotic Consciousness], allow for a new take on this issue. Simplifying it a bit, it may be said that, on the one hand, we have values which are objective, and possess a characteristic hierarchy, emerging on the horizon of the world in which we live; and on the other hand, we always experience them in the presence of a human being and in such a situation they initiate our commitment. The other awakens a sense of obligation within me. Why does this happen? This occurs because the situation and the other speak to us directly about “the existential drama of human existence — mine and someone else’s.”<sup>6</sup> In response to what type of drama this is, the author suggests that it depends on the place and circumstances. Then the imperative prohibitions saying “Do not kill,” “Do not lie” etc. derives from negative values, but the imperative of the orders “help those in need” or “lend a hand” derives from positive values, etc. Nonetheless, we have to bear in mind that the basis of this whole situation is a call from the other. Where does this call come from, what is its basis? Tischner claims — with reference to Saint Augustine and Kant — that the final basis of the call from the other is goodness, which manifests itself in the call. Therefore, it is a special situation: man is a tragic being, without the help of the other he dies along with his goodness, while a cry for help obliges him in a categorical way. Clearly emphasizing the moment of reciprocity, Tischner says: “When I save man from his drama, I simultaneously save myself from my own drama — from the threat of the danger of guilt.”<sup>7</sup>

In other words, I have to make a choice: to help or to run away. Which of the values should I choose, how should I respond to the call of the other? Certainly, this is not an easy moment. This is a situation of an extreme

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<sup>5</sup> J. Tischner, “Sztuka etyki” [The Art of Ethics], in: *Myślenie według wartości*, Krakow 1982, p. 365.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 366.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 367.

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decision, in which man confronts the limits of his humanity. Through experiencing such a situation, one's perception of the world changes in a profound way. Tischner claims that when something like this has indeed taken place, man is cast out of the "single-level," "one-dimensional" world, and introduced to a hierarchical world, or to the world of good and bad, of better and worse. To further describe this experience, Tischner uses the concept of moral sense. What does he mean by this? This is "a fundamental and extremely strong human emotion which opens us to the world of axiological possibilities, to the possible good and the possible evil, and which situates man in the world."<sup>8</sup> The essence of this sense is its preferential nature, and the fact that it places man before a choice which always takes the other into account. Inevitably, a question arises: What happens if a moral sense is not awakened. This question seems to be even more legitimate, as the author allows for such a possibility. In his response, Tischner seems to be suggesting that the world of such a man remains one-dimensional and flat, and that the man himself will exist in an inauthentic way, because his actions will only follow schemata adopted from other people or institutions. In short, he will not be himself.

As I have already pointed out, the theory of man was developed on the basis of axiology. In this way, it stood in opposition to other approaches: on the one hand, Tischner opposed an exclusively naturalistic depiction of man, that is, a depiction which created anthropological concepts on the basis of natural science; on the other hand, he equally energetically opposed the ontological presentations of man in the influential philosophies of Heidegger and Sartre. A concept of man understood as being-for-oneself, the person whose center is the axiological-I, emerged precisely in polemic with these depictions. A description of the axiological-I can be found in the article "Impresje aksjologiczne" [Axiological Impressions] and in the conclusion to *The Phenomenology of Egotic Consciousness*. This concept is found in what can be called the axiological basis of consciousness. Let us try to briefly describe this axiological-I.

From Tischner's viewpoint, among many possible and actual experiences of the I, the experience of the I as a special value is fundamental, because the other concepts of the I can be derived from the axiological-I. How, then, can this I be defined? What are its distinct characteristics? The description of its function is indispensable in answering these questions. First, according to Tischner, the essence of the I generally encompasses its individual consciousness. In other words, there is no I without the consciousness of the I; at its essence is a certain consciousness of experience, impressions, ideas etc. Yet, it is not — as we might hastily assume — a reflective consciousness, but a consciousness which conditions all reflections. It is precisely this a-reflective or pre-reflective self-consciousness that is part of the essence of the whole stream of consciousness, with all its contents, that Tischner describes as "conscientivity." On

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<sup>8</sup> "Etyka wartości i nadziei," op. cit., p. 97.

16 the other hand, “scientific” consciousness of the stream of consciousness is attained through various forms of reflection, but it is worth adding that “reflection is possible only upon what has been primordially presented by conscientivity.”<sup>9</sup> Therefore, the essence of the I is its conscientivity, and there is no I without the conscientive consciousness of the I. Secondly, to capture the axiological-I Tischner describes the process taking place in our consciousness, defining it as “solidarity of the I with something which primordially presents itself as mine.”<sup>10</sup> What does this mean? The sphere of possible egotic solidarization is determined by the features of “mine.” Consequently, only what in some way is or can become “mine” can be covered in the radius of inner solidarization. According to Tischner, it is important that the meaning of solidarization is axiological. In other words, what justifies something becoming “mine” is the value which “mine” has for me. Consequently, the area of my I is determined by the range of values with which I can enter a relationship of solidarization. Furthermore, as changes take place within it, the conscientive area of my I changes too, and the axiological-I is the core of the area, in which the egotic meaning of values forms the basis of conscientivity.

Thus, the conclusion of Tischner’s thesis is that the I is a value. However, there is a vast difference between the value qualities of the axiological-I and the value of all other objective, ethical, and aesthetic values. As we know, axiology assumes that every positive objective value possesses its respective negative value. This is not the case with the axiological-I, because it does not enter in a relationship with negative egotic values. At most, it can be said that “The axiological-I is endangered (one would like to say ‘ill-used’) only when, being a positive value, it is forced to take responsibility for the realization of anti-values. This situation is experienced as a kind of axiological suicide.”<sup>11</sup> These comments make us conclude that the axiological-I is a positive value in the absolute sense of the word. We have to be careful here, however, because this does not imply that everything within value qualities of the I is positive in nature. The axiological-I is marked by its privacy. To describe this feature, Tischner uses the metaphor of “axiological hunger,” which can be satiated through the realizing values in the surrounding world. Yet the hunger and the accompanying desire are unlike the hunger and desire we know through our corporeality. It is only a pity that Tischner did not spend more time on this issue, as from the few fragments pertaining to this interesting question, it is difficult to form a unequivocal opinion.

Apart from positivity and axiological privation, irreality and individuality constitute, from Tischner’s vantage point, intrinsic features of the axiological-I. It is unreal and transcendental in the sense that, in the world

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<sup>9</sup> J. Tischner, “Impresje aksjologiczne” [Axiological Impressions], in: *Świat ludzkiej nadziei. Wybór szkiców filozoficznych 1966–1975* [The World of Human Hope; A Selection of Philosophical Sketches 1966–1975], second edition, Krakow 1992, p. 164.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 166.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 174.

where concrete obligations occur, it can acquire the shape of I-the-doctor, 17  
I-the-professor or I-the-father etc., through processes of solidarization  
and intrinsic reification. In these situations, the correlate of each of these  
reifications is a definite world of values, “which the axiological-I believes  
to be fundamental, or at least most obligatory at the moment.”<sup>12</sup> There-  
fore, the realization of the axiological-I takes place on the periphery of  
the reification of values. All the reifications notwithstanding, the axiolog-  
ical-I remains unreal and transcendental because — as Tischner empha-  
sizes — no reification or soldarization could exhaust all the I’s possibili-  
ties. The last of the qualities mentioned is individuality. Individuality is  
stressed by the word “mine” — so significant in the solidarization proc-  
ess. It means that the I itself is always an individual.

Such an understanding of the axiological-I gives rise to two contra-  
dictory forms of the spiritual life of man: the first is the spiritual “nega-  
tion” of this life, while the other is real creation, permanence and devel-  
opment. Spiritual negation is conveyed through such experiences as: fear,  
terror, nostalgia, a sense of loneliness and guilt. Despair is particularly  
important, as it stands for the negative polarity of life for the axiological-  
I. The second form of inner life is the inner creation of man. Thus, “by  
responding to the attraction of positive values, the axiological-I constantly  
creates itself.”<sup>13</sup>

## Toward a Philosophy of Drama

If we can speak of the change or evolution of views from the early to  
the late, mature Tischner, this change can certainly be observed in many  
places. Nonetheless, in terms of the issues that interest us, here two points  
seem particularly important: first of all, the transition from axiology to  
the metaphysics of the good, i.e. agathology — along with all the conse-  
quences — is clearly visible; secondly, this is tied to another change, focus-  
ing on and investigating the I-Thou relationship as constitutive to man. In  
the former and latter case, the role of the other is significant.

The relevant text in the above-mentioned transition is *Myślenie  
według wartości* [Thinking in Values].<sup>14</sup> Tischner asks: “What experience is  
the fundamental origin of every axiological experience, including the ex-  
perience of thinking?”<sup>15</sup> — i.e. concerns all the evaluative experiences, in-  
cluding thinking. This experience is the encounter with the other. This  
encounter is defined as an event, giving rise to a drama whose course  
cannot be foreseen; this drama has its own time, setting, and characters.  
Moreover, the horizon of the drama is opened through an immediate  
sense of tragedy, which permeates all the modes of the other’s essence.

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 179.

<sup>13</sup> “Genezis z ducha,” in: *Świat ludzkiej nadziei*, op. cit., p. 219.

<sup>14</sup> J. Tischner, “Myślenie według wartości,” in: *Myślenie według wartości*, op. cit., pp. 481–497.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 486.

18 Tragedy is understood in line with Scheler's idea, as the destruction of, or the possibility of destroying some type of the good or a value through evil or anti-values. Yet, even if the horizon of drama begins with the phenomenon of tragedy, it also contains many other possibilities, such as the possibility of the triumph of good, the rebirth of man, etc. It is worth noting that all types of drama are possible only where "the interpersonal sphere has taken a hierarchical nature, and preferentiality has invaded the very core of human thinking."<sup>16</sup> In other words, only he who has experienced the encounter can say that he has experienced a specific good and evil, a form of tragedy, freedom, and the voice of the categorical imperative which comes to me from the other. The key word in axiology is the encounter with the other.<sup>17</sup> But we need to understand this statement properly, as it will have far-reaching consequences.

In what sense is the encounter with the other key to axiology? Generally speaking, what role does the encounter play? To explain it, Tischner combines, or rather compares the experience of the encounter with the description of Plato's cave in *The Republic* and offers an interpretation. He finds that the experience described in this text reveals that the world in which we live is not the world it can be and ought to be. The original axiological experience, therefore, does not tell us that something should exist which does not. It tells us: there is something which should not exist. To paraphrase a well-known and oft-repeated question in metaphysics, we might say: Why is there something which should not be? In specific situations it leads to questions such as: Why do the just suffer? Why did Socrates die? etc. Thus, a question arises: Why? This question, according to Tischner, originates in the light generated by the good (Greek: *agathon*). "The experience which we are attempting to describe is an experience both radically agathological and metaphysical, because it prompts us to question existence, it teaches us to distinguish plenitude from incompleteness, existence from essence, form from matter, and cause from effect."<sup>18</sup> In consequence, we should distinguish between two kinds of experience: the agathological and the axiological. Tischner considers the former to be more fundamental, as it reveals a negative aspect of all that surrounds us. It contains a message: there is something that should not be. But there is still no sense of obligation within this experience. Instead, it contains the experience of rebellion, which includes preference and an embryonic view of hierarchy. Only then, or on the basis of this experience, axiological experience emerges with its core meaning: "If you wish, you can..." Only at this point do we try to notice the specific things that need to be done,

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<sup>16</sup> "Myślenie według wartości," op. cit., p. 488.

<sup>17</sup> The encounter and its meaning within the philosophy of drama was presented in an interesting way at the end of the 1970s. In this respect, the text of "Fenomenologia spotkania" [The Phenomenology of the Encounter] is a good illustration. Tischner fully realizes its significance when he writes that "the issue of the encounter has become one of the most fundamental problems of philosophy." J. Tischner, "Fenomenologia spotkania," *Analecta Cracoviensia*, vol. 10, 1978, p. 73.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 490.



who we need to help and in what way. In other words, out of these two ex- 19  
periences, agathological experience reveals the negative aspect of all that  
surrounds us, all the deficiencies and imperfection; axiological experi-  
ence, on the other hand, illuminates events that can cope with the emer-  
gence of the tragic, but at the same time it presupposes “hope, a feeling  
of power, ... the existence of a sense of reality that reveals the values that  
can be realized here and now.”<sup>19</sup>

In *The Philosophy of Drama* and *The Controversy over the Existence of Man* agathology is one of the central themes. It can be said with no exces-  
sive exaggeration that it constitutes the axis around which or on the basis of  
which other questions are developed. To expand it and develop it, Tischner  
uses the texts of many thinkers, such as Plato, Meister Eckhardt, Hegel  
and Kierkegaard; yet a special place is reserved for the philosophers of  
dialogue: Rosenzweig and Lévinas. In creating the philosophy of drama,  
the majority of references are made to the latter, and, therefore, the role  
of the other and the encounter with the other. A fundamental word tied  
to the encounter is the “face,” introduced into modern philosophy and  
popularized by E. Lévinas. “To encounter,” emphasizes Tischner, “always  
means to be ‘face to face’.” He adds that “through the encounter we achieve  
an immediate sense of the other’s face.”<sup>20</sup> The face reveals the truth about  
the other, and as such, man is like his face. Yet it must be remembered  
that the face is not the same as the appearance. Things have appearances,  
but people have faces. It is precisely the face of the other that places us at  
the crossroads of the world; it is not possible to describe it with concepts  
we use to describe things, and in consequence, it demands a different lan-  
guage from that of ontology. For Lévinas, it is the language of ethics, for  
Tischner, the language of agathology.

The imperative “Do not kill” inherent to the Face has something  
absolute about it. The absolute (Latin: *absolvere* — to untie) undoes the ties  
with this world of things and beings, and connects with the other through  
which this world justifies itself. As such, the absolute is transcenden-  
tal. What does this mean? To answer this question, we have to com-  
bine the theme of the face and the ethical experience of “Do not kill”  
with the idea of infinity (the infinite; French — *infini*) and with desire.  
The ideas of infinity and desire are in close proximity to each other. Desire  
is open to something which cannot be absorbed by the I, by the ego, and  
which is enclosed in a whole. Because of this it overcomes egoism and  
its intrinsic aspirations toward totalization. Yet, within desire, viewed as  
the opening, there has to be a tender point which allows us to properly read  
a facial expression. Tischner emphasizes this by saying: “Desire knows  
what it wants even if it shies off... We shan’t diverge from the essence of  
Lévinas’s views when we say that desire is goodness.”<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 491.

<sup>20</sup> J. Tischner, “Fenomenologia spotkania,” op. cit., p. 74.

<sup>21</sup> J. Tischner, *Filozofia dramatu* [The Philosophy of Drama], Éditions du dialogue, Paris 1990, p. 37.

We would say, therefore, that in both Lévinas and Tischner — yet in slightly different forms — we find “biblical dramatic Platonism.” This means that Lévinas and Tischner join Plato in believing that being is not the principle of the good, but that the good is the principle of being. Yet, in the case of Lévinas and of Tischner the good loses its abstract nature and acquires the shape of the face, while in Lévinas it is the face of an orphan, a widow, and a foreigner, and in Tischner — the face of those participating in the drama of reciprocity. The effect of the good, the answer to this encounter, “awakens and delves into the goodness in man. Man wants to be good. In this willingness, that is, in this desire, he is disinterested... Being good implies doing what is good.”<sup>22</sup> In other words, opening to the infinite constitutes the desire. As suggested by these two contemporary thinkers, however, we can only open ourselves to infinity through the face of the other. The desire for good is awoken in man when he finds a form of human poverty. However, it is worth bearing in mind that such an idea of infinity has a positive connotation, which Tischner clearly emphasizes, in saying that “It does not emerge from the negation of the finite, because only nothingness could result from such a negation. An *a priori* assumption is the condition of conceiving of the finite. To conceive of the finite, one implicitly has to negate the infinite, from which it must take pride of place. Such an understanding of the infinite is similar to the idea of infinite perfection. (...) infinite perfection cannot be described through the category of being vs. existence. The idea of the good must be used.”<sup>23</sup> In consequence, metaphysics (*meta* — beyond, being vs. existence) becomes the metaphysics of the good or agathology. Through changing the infinitely perfect being into the absolute Good, we move beyond the ontological structure, to the sphere of agathology. If this is the case, then the completion of the above understanding would be a thesis which requires additional explanation, proposing that an absolute “being” exists, just like the Platonic idea of the Good. A special site where this Good is revealed is the faces of people living in the world and changing over time. It is precisely at this level, on the agathological horizon, that the human drama takes place. The face emerges on this horizon. The face cannot be mistaken for a mask or a veil, i.e. for various obstacles which hinder or prevent access to it. These obstacles stifle the presence of the good, and as a result, prevent the encounter — which to Tischner was an event in the deepest meaning of the word, because within it “the experience of the other, and thus the experience of oneself, acquires its ultimate visibility.”<sup>24</sup>

Despite many similarities, there is a fundamental difference between the understanding of the face in Lévinas and Tischner. The first emphasizes, most of all, the passive nature of the face, its poverty in the form of an orphan, a widow, or a foreigner, and the consequently asymmetrical

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., pp. 44–45.

<sup>24</sup> “Fenomenologia spotkania,” op. cit., p. 75.

nature of the I-Thou, I-other relationship, whereas Tischner says that “the face is not only passive, it not only speaks of the poverty experienced ... it also responds to poverty.”<sup>25</sup> The face emerges, following Tischner’s words, “as a gift of the agathological horizon,” that is, of the horizon on which good and evil take the shape of a drama, and drama, in turn, announces either the possibility of tragedy or the victory of man. At the same time, the face reveals various possibilities: heroism, tragedy, but also the hope of salvation. “The face is an expression of the existential movement in which man tries to justify the fact that he exists while keeping his existence protected by the good which brings him hope”<sup>26</sup> — and which sets him free.

At this stage, we might ask: from this new perspective, what is the connection between reference to the good and reference to values, or in other words, between agathology and axiology. If we carefully follow *The Philosophy of Drama* and *The Controversy over the Existence of Man* we cannot avoid the impression that Tischner’s stand becomes increasingly radical. It reaches its culmination in the description of the conversion where the good is juxtaposed with values. Tischner clearly distinguishes the good from values. “Values,” he says, “are what emerge ‘in the light’: they are ‘objective,’ rooted in the situation, given to us to admire (beauty), to execute (morality). The good is what remains in the shadow, what ‘is not of this world,’ but what governs the world of values, what ‘gives me light’ — it gives me light for my own good. ‘The good gives birth to the good.’”<sup>27</sup> Being touched by the good, being chosen, isolates man from the rest of the world. Here the discovery of the dimension of participation in the good risks becoming an object in values. After this experience man asks why. This question poses a threat to his prior axiology. Consciousness disintegrates, and in this disintegration the world of values stands opposed to the fundamental good. Tischner thinks that in this situation man has to rebel against himself, and do so in the name of hope, that is, in the name of the good situated in the future. Thus, in the controversy over the past and the future, the axiological distinguishes itself from the agathological and it stands opposed to the latter. Herein the past is an entirety which is axiological in nature, which means that it is a value in a definite world and for a definite world. The interesting thing is that the basis of this world is the axiological-I, “which is the subject of relative values *vis-à-vis* the experiential world of values.”<sup>28</sup> The axiological-I of a man astray emerges as something which has lost its meaning. This is indeed a tragic situation. “An old man” in this situation reveals the axiological justification, he defends himself, but the moment of transition is a suspension between despair and hope. This is a critical situation — he who experiences it has to make a choice. We should point out that a special role of the other is also revealed here. The experience of the other on the agathological

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<sup>25</sup> *Filozofia dramatu*, op. cit., p. 69.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>27</sup> *Spór o istnienie człowieka*, op. cit., p. 176.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 205.

22 horizon prompts a change from “the old man” to “the new one.” Tischner points out: “It has to be said: the Good ‘engenders’ goodness, goodness ‘prompts’ the Good to be even better. Both ‘engenderment’ and ‘prompting’ have the meaning of ‘mercy.’ Nothing happens out of compulsion, but out of freedom.”<sup>29</sup> An inevitable question arises: What happens to axiology? Does it perish, disappear, or change? Does the hierarchy of values undergo a transformation or reshuffling, and if so, how does this happen? The issue is not entirely unequivocal. It seems that there are many interpretations. One thing seems certain, however: axiology and the axiological-I are subordinated to agathology, which determines the scope of possible interpretation. Let us repeat once again, this — so to speak — reshuffling of the background always happens with the other’s significant participation. Moreover, we can risk the statement that the other is frequently the initiator of this tremor.

Finally, I would like to return to a basic question: “Who is man?” but considered from this new perspective. Here we find old and new themes. Yet most of all, we find the statement that man is a person. How should we understand this concept? The question, to my mind, is crucial, because — as we know — the meaning of the word person (Latin: *persona*) is ambiguous. We know about the tradition of the substantialist understanding of a person; following the classical definition, a person is an individual substance of a rational nature. But there exist other ways of comprehending it, that is why this concept should be explained a bit more at this stage. As we have observed, Tischner uses the concept of the person from the very beginning of his work, but he gives it a specific meaning. At both the early and later stages of his work, he retains its anti-substantialist understanding. But especially at the later stage of his philosophical activity, Tischner gives it a clear meaning, which draws from one of the original Greek meanings of this concept, and from the tradition of Greek drama. Therein, a person (Greek: *prosopon*) initially signified a mask. The mask, in turn, initially implied something other than what the Polish meaning of the word suggests. The mask did not hide the truth of man; on the contrary, it revealed it.<sup>30</sup>

Therefore, a person reveals the truth about himself, about what he really is, when he participates in a drama. A drama, on the other hand, from Tischner’s viewpoint, is what happens between a man and a man. The proper sphere of drama is a hierarchical agathological-axiological one, the sphere of the good and evil, of values and anti-values. Moreover, every drama has a specific time, which differs from the time of biology and physics. In view of this, how does a person have to be constructed, what structure must he have to participate in the drama? What are the conditions of

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 262.

<sup>30</sup> For an explanation of this notion and a discussion on the concept of a person, see: J. Tischner, *Filozofia człowieka. Od ontologii do metafizyki człowieka* [The Philosophy of Man; From Ontology to the Metaphysics of Man], Krakow 1986, p. 63 etc.; and J. Tischner, “Idea osoby” [The Idea of the Person], in: *Myslenie w zywiole piekna* [Thinking in the Realm of Beauty], selected and edited by W. Bonowicz, Krakow 2005, pp. 159–173.

being a person? To solve this issue, Tischner uses a concept he once used 23 before for this purpose: a Hegelian concept modified through the philosophers of dialogue. First of all, man must be a being-for-himself, he must be free and autonomous; but secondly, he must be himself through another being-for-oneself. The key in this phrase is the word “through,” as it points to the multiplicity of possible relations between the people constituting the drama, such as: being through the other or others, despite them, against them, along with them etc. Our being-for-ourselves through others has a specific past and future. If every drama is with the other, i.e. is necessarily a drama of reciprocity, then the expression “with the other” allows for a whole array of possibilities, and any attempt to enumerate them all is destined to failure. At most, we can delineate the cases which reveal polarities, and thus the scope of possibilities. Tischner does so, and observes that, on the one hand, the extreme situation of “a monad without windows,” of Job who experiences his otherness among others, and on the other hand, he shows a situation in which a person, a monad, is entirely open toward the other. In the latter case, Lévinas’s complete being for the other, described in the example of the hostage, dedication reaches the limits of self-destruction. This situation reveals the contradiction between the idea of being-for-oneself and being-for-the-other. It must be said that Tischner was fully aware of this, and to overcome it he drew from the reflections of Paul Ricoeur, who did not generally question this extreme possibility in the polemic with Lévinas. As we know, he did not reject the dimension of being-for-the-other, but he emphasized that its condition was the being-for-oneself. Therefore, “the acceptance of yourself is midway between a flight into nothingness (being-against-oneself) and a flight into God, between reification and deification. This acceptance would be impossible without the experience of the good.”<sup>31</sup>

Consequently, in order to be himself and to live, man needs his outer interpersonal sphere of being with others — just like his inner sphere of consciousness — to become the agathological-axiological sphere. The latter is extremely important. Tischner even describes it as “a space of man’s birth.” It is the inner space of consciousness. It has an agathological sense and it is organized according to the axiological principle of importance; in other words, it is hierarchical. Moreover, one of its features is the fact that it is constantly sensitive to the possibility of evil, which results in the possibility of failure, guilt and despair. In this sphere, “despair becomes present. It is not there yet, but it looks as if it already were: it is the ‘dark power’ which is constantly defeated by hope. Hope emerges from this conflict as a carrier of the good. Sensitivity to good and evil means that the inner sphere of consciousness is agathological by nature.”<sup>32</sup> It is precisely in this agathological sphere that man “is born” and lives, and above all, where he becomes himself as a human being. At the same time, the two basic experiences of this sphere are despair and hope. Despair is a radical negation

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., pp. 265–266.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 278.

24 and it delves so deep that it touches the very depths of a person. Despair “tells” man, and only him, that he is evil. Thus, to understand despair, we have to bring in the concept of evil. “All a person’s defenses against despair are in fact the defenses against evil. It has to be said: the essence of drama is less about despair than evil.”<sup>33</sup> On the other hand, hope emerges from within man’s experience — hope which is often associated with the presence of another man. It allows him to face despair and evil, and to overcome them.

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 282.