

# Man Facing Values or Man Facing Man?

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**T**ischner seems to reconcile the ethics of values with a dialogical perspective. Is this a conscious attempt, a creative overcoming of a tension between two different paradigms of thinking, or is it merely an inconsistency that comes out of faithfulness to his first love, in spite of following the latter?

## Exposition

Tischner's question dealt with man. However, when we focus our attention on the answers that philosophers have given to this question, we are filled with dismay. It appears that the answers are so diverse that the only reaction must be the feeling of helplessness. Although we may escape it by stating – in the face of this overwhelming diversity – that a permanent, distinctive feature of man is this inquiring about oneself. Still, this otherwise true recognition conceals a more fundamental truth: man is not so much a being constituted to

<sup>134</sup> question, to inquire, as a being constituted by being questioned or – as it was most often stated – called. Philosophers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – if they did not evade radical inquiries about man – agreed in this matter, though they seem not to have known it. However, today, when we look at the most significant achievements of 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophy – i.e. phenomenology, the philosophy of existence inspired by Kierkegaard and the dialogical thought that culminated in the philosophy of Emmanuel Lévinas – we see that they all say the same, though in languages so diverse that it requires certain effort to perceive it. They all speak about calling only in front of which man obtains his particularity.

According to phenomenological ethics, man is called by values to fulfill them, that is, make their matter concrete in his acts, introduce it into the real world. According to the Heideggerian analytics of Dasein, the mode of being characteristic of man, the calling comes from within man, though it speaks to him from above calling him away from losing himself in the dull being under the dictate of the omnipotent One, and calling him to being on the ground of the most personal possibility of being oneself. On the other hand, according to dialogical thinking, a calling comes from the face of the Other, the access to which – as Lévinas declares – is ethics.

## Posing the problem

Phenomenological ethics of values, Heideggerian analyses of Dasein and the endeavors to conceive of being were close to Tischner, though – I think – the most important thing for the development of his thought was dialogical inspiration. However, both Heidegger and dialogical thinkers definitely reject this philosophy of values in which man does not face being – as Heidegger would like – nor does he face another man – as the latter would prefer – but places him in front of objective, general values. In contrast, Tischner seems to reconcile the ethics of values with the dialogical perspective in his proposal for understanding man. Is this a conscious attempt, a creative overcoming of tension between two different paradigms of thought, or is it merely an inconsistency that comes out of faithfulness to his first love, in spite of following the latter? Can this endeavor – though it appears not only unjustified, but even reckless – help us understand man better?

Tischner follows phenomenologists' thought, which says that for the man equipped with a characteristic axiological organ, values carry a demand to realize their substance. Man is to serve values which – themselves helpless – need man to intercede for them so that they may enter the real world and define it. Man and his dignity are perceived here as standing between the ideal world of helpless values and the real world of man's actions and their power to define reality. Tischner writes: "The key to ethics is the experience of values" (D. Hildebrand, J.A. Kłoczowski, J. Paściak, J. Tischner, *Wobec wartości* [Facing Values], Poznań 1982, p.52) and further

on: “man lives amid values toward which his aspirations, thoughts and actions are directed” (p. 54), and further: “ethics as a discipline is intended, above all, as the study of values” (ibidem), and further: “ethics is, above all, a tentative theory of values” (pp. 56-57) and further: “it is ... a theory of man perceived as ‘material’ for values” (p.55), and further: “hope directs man toward the world of values” (ibidem), and further: “values are objective, that is, they stand before us as a task given to us, something that has an impact on us, something that obliges us to act” (p.60), and further: “the invisible world of values becomes an extraordinary strength for man, served by everything in him” (ibidem), and further: “man aims in life at making values – to which he is subject – find their embodiment in the world” (p. 54). As Tischner claims, man in defense of values (eg. the value of justice), is ready to die (cf. p. 60). 135

However, let us state this clearly and firmly: the space “man – value” is not the “man – another man” space. The “man – value” relation is a subject-object relation and does not lead him out of the horizon of his own self. Tischner writes: man “relating himself to values outside of himself builds himself as a value – a special value that is called I” (p. 55). In the dialogical paradigm this whole attempt to think man from the perspective of values is totally unacceptable. Man who – as Tischner puts it – “stands facing the world of values” (ibidem), does not “face man.”

Once we have managed to reject the theses formulated by Tischner, we have to stand up to others which Tischner propounds alongside the former. Let us listen.

He writes: “The key to axiology is the encounter with the other” (*Myślenie według wartości* [Thinking in Values], Kraków 1982, p. 489), and further on: “the ethical experience appears when man discovers that he stands facing someone similar to himself – another man”. (*Wobec ...*, p. 51) and further: “ethics ... – we can state without exaggeration – is the theory of the experience of another man ... It is the presence of the other that the fundamental ‘you ought to’ springs from.” And further: (p.56) “the original source of the ethical experience is not experiencing values as such, but the discovery that next to us has appeared another man. ... It is neither values, nor norms or commandments that are ‘primal,’ but the presence of the other man” (p.85) Tischner asks: “what experience is the fundamental source of all our axiological experiences?” and answers: “the encounter with another man” (cf. *Thinking in Values*, p. 486). Now it is the Other, not a value, that calls. We read: “there is something in the Other that calls out to be saved.” An encounter occurs only when we gather evidence of this call and the sources it springs from. The Other seems by his very presence to say: *if you want to, you may* (p. 487; a page earlier Tischner wrote: “A value seems to speak to me: *if you want to, you may*, now he writes that it is the Other that seems to say: *if you want to, you may*”). That is why only he who experienced the encounter “experienced originally the voice of the categorical imperative that from the Other came to him. Only he who encountered [the Other], may truly sacrifice himself.” (p. 489)

The above and earlier quoted expressions not only appear in the same works, but – though they seem to be mutually exclusive – they neighbor each other. How is this possible? Sensitivity to values or blindness to values are not the same as sensitivity or blindness to another man. For “standing up for” powerless values which “ask” to be realized is not the same as standing up for another man who calls me with his misery. My relationship with a value is not the same as my relationship with the Other. A value’s calling is not the same as the Other’s calling. And my response to a value’s calling is not the same as my response to the Other’s calling. I do not respond to a value, nor am I responsible for it – I respond to the Other and I am responsible for him. I do not dress the wound of an injured man in order to realize the value of mercy. In short, “thinking in values” is not “thinking in terms of my neighbor.” The evangelical ethos of love does not lead me toward values but toward my neighbor. One who cannot reach the Face, seems to need values. Therefore, the point is not to “return to the values themselves,” but to hear the calling of a man. Not just any man, but “this man,” my neighbor.

Tischner’s intention, even if not fully conscious and as such not explicitly articulated, is, I think, to open and enter the dialogical paradigm of thought in such a way that the world of values is not turned down. As a result we obtain something that does not make a coherent whole. However, our task is to defend this thinking, not to reject it as inconsistent.

The first attempt to accustom oneself to the contradiction shown above, the contradiction between “thinking in values” and “thinking in terms of the Other” (the Other as a concrete other man) could follow the tracks of Tischner himself as he entrusted the role of a mediator between I and the Other to values. Enumerating various values, he wrote: “all these values are values through which man refers to another man” (p. 55). And further on: “He and I stand facing each other, illuminated by the shine of manifold values that mark out paths to each other and from each other (p. 51). Values are the prism through which we perceive the Other, “through them – Tischner wrote – I see the Other, as well as myself” (p. 57). And further he stated that “in fact, while articulating the word ‘value,’ we have man in mind – man seen in the particular light of a given value” (ibidem). And one more statement: “Fundamentally and primarily, ethical values appear as values that define my attitude toward another man” (p. 58).

However, giving values – first of all ethical values – the role of a mediator between I and the Other – even though it may seem just to the common sense – from the point of view of the philosophy of dialogue, is unacceptable. The I–Thou relation is direct and it does not allow for any mediation. The Face speaks to me directly, without referring to such entities as values. I encounter you Face to Face, immediately, and not “through” values. And it is not thanks to the light of the value of mercy, nor thanks to the power of its demand that I respond to your calling. It is not this value that determines my attitude and it is not this value that I respond to. I respond to you. Values understood as mediating the relation

between I and the Other cannot be reconciled with the assumptions of <sup>137</sup> the dialogical paradigm.

In the second attempt to deal with the contradiction shown in the beginning, we shall follow the track of understanding a value not as something general, that directs its call to all people, but as absolutely individual, constituting the axiological substance of a concrete person, the substance that also requires realization, but from this one concrete person. Such a value can be found both in Max Scheler (as *Wertperson*) and Nicolai Hartmann (as *Persönlichkeitswert*), as well as Tischner himself (as “the axiological I”). This value, while constituting the axiological predetermination of an individual person, in its demand to be realized is close to the call of conscience, which according to Heidegger calls a person to become one’s true self, although in the case of Heidegger it is difficult to speak of a concrete substance given to realize it. The suitability of my existential choices consists not in achieving the suitable, predetermined quality, but in their “mineness,” that is, they are made one’s own with all the seriousness due to them. In the positive mode of solicitude, this *Fürsorge*, solicitude “for the Other,” *Dasein* – Heidegger claims – allows the Other to be from the depths of his most personal possibility of being. (cf. *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie, Edward Robinson, Blackwell Publishing 1962, §29 and 66)

Tischner speaks about this value of one’s own being both as the value of my being as well as the value of the Other’s being. As far as I know, he does not use the phrase “the axiological Thou” next to the expression “the axiological I”; still, I think, we can justly use that expression. Tischner writes: “In ethics the other man is a value, I myself am a value” (p.52), a human person is a value here, “it is a value,” Tischner writes, “that became a person” (p.87) and – another quotation – “it is a primordial, absolute value” (ibidem), it is this value that directs toward us its demand to be respected and, above all, to be saved. We may once again quote: “there is something in the Other that calls out to be saved.” (*Myślenie według wartości*, p. 487)

However, if “I myself” am in the same measure this kind of “absolute value” as the other man, then we appear not only comparable, but almost equal. Then, however, asymmetry collapses: the irreversibility of the I–Thou relation, the irreversibility that decides upon the disinterestedness of my responsibility for the Other. Ethics is then squandered.

So now collapses our second attempt to become accustomed to the contradiction shown in the beginning. For the I–Thou relation is a pre-relation which not only does not allow for any mediation, but for which ascribing values to Thou would be – paraphrasing Heidegger – “the greatest blasphemy imaginable against his being.” But man’s life does not entirely remain within this relation. There is – for example – no justice in it: I owe everything to the Other. But in general we are not alone, alone with the Other; there is the Third one with whom, as Lévinas showed, appears the necessity of justice, the necessity to compare and evaluate,

138 the necessity of measure and order, including the axiological order, and thus the necessity of values. Together there appears a new possibility to understand what seems to be a contradiction in Tischner.

The third attempt is then directed toward the Third person, who is also my neighbor, at the same time being the Other for the Other. Now we understand that values do not direct me toward the Other, do not mediate between me and him, nor is the Other from this pre-relation a value. Values appear together with the Third, out of tempering the unusual privilege of the Other. Values follow this pre-relation, they are the bridling of its possessiveness, they are the means of sharing love which the Other originally awakes in us. However, without opening to this pre-relation, without opening to this first love, values have no significance. It is “my relation with the other man as my neighbor,” Lévinas wrote, “that gives the meaning to my relation with all the others.” Justice, then, does not consist in bridling the original possessiveness of I. If this were so, not only would its origin be negative but it would constantly be something problematic. Justice occurs when I bridle my readiness to give everything to the Other for the sake of the Third person, who is the Other to the Other, and the other Other to me. This is the place where values are on the right place. Thus they are not and cannot be something primeval. Its justified existence presupposes a previous experience of the Face and experiencing the readiness to give everything, including one’s own life, to the Other. Without direct access to the Face of the Other, values truly become – as Heidegger wrote – “a faded disguise of the objectification of being.” For values cannot lead me toward the Other, as no objectification leads to him. They can only obscure him.

One might also add that, in directing their demand to be realized toward all people, values constitute reciprocity between persons, that is: I should be just to you, and you should be just to me. But this implies that there cannot be room for values in the pre-relation which is drastically asymmetrical, even though this is where the ground for them is laid. This reciprocity is allowed for only with the Third person, with the order that the presence of the Third person requires.

To sum up, we must admit that Tischner was right to insist on values in a manner incomprehensible for us, despite his opening to the dialogical paradigm. It is only now that we have found the proper place for them.

## Postscript

We still remember the horror of the madness of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and we still cherish the hope that the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be less cruel than that past century. However, should not we rather expect with more certainty that it will be worse? Are the passions that led to the crises of the 20<sup>th</sup> century waning or being relieved in a more civilized way? Is the mode of being that brought about the cataclysms of the 20<sup>th</sup> century decreasing or is it being strengthened? For it is not my, your or his doing evil that leads us

to a catastrophe, but my, your and his mode of being which in general <sup>139</sup> consists in not doing good. What to make of the fact that the evil done by me and by you is – we believe – little. Truly, it is little compared with the abundance of the good not done. We become monsters not through the evil we do, but through the abundance of good that we do not do. A man who in his youth decided to devote his strength to mankind, to come to the aid of the poor, finally derives satisfaction from amassing money. But not for the poor – for himself. To be a man for 50, 60, 70 years only to give up to the gravity of one's own self, to care only for what is mine – that is a tragedy. And nobody does more harm to a man than what he does to himself.

A man who is satisfied with wealth and power over others is not a man to save the world. He is not even free enough to save himself from the trap of his own self-interest.

In this world to meet someone like Tischner was a special occasion. Anyone who met him was given a gift, invited to take part in joy. There was a kind of basic positive emotion in Tischner, a positive mood, a positive idea. And he infected others with this emotion, he aroused positive motivation. However, this does not mean that he was uncritical. I think that in the Christian manner he was full of pity for the angry dogs, but their negative emotions, their “concerns” were not his emotions, his “concerns.” He was concerned with the Other, but not to follow him with a stone in his hand. A stone is for building a home, not for throwing at others. Tischner constructed a home. Tidying this home was for him neither a cataclysm nor an act of destruction.

In a country where aggressive resentment always comes to power, someone like Tischner seems superfluous. And yet we do not need anything more than positive emotions, a positive idea, positive motivation. For the circle of thinking people, people who philosophize, it was Tischner who brought the crucial message: enough of the I–philosophy, enough of “the philosophy of the self” – the proper paradigm of thinking is the philosophy of the other person, the philosophy of Thou: I am, for Thou art.

## Discussion

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KAROL TARNOWSKI: I will begin with the points that I agree with. First, like Jacek Filek I too think that the dialogical relation is not of the same character as the relation toward a value, and calling Thou or I a value is to my mind unacceptable. I is not a value, it is rather a subject to whom values appear. Therefore to say that the axiological I is to itself a

<sup>140</sup> privileged value is a kind of paralogism with which something must be done. Second, I agree that there is a characteristic directness between I and Thou that cannot be substituted by anything. I see this directness as creating bonds of communication, understanding, mutual consideration. This is something irreplaceable. I like using the term “presence” here. The Other demands my presence, my presence for him.

JACEK FILEK: Sometimes I say “presence facing”...

KAROL TARNOWSKI: But this is where my agreement ends, as I will argue with most of your statements. First of all, despite the characteristic directness of this relation, I do not approach the Other empty-handed. I come to him in fact with values. If I give bread to a poor person, I give him a certain material value. Even as we are now debating with each other, there is a dialogical relation between us – one can say to another: “look, what a nice picture!” These values circulate among us and can be the expression of the attitude toward Thou. So in a sense, this dialogical relation is direct, and in another crucial sense it is mediated by values in a way it is mediated by language. Thus, it is not that these mediations are secondary to the ethical relation. On the contrary: in general they constitute its essential element. Values enter the I–Thou relation directly, as its vehicle or expression. If one abided by the statement that values are always for the Third party, it can be said that this Third party is always between I and Thou. This may also have a theological connotation.

Further, I think that values are more than just a continuation of the self. Values are elements of interpersonal language which always conveys some ethical intention. I may want to play the piano beautifully for you, but also simply for people – this is also a certain ethical gesture. Various creativity, but also simple services may contain ethical intentions, which would be unable to realize themselves at all were it not for these specific values. Therefore, I think that interpreting values in the light of the idea of justice is highly insufficient. Values are to my mind both the expression of the human intrinsic need to create – calling this egoism would be absurd – as well as an expression of the need to share the fruit of this creativity with others. This fruit may be, for example, bringing others up to contemplate the world. All in all, I entirely disagree with Heidegger’s and Lévinas’s depreciation of the notion of values. Values are not the outcome of subjectivization, they are not objects in the common understanding of objects of sensory or scientific perception, nor are they some kind of esthetic objects. Nothing of this sort. They truly exist – one often says “objectively,” but this notion does not make much sense. They truly exist and truly demand to be appreciated or realized. Truth is something that should be appreciated and apprehended, of course not against other people, not to the detriment of other people. Beauty should be noticed and introduced into man’s life. This is not an abstract duty soaring somewhere among mathematical objects, but a duty from man’s world. And appreci-

ating values, if one understands them in such a way, is not a blasphemy <sup>141</sup> against being and the Other, nor against God as Heidegger would like it to be. For it is only because man seeks God – if he does seek God – who therefore is important to man, that the latter may also notice, as in the Bible, that God comes to him. The meaning of God is of the relational and axiological character, although with a reservation that I expressed in the beginning: that the I–Thou relation is not the I–value relation.

ADAM HERNAS: I think that an implicit axiom for the above-presented reflections is Lévinas's ethics, and especially this critical point called prerelation in the radical version from *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*. Professor Filek speaks of an asymmetrical relation, so he is not concerned with a dialogical principle of any kind, but with the core of Lévinas's philosophy. So the problem posed here concerns the question of whether in the horizon of Lévinas's asymmetrical prerelation values can exist at all. And this entirely changes the optics of the above reflections, for we are no longer concerned with agreeing axiology with some specific kind of philosophy of dialogue, or with dialogical thinking in general, but with the question of whether it is possible to think in values from the perspective of such extreme ethics. In fact, Professor Filek traces possible tangent points of the ordered world of values and the world of a certain ethical drama. His thesis is that values do not belong here, they are something from another dimension. The exit point is that values are possible in the social world in which we meet the Third person, and here Lévinas speaks about justice. Of course, one might wonder as to whether justice is a value, perhaps the fundamental value. However, Lévinas does not speak of values, he only speaks of justice. Thus the whole problem is very specific: Is it possible to think in values in the perspective of a radical ethical situation, in the perspective of the encounter with the Other?

JACEK FILEK: I think I should put certain matters right so as to avoid misunderstandings. First, your voices in this discussion refer to a point which goes beyond the initial thesis as well as the thesis on this tension in Tischner, with which we somehow have to manage. All the questions raised concern the attempt to reconcile thinking in values with thinking in terms of one's neighbor or the Other. I rejected such an attempt. In my view, this attempt is impossible. But I did not pose the question: What is a value? I did not pose the question: What is a relation? What is closeness? Although I am not a historian of philosophy, the text that we are now discussing is historical. It refers to certain existing philosophies, to the phenomenological philosophy of values. For we know what a value is from Scheler and Hartmann. I do not think that Scheler and Hartmann ultimately settled the problem of values, but it is they that put thinking in values in a form that is philosophically satisfactory. And if philosophers of dialogue or Heidegger discuss thinking in values, they have in mind the phenomenological philosophy of values. And when Tischner speaks about values, he speaks about

<sup>142</sup> them being influenced by Ingarden and phenomenological literature. This is a very specific understanding of values. I assume this understanding, for it inspired Tischner and was the subject of discussion for the philosophers of dialogue and Heidegger. I also think that this phenomenological theory of values is, so to speak, the most valuable theory of values. The notion of value is an exhausted notion, an ideological notion, a common-sense notion that we cannot get rid of, and yet using it resembles philosophical babble. Only phenomenological philosophers speak about values in a responsible way. We distinguish values and goods. I meet my neighbor and I can offer him certain goods. We divide values into values *per se* and concrete values. A concrete value will be, for example, the value of the friendship between John and Adam. We may observe this value on the relation that binds them, on John or Adam. On the other hand, values *per se* are certain ideal entities that are ontologically troublesome and we cannot discuss them at the moment. If we remember that while speaking about values I do not use a common-sense notion, then my rejection of thinking in values does not mean that I am headed toward demonism of some sort. Simply, thus understood, values are rejected both by Heidegger and philosophers of dialogue. On the other hand, I do not describe the dialogical relation – I assume it, as it has been presented in the dialogical literature. Buber is quite explicit here: this is an entirely direct relation. There are no mediating notions, no mediating entities. However, the I–values relation is a subject–object relation.

KAROL TARNOWSKI: Of course, but it becomes such secondarily, as an object of philosophical thinking. When I give bread to a poor person, I enter a direct relation with Thou by means of a certain good that assumes a value.

JACEK FILEK: When I enter the relation with the value of mercy, I feel this value, I experience it. I see that this value demands to be realized in this concrete situation when I meet a hungry person. And responding to the calling of this value, I share bread with the Other. That is this mediation that Buber was incapable of imagining.

KAROL TARNOWSKI: Let us see how it looks. I see a poor person and I give him money. Of course I do not think about values. I give bread to the Other, I do it directly, but nonetheless – whether I am aware of it or not – I somehow mediate my relation with the Other through what I bring for him in my hands. My hands are not empty. And bread, of course, is a value...

JACEK FILEK: Bread is a good.

KAROL TARNOWSKI: Right, but a good is determined by values – this is what Scheler's philosophy of values says. I think that in the discussed article there is a certain philosophical procedure substituted for pre-

philosophical procedure, as if the pre-philosophical procedure, that is a <sup>143</sup> common, everyday activity, required an arduous intellectual balancing act. Nothing of this sort. In everyday life values enter the directness of the I–Thou relation. And the fact whether Buber agrees with it, whether Lévinas thinks so, does not concern me. I am interested in how it really is. It seems that the text under discussion obliges us not only to determine whether Tischner was right or wrong. I agree that he made the problem easier for himself. I also fully agree with the first sentences of the article which say that the subject is called. This is a crucial issue. Here I can give my total agreement. If we were to analyze calling as such, we could talk about values' calling as well as the Other's calling, which is obviously more fundamental, but not the only one.

JACEK FILEK: These are absolutely separate ways. I will follow Lévinas in stating that the calling comes from the face of the Other, and not from values. And there can be no talk of cohesion or similarity between them.

KAROL TARNOWSKI: These kinds of calling are not similar but analogical. If an artist creates a painting, he is undoubtedly a subject called by some kind of values which become concrete for him while painting. Creating is calling on the part of values. This appears obvious to me.

MICHAŁ BARDEL: I have the impression that all the difficulty comes from the fact that our example with giving bread is one-sided. We may give bread to someone who needs it, either entering a relation with him, or not. The action is exactly the same, our subjective feeling of a well-done duty may be identical. But giving bread to a poor person may not be a dialogical relation. I have a feeling that Karol Tarnowski too easily admits the possibility that a dialogical relation will appear. The fact that we are sitting here and talking, that we are listening and responding to one another does not at all imply that we are entering a dialogical relation with each other. A dialogical relation is something specific, ephemeral and – at least in Buber – extremely exclusive, rare, a fleeting glimmer that rapidly disappears, and then we again return to the subject–object relation. As we sit here, we are in the subject–object relation, despite all the liking we have for each other. The dialogical relation happens to us from time to time. And then, when we enter it, values recede into the background.

KAROL TARNOWSKI: But in such a case, while giving the Other bread outside the relation, do I treat him as an object? That is a tremendous simplification.

MICHAŁ BARDEL: I treat him not as an object, but in an object–like manner. I give him bread, I focus my attention on him, he is in the centre of my consciousness, he is the object of my act – an object in the philo-

144 sophical, Cartesian sense. Tischner's *Filozofia dramatu* [The Philosophy of Drama] says that people around us are a part of the scene; we sit at the table, talk, we pass them in the street, and only from time to time there is drama between us. We do not enter the drama with everyone who sits next to us only because he is there. We do not enter the relation with everyone to whom we talk, even seriously and profoundly.

KAROL TARNOŃSKI: If we stick to the notion of the encounter that we have in Marcel and Buber, then an encounter is truly something very rare. But if we start from ethical relations in the Levinian sense, then there is not talk about an exceptional encounter: every relation with the Face is an encounter, and in every such encounter I should offer the world, i.e. a value, to the Other.

MICHAŁ BARDEL: We should settle how we understand a relation: according to Lévinas or Buber? In the latter case, a relation requires total directness. In fact, in each of the philosophers of dialogue this relation takes a different shape. Surely, Tischner's drama is something quite different from Buber's I–Thou relation. Tischner's notion is much broader: there is a scene of the drama. In Buber the scene (or, what is meant by “the scene” in Tischner) is excluded from the relation. In the I–Thou relation the scene disappears. There is only Thou who fills all my horizon.

PIOTR AUGUSTYŃIAK: I would like to come back to the problem of value and to what you have said about the theories of values according to Scheler, Hartmann and Ingarden as the point of departure for Tischner's thinking. I have the impression that when Tischner refers to Lévinas and Heidegger, he is aware of the fact that phenomenologically understood values, as they were described by phenomenologists, are indefensible. In *Thinking in Values*, Tischner says: “The notion of values intertwines with subjectivism and nihilism. The efforts of Scheler, Hartmann and other phenomenologists are to no avail. The idea of the object is inseparable from the idea of the subject. The more we underscore the object-like character of a value, the more the subject will appear. Axiology, instead of opening the way beyond the sphere of the subject, will affirm its subjectivity.” And in fact this is exactly what you say in your article when you state that: “The ‘man–value’ relation is a subject-object relation, and does not lead him out of the horizon of his own self.” So I think that Tischner is aware of this impossibility...

JACEK FILEK: Is he aware of it permanently or at times?

PIOTR AUGUSTYŃIAK: I do not know. Yet there are moments when he realizes it and I have the impression that when he speaks about values he tries to formulate anew this inherited theory of values or even formulate his own positive program. It seems to me that the phenomenological

theory of values is unacceptable for Tischner, or not entirely acceptable.<sup>145</sup> And when he affirmatively speaks about man's reference to values and thus the strengthened self, he means something quite different than object-like value and subject-like self.

In conclusion I may again quote the same Tischner article: "A classical axiological text is a description of man in the cave from Plato's *Republic*. Plato does not speak about object-like values or valuable objects and yet his description is deeply axiological in character." Tischner searches after the origin of evaluation, after arranging certain situations and challenges in a hierarchy, but he searches outside the theory he inherited. I think that this is something worth considering in Tischner, which you do not fully express.

JACEK FILEK: I think that the same goes for Karol Tarnowski: we are dealing here with a certain intuitive notion of value. But I do not know any reconstruction of a new conception of values on the basis of Tischner's works. Nor have I tried it myself.

But I have not answered Adam Hernas yet. As Jacek Filek, privately, and not as someone who in abstract terms considers the problem, I attempt to understand what Lévinas told us and I think that it is the most important thing that happened in the second half of 20<sup>th</sup> century. And it is true that the solution which I find for this tension that I have always felt in Tischner's thinking is Levinian in character. Justice may and should be treated as a value. As the most prominent value. In all catalogues of values we always find the value of justice. Justice occurs in two different positions. First, it is justice that I do to the Other and it means that I give him everything. On the other hand, social justice, distributive justice appears with the Third person. And this is Lévinas's concept. As this justice is in fact a value, my suggestion is that in such a case, other values also appear at this same level, for in closeness, in a relation or pre-relation I give everything and no values are needed. Of course such a relation may not exist, but we read about it in Lévinas. I give everything and do not have to count anything. I do not have to be able to count. When the Third person appears I begin to come up with ways out, I begin to calculate, count, compare the incomparable, as Lévinas puts it. And here measure emerges, and Aristotelian virtues and values understood phenomenologically appear. This is the solution that Lévinas suggests which solves the problem in Tischner. Personally I tend to accept such a solution. I cannot find a better one.

ADAM HERNAS: Note that Lévinas does not show the way from responsibility to justice. The social world, the world of justice, is a kind of postulate which in a way results from the responsibility for the Other. Lévinas also tries to think from within the asymmetrical ethical relation about the common world of interpersonal relations. Therefore, a question arises: How can one leave the situation of a hostage stigmatized

146 with responsibility and return to the world of simple social relations? I am willing to defend the thesis that in Tischner, in fact, there is no this pre-ethical relation. Please note that in *Spór o istnienie człowieka* [The Controversy over the Existence of Man], Lévinas's conception is thoroughly criticized where it promotes the absolute disinterestedness of the sacrifice for the Other. In this sense in Tischner there is no necessity to look for the transition from some pre-ethical dimension to the world of values, nor to reconcile these two. In fact, one can say that from the beginning Tischner thinks both agathologically and axiologically. These are not two different worlds: a radical ethical event and a return to the normal world with a stamp of this event. However, this is so in Lévinas, as he considers man to bear responsibility for the Other – not for the Third person – as the eternal burden. It is – let us state it outright – a legal responsibility in the biblical sense. Meanwhile, only under this condition is the world of justice possible. Yet Lévinas does not show ways of transition. The hostage is a hostage to the death. It is completely uncertain how he could return to life.

JACEK FILEK: In Buber it is really true that man wanders from the sphere of the I–Thou relation to the I–It, and that he returns to the relation as if it were a spring, and then sinks into “the world of It” again, and exists there somehow without losing the ultimate spiritual balance. And when he ceases to visit the relation, this source, he is sure to die spiritually. I go out to a news-stand to buy a newspaper, and I meet a newsagent as It, not Thou. In fact, it cannot be otherwise. In Buber it is empirical wandering. But in Lévinas it is quite different. He does not describe this event. There is no such event. There is no empirical transition. The Third person does not appear empirically next to the Other. The Third person is immediately in the eyes, in the face of the Other. We can find all this already in *Totality and Infinity*: the Third one, justice, asymmetry. We cannot wait for the event which will throw us outside closeness, as this event is not of an empirical character. In closeness, in the exclusiveness of the relation the Same–the Other, the Third person is there from the beginning, there are all Third persons there, all humankind. I have no chance to close myself, nor do I have the possibility chance to give everything to the Other. This Other, the Third person does not appear later. He is there at once. I have to count and divide at once. What I like here – though I do not know whether it really is so – is that, for Lévinas, the appearance of justice, the whole axiological order is determined by something fundamental, something basically positive, which may simply be called love. He says that instead of the word “responsibility,” he would eagerly use the word “love,” if it were not so ambiguous. Therefore justice has basically a positive origin. It consists not in bridling one's greed – as it is in Hobbes – not in civilizing one's egoism, but in bridling my readiness to give everything to the Other on account of the Third person. This origin of justice is something essential and thoroughly Christian.

DOBROŚLAW KOT: You write about the I–Other pre-relation. I would like to know what the character of this “pre,” this primordial nature is. We can speak about primordial nature in manifold orders. This relation is “pre” with regard to what? 147

JACEK FILEK: According to Lévinas it is “pre” with regard to the social order, the axiological order, consciousness, knowledge, cognition... this is difficult to imagine. But constituting consciousness, self-consciousness, certain patterns come later.

DOBROŚLAW KOT: Later with regard to this relation. But in the temporal sense?

JACEK FILEK: Later with regard to closeness, with regard to standing “face to face.”

DOBROŚLAW KOT: I think that here the idea of the “pure” subject appears, which is in fact void, in every sense undetermined, and the only thing which can receive this revelation of the Face. But what should we do with the subject which is already shaped somehow and enters a relation? As – after all – he has some cognitive order. If I were blind and deaf, I would not notice a beggar asking for bread, as I would neither hear nor see him. Is it not true that if we assume that this pre-relation precedes everything, then this is in fact an abstract idea, and not some concrete, factual experience?

JACEK FILEK: I cannot answer this entirely with Lévinas. It is not that I, empirically, as an individual, do not exist, but the constitution of the consciousness of the self is of course later than the appearance of Thou. And as Lévinas says, we are at first not in the nominative case, but in the accusative case, and truly first some Thou before me must turn to me many times, must touch me, call me and only then the later structure of the consciousness of the self, the self-consciousness may take shape. I can explain it thus on the common-sense level. I exist, I am a 20 year-old pleasure-seeker, yet not devoid of consciousness, of all these orders. I live, but in the ethical sense I do not exist. I begin to exist really only when I begin to love. Then I crack the shell of egocentricity, as I discover the Other. This is what the transition consists in: for a natural egocentric this sudden moment of seeing the Face, standing “face to face,” in other words falling in love, is simultaneous with the discovery of other people in general. This natural egocentric for whom there where no other people in the world – that is, they existed, but he was not able to do anything for them – suddenly through this Thou that he has, he can see others. This is the lesson that closeness gives, that love gives. This is such a common-sense explanation, but Lévinas speaks about it with a more sophisticated language.

But how is it possible that consciousness appears only with the Third person, and all these procedures that lead to knowledge and philosophy appear? A simple example: if I am alone with the Other to whom I am willing to give everything, then I do not have to count at all. I do not know counting, calculation. Only when the Third person appears I must share my love. This is the point of departure. I must begin to count, I must know how to compare, measure, evaluate etc. This entails the whole development of consciousness that we know today – this is how Lévinas tries to present it.

DOBROŚLAW KOT: So the Third person appears in a certain order: there is already the Other and later (let us not determine what kind of “later” this is) the Third person appears – and then the necessity to count, share etc. arises. And then values appear, e.g. justice. If they appeared earlier – if I understand you well – they would mediate the I–Thou relation, and consequently destroy the importance of the experience of the Face. Yet I stubbornly return to the concrete character of this experience: the Third person is always in the context of experiencing the Other. The experience of the Other without this context is a mere abstraction.

I do not see the sharpness of the juxtaposition: either values, or the Other. You seem to be saying: If I help the Other because of some value, then this is somehow “insincere,” as I do not answer to the calling of the Other, but the calling of an impersonal value. However, it seems that one can think the relation with the Other – following Tischner – in the light of values. This appearance of the Other brings light to values for me, reveals to me values that I have not noticed earlier. I help the Other, as his appearance has made me aware how important solidarity, sacrifice etc. are. I help the Other, I respond to his appeal, at the same time realizing certain values. And while helping him, I realize them. The axiological context does seem to be phariseeism.

JACEK FILEK: I think that the difference between us, in fact not only between you and I, but the other discussants as well, consists in not having one proper philosophical conception of values before our eyes. It seems to me that you always use this concept intuitively. We speak about values, about the world of values arranged in a hierarchy. But I first of all mean the reference to values not after an act, when I estimate the value of the act, but before an act. A value motivates me, the experience of value, motivates me. I have an axiological organ with the help of which I am in touch with the value of justice itself and I see that justice itself is beautiful and that justice itself demands that I realize it. Here occurs a concrete situation. Now, while experiencing the demand from the value of justice itself, I find the motive for my actions and I act justly toward you. This is said in short. Well, this is unacceptable from the perspective of the philosophy of dialogue. For the calling comes from you and not an ideal justice which has a certain meaning that can be examined, a certain

height etc. – you know it all. And it has this form of value that makes me <sup>149</sup> – while experiencing its meaning – experience it as such that should be. And this is that mediation. Now imagine that someone does something good for you (and a good is something on which the matter of value itself becomes concrete) but not because you yourself deserve it, but because he experiences this value itself. And this value itself demands... This is unacceptable from the perspective of the philosophy of dialogue.

DOBROSLAW KOT: I have the impression that you carry out the following operation: you take the pure phenomenology of values (because it inspired Tischner), then the pure philosophy of dialogue in a very radical form of the philosophy of Lévinas (because Tischner referred to Lévinas) and assume that the two are present in Tischner in their pure forms. And according to you it all comes down to an absurdity, as the juxtaposition of the two conceptions bears contradiction. Your conclusion seems to be right: Tischner fell into contradiction. Yet it looks as if Tischner's train of thought was different. Tischner shows that the encounter with the Other may also be an axiological event. He shows that there is not only a pure phenomenological experience of values. It is not so that a value given to me in a direct experience forces me to help the Other and I – carrying out the command – help him. It is the Other who asks for help that opens to me the axiological perspective. Tischner, studying the phenomenological experience of the encounter, enriches the phenomenology of values. And you – without showing this train of thought – speak about the contradiction of the pure phenomenology of values and the philosophy of Lévinas, and impose this contradiction on Tischner's thinking. However, there is no such contradiction in Tischner.

PIOTR AUGUSTYNIAK: Your article is an excellent reconstruction of the way a thinker, who begins from the paradigm of the phenomenology of values and then entirely enters the sphere of the philosophy of Lévinas, may save thinking in values. However, I would like to return to Tischner, as I am not sure whether this process really takes place in him. I have the impression that he wants to think in values and perceives values other than they were at school where he learnt them. The same goes for the question of pre-relation, the encounter with the Face. I have the impression that Tischner does not entirely agree with the pre-relation being – as Lévinas understands it – something absolutely primordial, absolutely asymmetrical and irreversible. I will use the language of the transcendental philosophy that asks about the conditions of possibility. In Lévinas the transcendental condition of the possibility of the metaphysical sphere in which “there is” the Same and the Other, and in which their nondialectic relation takes place, is the encounter with the Face. In Tischner this condition of possibility is something more primordial. Tischner says that the encounter is something *a posteriori*, that it happens within the horizon of the Good that permeates the reality as light does. This is all a Platonic metaphor.

150 What we have here in Tischner is a very conscious disagreement with the relation as something absolutely primordial. It may be shown in the following way: Lévinas is a Jewish thinker, Tischner is a Catholic priest. What follows is that, in Lévinas, transcendence is thought in a radical way. The Other is a radical transcendence whose introduction into the world, the sphere of being, would mean profanation, even annihilation, an attack, a crime, violence. And here appears Lévinas's radical criticism of Greek thinking. On the other hand, Tischner puts it straight that for a Christian, whom he is, Lévinas' radical Jewish thinking is rather a provocation to think over the relationship between Jewish thinking and Greek thinking. What does it entail? There is not a word that transcendence – when it becomes immanence – loses its absolutely transcendental character. On the contrary, it is immanent, it enters the world. In this way it is itself. This perspective allows us to understand Tischner's disagreement with Lévinas, as Tischner does not at all want to accept all the consequences and basic assumptions of his thinking – at least I think so. This also explains why Tischner searches for new inspirations. Above all in Meister Eckhart.

JACEK FILEK: I agree. At one time I said that in Tischner something stopped. Perhaps it was due to his illness that he did not follow the way he had begun to the end. I wrote a PhD dissertation on the philosophical history of values in which I also tried to refer to Heidegger, then I had the results of this research published as *Z badań nad istotą wartości etycznych* [Research into the Essence of Ethical Values]. In the mid 90s I wrote a postdoctoral thesis called *Ontologizacja odpowiedzialności* [The Ontologization of Responsibility] and Tischner was its reviewer. In his review he praised me for having abandoned values and in a serious manner engaged in responsibility. He thought that the way I chose, somehow transcending thinking in values and heading for responsibility, which surely led to the dialogical paradigm, was the right way. This remark from the review became embedded in me, maybe even settled certain questions. And now it is difficult for me to communicate with you, because Tischner praised me while you do not want to accept this way from-to, but you want to “synthesize.”

PIOTR AUGUSTYNIAK: Right. But perhaps the way toward responsibility that Tischner enters following Lévinas, has, in his case, a different exit point. I think that Lévinas's thought attracted him similarly to a light at the horizon. It is not the light that is the most significant but the horizon that it makes appear, and which is never the end of the journey but something that triggers it. On the path of thinking the initial aim – the inspiration – is rarely identical with the sphere that opens on the way. Maybe it is some philosophy of dialogue that opens before Tischner. These questions are fascinating to me.

JACEK FILEK: To put this issue in the simplest way: What is beyond me? God, values, my self, my deep Dasein or the Other? Lévinas's answer

is unambiguous. I think that the transition from the answer “values” to <sup>151</sup> the answer “the Other” is correct.

A classical question in ethics is not “What do I do?” but “With regard to what?” From Aristotle through Kant to the present time, this is the crucial question: “with regard to ....” If I do good to the Other, then I may do it with regard to my own affairs, with regard to the fear of punishment, the hope for the reward. I may also do it with regard to values, or to the Other himself. In the phenomenological ethics of values I do this good to the Other with regard to values. If someone understands values in such a way that I do this good with regard to the Other, and I need the notion of values only to describe this good, then he is not thinking about the values that I am thinking about. The values that I am thinking about, the values described by phenomenological ethicists, are the values with regard to which I do good to my neighbor. On the other hand, in the philosophy of dialogue, I do good to you with regard to you, and not for some other reason. If we understand this tension in such a way, then a move away from the values with regard to which I should do good to you is obvious to me. And if someone wants to describe this turn toward the Other, doing good to him with regard to himself, and badly needs values to do that – then I may agree to it. But these cannot be the phenomenological values.

I repeat, the notion of values is terribly exhausted and I think that we should abandon it.

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