

On the Uncanniness of Good

Cezary Wodziński

This paper was first published in the monthly *Znak* in May 2005, issue 600, pp.103-119.

Translated by Agata Masłowska.

The text is an English version of the lecture entitled *Über die Unheimlichkeit des Guten* delivered at III regional conference Organization of Phenomenological Organizations "Subjectivity, intentionality, evil. In memory of Józef Tischner" – Warsaw 26–28 November 2004.

Cezary Wodziński (b. 1959) is a philosopher, translator and essayist. He works in the Department of Contemporary Philosophy at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences. He was the editor-in-chief of "Aletheia" magazine from 1986 till 1990. He was granted the Tadeusz Kotarbiński Award of the Polish Academy of Sciences for his post-doctoral thesis *Heidegger i problem zła* which was later published by the Oxford University Press as *Heidegger and the Problem of Evil*. His interests focus on the philosophy of Shestov and Heidegger, metaphysics, phenomenology, hermeneutics and the philosophy of dialogue. He is the author of several books: *I cóż po filozofie... Eseje* [What use is a philosopher ... Essays] (1992), *Wielkie wędrowanie* [The Great Wandering] (1998), *Wiedza a zbawienie. Studium myśli Lwa Szestowa* [Knowledge and Salvation. A Study of the Thought of Lev Shestov] (1991). He has also translated Shestov, Nietzsche and Heidegger.

In Tischner's analysis of the most significant relation, that is, the relation between Good and the human being, the area of importance is different from that identified by Lévinas. In contrast to Lévinas, Tischner claims that freedom constitutes the field of this relationship (...). The absolute Good affects a person rousing his freedom of being receptive to the Good. If the person is a lead actor in this agathological drama, then the Good becomes the transcendental director of the dramatic performance; a producer hidden behind the curtain. It is not present on the stage of existence and non-existence, good and evil. In a peculiar way, Good sheds light on the stage on which the drama takes place, but it remains hidden in the shadows.

1.

First, an unrevealing constation: the originary inspiration of Tischner's thinking is phenomeno-

logical in nature. In what sense? In the sense of ‘originariness,’ or to be precise, ‘the originariness of experience.’ Through revealing the inspiration of his thinking, Tischner includes himself in the philosophical tradition which asks the question: “What is it that is ‘originally’ given, that is presented in the scope of the widely understood experience?”¹

The phenomenological tradition well known to Tischner, suggested many answers thoroughly considered by the author. According to Tischner’s laconic recapitulation, what Ingarden regarded as ‘originally’ given was ‘the data of eidetic intuition, ideal necessities’ constituting the meaning of objectivity within its limits. From Husserl’s viewpoint, the underlying reasons for ‘the originariness of experience’ are both ‘a particular eidos immanent to the act of perception’ allowing for the perceiving of the object (*sc.* the objective sense) and the sphere of the constitution of transcendental meaning, in other words – the transcendental *ego*. Heidegger’s ‘originary’ is identical with ‘temporality’ and with ‘the timing’ of the time of being, *Dasein*. Finally, for Lévinas the ‘originary’ emerges in the experience of ‘the face of the (absolutely) Other.’² Within Tischner’s phenomenology, all these modalities are crucial at various stages. However, the projects of both Heidegger and Lévinas inspired Tischner to the greatest extent.

Within Tischner’s hermeneutical optics, both these projects legitimately narrow down the scope of the meaning of ‘the originary experience,’ moving it to the area of ‘the human experience.’ To be precise, when Tischner, faithful to his phenomenological inspiration, researches the area of ‘the originary experience,’ the horizon of his research is strictly and consistently limited to ‘the originary experience of being a human being.’ Here the act of self-limitation is synonymous with a strong assumption – ‘the originary experience’ is ‘the experience of being a human being.’ To be even more explicit, ‘the originary’ experience is to determine the way of ‘being a human being.’

Additionally, although Tischner’s thinking is oriented toward revealing and describing the structures of human existence (these structures are transcendental due to their scope), they acquire neither ontological (see below) nor *a priori* status or category. Due to his faithfulness to ‘the experience,’ Tischner looks for – let us risk using the paradoxical formula of the Kantian tradition – the transcendental *A Posteriori* of human existence. ‘The experience’ is always one word richer and wiser than the phenomenological dictionary of description. The dictionary is not given as such; it is set and being set for ‘the experience,’ often for a trial and in the form of a question.

Instead of describing the genesis and structures of a human being or ways of being a human being, Tischner’s thinking prefers to explore the birth of humanity or a person being born, while it systematically submerges itself into ‘the originary experience.’ In Tischner’s more recent works influenced by Master Eckhart, the question about ‘the condition for

¹ J. Tischner, *Myślenie według wartości* [Thinking in Values], Krakow, 1982, p. 40.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 40-41.

¹⁵⁴ the possibility of the humanity of a human being' is asked in the following way: "Under what circumstances can a human being be born within a human being?"³

2.

The first discovery: the place of birth of humanity within a human being is the drama of good and evil, in which the person participates both as a passive object and an active subject⁴. The axiological space – the space of dramatic relations (encounters) of the person with other people within the cycle of good and evil – defines the limits of 'the originary experience.' The thinking which seeks the transcendental *A Posteriori* consistently becomes 'thinking in values.'

A human being is born when – let us make do with instructive labels – he is lost in the element of good and evil. Here 'the element' is synonymous with 'the originariness,' 'being lost' with 'the experience.' Let us identify the second critical situation: the human being dies when the field of his experience turns into "*jenseits von Gut und Böse*."

Let us consider two types of circumstances. First, 'the death of a human being' does not take place when – in the light of traditional axiological superstitions – a human being succumbs to evil (by rejecting good), but when he abandons the space of values. In the land of 'beyond good and evil,' these are demons (wearing the masks of fallen angels), not people who meet each other. Secondly, according to the phenomenological statement of the faithfulness to experience, 'thinking in values' chooses – again, against the traditional axiological instructions – the way 'from' evil 'to' good:

Usually in the research on the mystery of good and evil, the question about the nature of good is considered first before the question about the nature of evil. In this introduction to the philosophy of drama, we have taken a different route: we started from evil to slowly obtain understanding of good through evil. It resulted from the assumption that although good is closer to our hopes, it is evil that is closer to our experiences. The philosophy which admits using the phenomenological method is condemned in advance to give precedence to the research on evil over the research on good.⁵

"Condemned in advance" – this phrase does not imply any *a priori* statement. On the contrary, it shows the phenomenological sensitivity to the experience of evil. Thus, the analyses of ways in which evil appears in the human (i.e. interpersonal) experience are profound and wide-ranging. Importantly, these analyses are meant to follow the order of the sense – that is, the metaphysical order – in which evil reveals itself in interpersonal

³ J. Tischner, *Spór o istnienie człowieka* [The Controversy of the Existence of Man], Krakow, 1998, pp. 276-280.

⁴ See e.g. J. Tischner, *Filozofia człowieka* [The Philosophy of Man], Krakow, 1991, p. 98.

⁵ J. Tischner, *Filozofia dramatu* [The Philosophy of Drama], Krakow-Paris 1990, pp. 250-251.

relations. It constitutes the originary senses of these experiences in many ¹⁵⁵ different ways, such as betrayal, refusal, lies, condemnation etc (always in a certain form of confinement). Evil only appears dialogically, within ‘the area of dialogue,’ that is, in the area of ‘words’ not ‘things,’ to be precise – the area of ‘meaning,’ not of ‘existence.’ Evil requires face-to-face interaction to reveal itself.

3.

The appearance of evil has a special – interpersonal – nature, which Tischner highlights in the figure of apparition:

Evil is an apparition, an evil apparition – at the same time the adjective ‘evil’ only analytically expresses what is hidden in the notion of apparition. (...) The reality of apparition is neither the reality of existence nor the reality of lack in existence. The apparition is an in-between-reality which is born between two people as the fruit of shared dialogical structures.⁶

What does it mean here – in the language of phenomenological analytics of the ways of appearance – that evil has a dialogical nature (*sc.* interpersonal, *sc.* apparitional)? It means, to be precise, that it is not a phenomenon out of the order of existence. It never happens – using Tischner’s (and not Heidegger’s) terminology – in the discipline of ontology or on the ontological stage of drama. Evil ‘is’ – it is able to threaten and entice, persuade and tempt, it is able to annihilate and kill – but it is in a way different than what is, different than existence.

Following Tischner, let us expand the scope of this key arrangement: the axiological sphere goes beyond the discipline of ontology. The drama of the encounter within the cycle of good and evil does not fit in the horizon of existence and non-existence. “The drama of good and evil is above all a metaphysical drama. When we face the question of good and evil, we are placed ‘beyond all physics.’”⁷ “Good and evil constitute the real metaphysics of human existence, they are what *meta-ta-physika* is.”⁸ Here ‘metaphysical’ means above all the movement of transgression and transposition in relation to ‘the physical.’ The axiological drama comes first – in the sense of the originariness of experience – before the ontological one.

4.

Tischner’s thinking deliberately takes the route opened up by Lévinas. It goes through a gate with a Hebrew inscription: ethics precedes ontology. Let us briefly recapitulate its expanded description: Ontology – Lévinas reasons – is impossible not because any relation with existence assumes the previous understanding of being, but above all because the

⁶ J. Tischner, *Filozofia dramatu* [The Philosophy of Drama], pp. 152 - 153.

⁷ J. Tischner, *Filozofia człowieka* [The Philosophy of Man], p. 98.

⁸ J. Tischner, *Filozofia dramatu* [The Philosophy of Drama], p. 156.

156 understanding of being does not encompass the relation with the other, which precisely “precedes all ontology. This relation comes first in the scope of being. Ontology assumes metaphysics.”⁹ The relation with the other – the descriptions of which, constantly modified, can be found in all of Lévinas’s works – is an ethical relation. Thus, “Ontology assumes metaphysics” means that ethics – a condition for ontology – is the first philosophy and metaphysics, in its strict sense. The encounter with the other – with the distracting and imploring Face of the other – is a metaphysically originary experience. “The famous *conatus essendi* is not the origin of all law and meaning,”¹⁰ but this origin is constituted by the ethical relation – being born through the encounter with the other – of responsibility for the other. Being is not for no reason, on the contrary: the Other makes me inquire into the right of being, it knocks me out of ontological judiciousness and conceit. It is a “word” from the beyond of ontological difference.

It seems that the strategic trait of Lévinas’s metaphysical project can be thematised into categories borrowed, so to speak, backwards from Tischner’s dictionary: axiology is metaphysically first in relation to ontology. “The first metaphysical question is no longer the question asked by Leibniz: ‘Why is there something rather than nothing?’ but: ‘Why is there evil rather than good?’ This is the de-neutralisation of being or stepping outside of being. The ontological difference is preceded by the difference between good and evil. It is the right difference and the source of all meaning.”¹¹ The difference between good and evil, neutralising the ontological difference, opens the field of the originary experience. And the other way round; the encounter with the other, suspending ontology – in the whole sequence of commotion which can be given the common name of the peculiar ontological *epoche* – takes us into the field of the difference between good and evil. We find ourselves ‘somewhere else,’ in the area of dis-inter-esse-tedness, beyond ‘being and existence’ where the rules that apply are ‘different than being’ and they apply ‘in a different way than to be.’

5.

It seems... During the transfer to the sphere of the originary experience – the transfer onto the right ground of metaphysics – it is necessary to exercise exceptional hermeneutical caution and semantic scrupulosity (of which no learned analysts dream!). Following the movement of transcendence which takes us beyond ‘physics,’ it is necessary to be aware of and to control wherefrom and whereto we are moving. Within this movement, it is not hard to succumb to some illusions. I will attempt to point

⁹ E. Levinas, *Totalität und Unedlichkeit. Versuch über die Exteriorität*, übers. von W. N. Krewani, Freiburg 1987.

¹⁰ E. Levinas, *Etyka i Nieskończoność* [Ethics and Infinity], trans. B. Opolska-Kokoszka, Krakow, p. 67.

¹¹ E. Levinas, *Die Transzendenz und das Übel*, w: *Wenn Gott ins Denken einfällt*, übers. von T. Wiemer, Freiburg 1988, p. 187

The lesson on Lévinas should be – from this perspective – extremely educational for the adventures into Tischner’s thinking and the unwelcome difficulties it encounters.

When Lévinas takes up subsequent, more and more radical attempts at neutralising ontology, *sc.* de-ontologisation of metaphysics, he constantly struggles with the difficulty of the highest attempt and he does not allow himself to make the smallest oversight or simplification. He is aware of the fundamental meaning of Heidegger’s ontological difference, the difference between being and existence. He knows well that the conflict with ontology takes place within the order of meaning, and not of existence. He distinguishes – to the standards of ontological possibilities – between ‘ontological’ and ‘ontical.’ Yet, the difference between existence and non-existence is of an absolutely different order than the difference between being and existence.

Furthermore, for Lévinas, the ontological difference constitutes a peculiar grammatical matrix of all differences, and in this sense ‘it is the only appropriate difference’¹² (one should not be deluded by the apparent contradiction of this expression with the above-mentioned formula). Yet, ethics does not so much constitute a layer more primal than ontology, as it is ‘what in some sense is more ontological than ontology, it is the emphasis of ontology.’¹³ Transcendence – a transfer from the order of existence to the order of sense (here: the sense of being) – already takes place within the limits of the ontological difference which in this sense constitutes ‘the only appropriate difference.’ Thus, Lévinas’s attempts consist basically in transforming – radically unchanging – the meaning, deformalising, or to be precise, transformalising the ontological difference, by revealing and describing the movement of diversifying (of transcendence) in terms other than being, and the difference between being and existence. In other words: ethics as ‘an emphasis of ontology’ is an attempt at moving the ontological difference onto a different ground, onto the ground of the difference between good and evil.

6.

In the meantime, Tischner’s thinking at times tends to be oblivious to the ontological Heideggerian lesson which was otherwise consistently and successfully translated by Tischner’s thinking into the ontologically infertile patches of the Polish language. When Tischner repeatedly reiterates the phrase about the disproportion of the difference between existence and non-existence, and the difference between good and evil, he compares and juxtaposes the ontical difference (and not – in the Heideggerian language – ontological) with the axiological difference. It is impossible to treat this as a typographical error or talk in terms of a meaningless dispute over

¹² E. Levinas, *Wenn Gott ins Denken einfällt*, p. 201.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

158 words, since ‘a dispute over words’ is an appropriate element of ontology. In contrast to Lévinas, Tischner does not seem to notice that the constitution of the meaning order has already taken place, that in the space of the ontological difference we find ourselves not among existences (and their ontical modality: non-existences), but between existence and being, that is to say, in the dynamic process of the revealing and veiling of sense (the being of existence and being). Then he seems to succumb to an illusion which can be legitimately called the ontical illusion.

Let us expose only one of the consequences of this illusion. The reference of Tischner’s ‘philosophy of man’ to the fundamental Heideggerian ontology is marked with a certain ambiguity. Heidegger’s *Daseinanalysis* wants to be strictly ontological: the question of *Dasein* is formulated and analysed in the light of being. The analysis of ways of *Dasein* being – conducted according to the fundamental ontological characteristics of ‘this’ distinct existence which understandingly refers to its being as well as to being as such – is not an answer to the question: ‘Who (what) is a human being?’ The analysis in the light of ‘the question of being’ means that we ask ‘How is a human being.’ We then ask about the modalities of being which define ‘the way of being a human being.’ We analyse the ontological structure and not the ontical abstraction, and still less – the existential concretisation. Tischner’s question: ‘Who is a human being?’ indeed keeps a distance from all traditional substantial interpretations¹⁴, but sometimes it turns towards ontics, blinding this fundamental circumstance of the ontological difference being inscribed – like a watermark – in the very structure of *Dasein*. The existence referring to being is a place (*Da*) in which being reveals itself (*Sein*). From Heidegger’s viewpoint, the ontological ambiguity, to be precise: ontical-ontological, is structural. In Tischner’s thinking, the ambiguity can split into two independent meanings: ontical and ontological.

7.

Let us briefly consider the second illusion – let us call it ontological – using the example of Lévinas’s attempt at overcoming ontology, *sc.* the deontologisation of metaphysics. The serious difficulties accompanying this incredibly bold undertaking were already pointed out by Derrida in his model criticism¹⁵; I will refer only to a fragment of it here. If the ontological difference is understood as a disproportionate relation between existence and other-than-existence (and that is exactly how – from the negative perspective – Heideggerian being presents itself), then it defines the way of the opening of what, in Heideggerian language, is called ‘the absolutely Other.’ The ontological difference is not only a formal pre-matrix of the

¹⁴ See e.g. J. Tischner, *Filozofia człowieka* [The Philosophy of Man], pp. 24 - 52.

¹⁵ J. Derrida, *Przemoc i metafizyka. Esej o myśli E. Levinasa*, w: *Pismo filozofii* [Violence and Metaphysics. An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas, in: Writing of Philosophy], selection B. Banasiak, Krakow 1992, pp. 161-224.

relation of transcendence, but it is its appropriate representation. The ethical ¹⁵⁹ relation is impossible without the thinking of being, *sc.* of the ontological difference, which is a condition for the appearance of the absolutely other. Thus ethical transcendence assumes ontological transcendence. To be the absolutely other, first one should be in a different way than existence. Standing against ontology, Lévinas has to – more *nolens* than *volens* – assume the thinking of being. The metaphysics of the Face is only a reflex of the Otherness revealing itself in the ontological difference.

Lévinas's repeated attempts at going beyond the cycle of being and the utterances of 'the other in existence' show that the project of the deontologisation of metaphysics constantly stumbles upon the unbearable aporia of being entangled in the language of ontology. It resembles analogical, equally determined attempts made by Heidegger, who is made – when designing 'the overcoming of metaphysics' and reiterating what constitutes the inexpressible ground of metaphysics – to articulate his projections in the deconstructed metaphysical discourse. In the case of Lévinas, the unbearable word 'to be' is waiting for him at the beginning and at the end of the way of thinking of the absolutely other. This is constantly to spite the sophisticated and more and more radical spells of deontologisation. The Hebrew inscription assumes the Greek transcription.

In reference to both of these projects it seems legitimate to suspect that aporia, with which and upon which they stumble, is the evidence of not so much a failure, but of a more and more deliberate sign of the inevitable aporetic of the metaphysical thinking itself. Aporia showing itself on the way of thinking, which – referring to Lévinas's paradoxical formula – thinks more than it thinks, more than it is capable of, is incorporated in the structure of the thinking of transcendence. In this sense, succumbing to the ontological illusion of disentangling oneself from ontology, it simultaneously frees itself. In the metaphysical space of the thinking of transcendence, the range of 'failures' is the most visible evidence of 'success.'

On the other hand, it is impossible to omit a crucial difference between these two projects of the reconstruction of metaphysics. The Heideggerian deconstructive intention emerges from inside metaphysics itself, in the regressive torsion of metaphysics folding toward its own origins which are hidden away from it. The language of ontology, as it were, demands reformation, which is fully audible in Heidegger's later project of the deontologisation of ontology (the thinking of being beyond the ontological difference). The other of metaphysics speaks from the inside of metaphysics demanding its fundamental reorganisation. It is quite different in the case of Lévinas, who listens out for the absolutely Other outside ontology, and tries to send the difference of transcendence outside it, and at the same time to give a radical exterritorial character to metaphysics. All of Lévinas's undertakings are an infinite 'essay on exteriority.'

Getting back to Tischner: when one studies his texts, one might get the impression that 'the ontological reduction' – consisting in the transfer

160 of 'the originary experience' from the sphere of ontology into the area of axiology – does not constitute any fundamental difficulty. As if a simple decree: we are 'on the other side,' beyond ontology, was synonymous with the performative gesture of fulfillment. Just as in the situation of being thrown into the white-water rapids, one tries to save oneself from drowning and screams to encourage oneself: 'I am almost on shore!' As if the word 'to be' in the expressions 'to be good' and 'to be evil' played only the syntactic role of the auxiliary verb.

8.

The third illusion – let us call it axiological – connected with the reconstruction of metaphysics, in our narrowed context: of revealing and describing 'the originary experience of being a human being,' is exceptionally troublesome. To be precise: certain consequences of freeing oneself from this 'natural' illusion seem to be troublesome and dangerous.

I will say it in advance: Tischner's thinking – despite explicit declarations that it is deliberately and consistently oriented toward 'values,' and that by placing the drama of the birth of a human being within the cycle of good and evil, it discovers the originally axiological sphere of experience – is free, to be precise: it gradually frees itself from 'the axiological illusion.' Which – to put it simply – would promote the metaphysical primacy of the sphere of values. Staging movement 'in values,' Tischner's thinking thinks differently of the other than a value.

In Tischner's early works another dimension opens up, a dimension which goes beyond the axiological perspective, *sc.* the language of the experience of 'good and evil' explained in terms of 'values and anti-values.'¹⁶ The project of another vision of the originary experience – other than axiological, another vision of a human being – other than in the world of and in the light of values.

Agathological experience is primarily a revealing experience, whereas axiological experience is a projecting experience. Agathological experience concerns being in the light of the good; axiological experience concerns events in the light of the valuable.¹⁷

Tischner expands on this correlation of the two dimensions of experience in his later texts:

The basic function of the agathological is revealing and problematising. (...) The agathological makes you think. The axiological reveals the directions of action. The agathological creates a problem out of existence itself. The axiological reveals the ways of survival¹⁸.

The introduction of the new – agathological – dimension of experience, however, does not correct the fundamental deontological optics: "A human

¹⁶ See e.g. J. Tischner, *Myślenie według wartości* [Thinking in Values], p. 387.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 516.

¹⁸ J. Tischner, *Filozofia dramatu* [The Philosophy of Drama], p. 58.

being can die for what is invisible. He can sacrifice his 'authentic existence' ¹⁶¹ in the name of what is 'beyond existence.' The ontological drama is only an introduction to the agathological drama"¹⁹. At this point, we are less interested in the recurrence of 'the ontical illusion'; what is relevant is an attempt at setting axiology and ontology (*sc.* ontics) on the more basic ground of the experience of the agathological (drama).

In *A Dispute about Man* – in this particular 'encyclopaedia of anthropological sciences' which picks fruit from Tischner's long-lasting experiments – the metaphysical primacy of agathology is strongly confirmed: "Taking up the issue of a human being, we have to abandon the area of ontology and stand on the ground of agathology."²⁰ "The ontology of a person is bound by the laws of agathology."²¹ And the thesis which is crucial in our critical peregrinations: "The agathological space of consciousness is a condition for the possibilities of humanity within a human being – his being himself as a human being. (...) A human being 'gives birth to himself' in the agathological space and thanks to it. It is the home space of a human being, his *matrix*."²²

Agathology 'reveals': the originary area of the experience of being a human being; 'problematizes': it leaves 'being a human being' in doubt, and looks for 'a justification' for being – a hidden reason for ontology itself. 'The Logic of the Good' follows rules that are not ontologic or axiologic.

9.

Let us again have a look at the ontological problems, but this time to go beyond ontology toward agathology. Tischner's thinking partially shares this, again, with Lévinas's thought.

In Lévinas's final editing, the metaphysical 'asking of questions' is neither: 'Why is there existence rather than nothing?' nor: 'Why is there evil rather than good?' but: 'Why is there being rather than the Good?'²³ In this fundamental formula of 'the transcendental difference,' being stands for absence and inaccessibility, *sc.* the uncanniness of good. In the world of and in the light of being, the real good is absent.

According to the old tradition to which Lévinas – followed by Tischner – directly refers, the Good appears as a stranger from 'the beyond' of ontology: *epekeina tes ousias*.

At this point, we need to ask a persistent question: does thinking of the absolutely Other – while taking the final step towards the ultra-radical deontologisation of metaphysics – definitely free itself from the haunting aporia? Is thinking indeed able to think of the absolute depths of the abyss separating being from the Good? And is it the way of fulfilling the task of the thought which desires to think more than it is capable of? Yet, be-

¹⁹ J. Tischner, *Filozofia człowieka* [The Philosophy of Man], p. 97.

²⁰ J. Tischner, *Spór o istnienie człowieka*, [A Dispute about Man], p. 8.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 168.

²² J. Tischner, *Spór o istnienie człowieka*, [A Dispute about Man], p. 280.

²³ See C. Wodziński, *Światłocienie zła*, [The Chiaroscuro of Evil], Wrocław 1998, pp. 374-378.

¹⁶² ing 'is' as absent as the 'Good' is... It 'is' equally pre- and beyond-present. The word 'is' – although neutralised with an infinite number of inverted commas – seems to be equally inappropriate and unreliable in relation to both the Good and being. Perhaps the mysterious principle of the closest affinity is hidden in this most remote difference? The discreet principle of the closeness of two absences? Of two metaphysical Incognito? *Epekeina tes ousias* which is characteristic of both good and being... The metaphysical good-being, separated from physical well-being by the abyss of meaning? Let us go as far as these questions and let us transfer our objections to the area of axiologic.

10.

Let us ask: what Good is spoken of on the horizon of agathology? It is not for no reason that for a while now we have been writing this word – following Lévinas and Tischner – with a capital 'G,' which we did not do with the terms of the axiological difference. Moreover, we have not spoken of the cycle of 'good and evil.' Well, we have not even mentioned evil...

Where have we found ourselves? Lévinas has no doubts at this point: the translocation of the transcendental difference beyond the ontological difference also implies the extradition of the axiological difference. Thinking about the question of good and evil in axiological categories, we still remain on the ground of ontological because we thematise it in the language of 'freedom' – of 'free choice.' All the more so when thinking of the Good. Yet, the Good – Lévinas indefatigably argues – precedes freedom. The Good chooses me before I could choose it. The good-willingness and good-ness of the Good outstrips my every active choice within the cycle of good and evil. 'To be overcome by the Good does not imply choosing good out of some neutral place. (...) To be overwhelmed by the Good implies being excluded from the possibility of choice.'²⁴ Let us stress the fact that this 'exclusion' is not an outcome, but an assumption of every choice. The exclusion from the possibility of choice is 'a primal pact with good' making freedom possible. I can choose – secondarily – in the world of good and evil, because – originally – I was chosen by the Good from the beyond of this world.

Where have we – let us recapitulate – found ourselves in the *Agaton* light? Well – however paradoxical it would sound – we have found ourselves 'beyond good and evil.' Good as *epekeina tes ousias* also takes us *jenseits von Gut und Böse*.

11.

That is all as far as Lévinas is concerned. Now let us allow Tischner to lead – or to seduce us. The transfer to the obscure territories of agathology takes the thinking out of the shallow soil of 'in values,' leaving preroga-

²⁴ E. Levinas, *Humanismus des anderen Menschen*, übers. von L. Wenzler, Hamburg 1989, p. 75.

tives to axiology in its typical economic sphere of activity. At this point ¹⁶³ the fundamental question is: 'How can one get to the absolute Good by freeing oneself from the relative good and evil?'²⁵ The object 'absolute' constitutes – let us add in light of Tischner's analyses – only the analytical expansion of the meaning of Good from beyond (the relative) 'good and evil.' The absolute is *ex definitione* from beyond: *meta-, epekeina*; it is transcendence in its strict sense.

Characteristically, 'the ontological argument,' which Tischner borrows – translating it into the sphere of agathology – from Anselm of Aost, again sneaks into the description of absoluteness, *sc.* the transcendence of the Good. The key wording is: 'that beyond which nothing greater can be thought of,' is referred to the absolute Good. Tischner emphasises once more that, in this way, "we go beyond ontology and move from the level of 'the logic of existence' onto the level of 'the drama of good.'"²⁶ The thing is that again 'the logic of existence' does not imply ontology in the fundamental-ontological senses, but it implies sheer ontics. I would like to treat this as peculiar self-reproducing *lapsus linguae*, evidence of which can be found in Tischner's expansion of the characteristics of the Good:

Can the absolute Good not exist? The Good 'demands' existence through itself. The absolute Good demands existence in an absolute way. That which demands existence in an absolute way can not but exist. Its existence has to be like its demands for existence.²⁷

The logic of preference is understandable here: the absolute Good exists in an absolute way because it is the absolute Good, and the non-absolute Existence is the absolute Good, as it Exists absolutely. The logic of preference is determined here by the logic of the Absolute – despite all the objects. It is also understandable that this description concerns the phenomenon of 'beyond existence and non-existence.'²⁸ It is enough, however, to replace the notion of 'existence' with an equivalent notion of 'being' to be strongly convinced that we are still dealing with the statement in the language of ontology *sensu stricto*. Good-being is the first notion; the appropriate transcendence – 'beyond existence and non-existence' and 'beyond good and evil.'

Good desires to be, Tischner says, and following Master Eckhart he adds: 'Good is a desire for even greater good,' *sc.* "the awareness of good is nothing more than the desire for being 'good to a much greater extent.'"²⁹

(Let us note in parentheses – without any malicious intention which is keen to look for simple contradictions in Tischner's thinking – that 'the axiological reduction' carried out on the agathological horizon takes 'the birth' of humanity within a human being to a space in which 'thinking in values' tended to see 'the death of a human being').

²⁵ J. Tischner, *Spór o istnienie człowieka*, [A Dispute about Man], p. 169.

²⁶ J. Tischner, *Spór o istnienie człowieka*, [A Dispute about Man], p. 270.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 272 - 273.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 288.

In Tischner's analysis of the most significant relation for him, that is, the relation between the Good and the human being, the area of importance is different from that identified by Lévinas. In contrast to Lévinas, Tischner claims that freedom constitutes the field of this relationship: 'What is absolute does not cancel freedom, it assumes it. The Good is what is absolute. A human being, becoming receptive to the Good, becomes receptive to what is absolute. But one can become receptive to the Good in no other way but through freedom. (...) The encounter with the Good rouses freedom from slumber. The awakened freedom discovers that the Good is absolute.'³⁰ At the same time, to continue Lévinas's thought, Tischner's last work exposes the goodwillness of the Good as a grace, the essence of which is that it is free of charge³¹.

The absolute Good affects a person by rousing his freedom of being receptive to the Good. If the person is a leading actor in this agathological drama, then the Good becomes a transcendental director of the drama performance; a producer hidden behind the curtain. It is not present on the stage of existence and non-existence, good and evil. In a peculiar way, the Good sheds light on the stage where the drama takes place, but it remains hidden in the shadows. A human being does not encounter the Good, but he is indebted to the Good for the chance to encounter the other and others. In the light of foreign Good, all the human, *sc.* interpersonal encounters and dialogues take place. In making them possible, the Good remains uncanny. Acting overwhelmingly, but discreetly – as some sort of kind gift – it comes from the foreign land of *Jenseits...* It hides beyond the border of local existence and non-existence, local good and evil. In the regions which in German are called *Unheimlichkeit*, in which the Greek experience of *deinos* echoes. Let us repeat: good-being and good-ness do not imply well-being.

The Good's peculiar way of (off-stage) 'appearance' spurs many questions. Does the Good not appear in the interpersonal world in the likeness of an Apparition, which is the manner of the epiphanic presence that Tischner reserves for evil? Can one consider the apparition of the Good along with the evil apparition? By affecting a human being, choosing and freeing a human being, by calling on him to do good and for good, does the Good not act as if it was a good Demon? Can one not consider the peculiar demonism of the Good? Finally, since the Good descends upon a human being from 'beyond' good and evil, since in the relevant sense it suspends the activity of the axiological difference, as it does not let itself be explained in terms of the local interworld good and evil, then how can the epiphany of the Good be distinguished from the epiphany of Evil? How can one distinguish one apparition 'from beyond good and evil' from another – one that would seem radically, absolutely other? To be precise, how can one tell the difference between 'one' and 'another' – when the difference has been suspended – and

³⁰ J. Tischner, *Wobec zła*, [In the Face of Evil], "Tygodnik Powszechny" 9.I.1992.

³¹ J. Tischner, *Spór o istnienie człowieka*, [A Dispute about Man], pp. 170, 192, 287.

not refer to another, seemingly suspended ontological difference? How to distinguish without the distinction between 'to be more, the most' and 'to be less, the least' which is decisive as far as this issue goes? In a nutshell: between Being and Nothing? 165

13.

One more fundamental issue to end with. In the current presentation there has been no mention of a word which in the dictionary of Tischner's thought has a crucial meaning. The word is: God.

God is Good. And only in the light of this tautology, the absoluteness of the Good acquires its full meaning. "God gives existence to himself and to the world according to the laws of 'the drama of good.' He is 'beyond existence and non-existence.'"³² God's participation in the human drama determines the three-part structure of the staging: creation, revelation (selection), salvation. The agathological sense of this drama: 'God created me to reveal himself to me; God wants to reveal himself to me to save me. Everything happens in the name of good and on account of good.'³³ The absolute goodwillness of the Good presents itself in the order of salvation: 'Salvation is a pure experience of the Good.'³⁴

The originary phenomenological inspiration – the search for the originary experience of being a human being, *sc.* the condition for the possibility of humanity within a human being – acquires particular illumination in the language of religious thinking. 'The agathological space,' 'the matrix space' of the birth of a human being, is a space of redemptive divinity. The grace of God which gives rise to humanity within a human being is not anonymous, however. A human being is born owing to God and toward God (*ordo salutis*), who is the absolute Good.

The fundamental question is: Does the absolute Good affect a thought which is not visited by God?

Discussion

This paper was first published in the monthly *Znak*
in May 2005, issue 600, pp.119-132.
Translated by Agata Masłowska.

ALEKSANDER BOBKO: What is striking about Cezary Wodziński's article and about his way of looking at Tischner is the very accurate perception of Tischner's main subject of interest, that is, the attempt at getting to the most originary, and seeking to express the most originary, in some sort of

³² J. Tischner, *Spór o istnienie człowieka*, [A Dispute about Man], p. 273.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 167.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

166 new language. It seems that Tischner's approach derives from his pastoral and religious education experiences, from a certain dramatic awareness of the fact that, on the one hand, religion and religious education talk about accessible and originally apparent issues, but on the other hand, a priest has the fossilised language of sermons at his disposal – a language which does not fit in with what a religious education is really about. For this reason, Tischner often said that religion required a new language – though we might ask how far he got in creating this new language.

Tischner also looked for a new language in the philosophical dimension and here – to simplify it – he put the whole tradition, from scholastics to Heidegger, into one bag. In many texts Tischner himself said openly that Heidegger was also the philosopher of form, that the access to the originary is mediated – in Heidegger's case as well – through a certain structure. Yet, Tischner was possibly convinced that you can access the originary without the mediation of form, although he only tried to formalise this thought in the second part of *A Dispute about Man*, writing on the logic of the good juxtaposed with the logic of existence; but basically these are only declarations, and not developed or concretised propositions.

CEZARY WODZIŃSKI: It is difficult for me to accept the thesis that Tischner's thought succumbed to such a simple illusion, the direct, unmediated experience of the originary. Tischner's thinking is, if one can use a paraphrase of one's own phrase, thinking from the depths of language. What is characteristic of his thinking is an exceptional linguistic sensitivity which protects it from the instrumental treatment of language. We remember his famous statement: 'everything is true on condition that it can be translated into the language of highlanders.' I think that Tischner had and nurtured his longing for 'the language of highlanders,' for 'the language of origins,' in which he could express the originary experience. Yet, the way to this language, that is, the way to this origin, for him always meant 'being on his way' – *unterwegs zur Sprache*, of which he learnt not only from Heidegger, but most of all from his own extremely rich linguistic adventures. Let us remind ourselves of these 'linguistic' inspirations and fascinations of Tischner. These are Riccoeur, Marcel, Heidegger himself, then Lévinas, Rosenzweig, and also – on the way – Meister Eckhart. These are intentional fascinations as well, given the approach of all these thinkers toward language. But most important about them were both the search for 'the language of highlanders' and the persistence in this search. Tischner looked for 'the language of origin' and each of these roadside finds was precious to him, but never definitive and final. Tischner drew on many languages, and what is more, I think he strived not so much for a crystalline, transparent language, but very often he – deliberately or spontaneously – mixed different languages together, observing the tensions created in this process. Searching for 'the language of origin,' he remained multilingual. Perhaps this is not conspicuous on the plane of words – in the 'stylistic layer' – because the 'Tischner style'

is immediately recognisable, and unmistakable. It is conspicuous in its way of asking questions and delving into problems. Tischner's language is full of sparks, and at times, full of smoke. The linguistic sensitivity I have mentioned probably comes from the conviction that language allows us access the originary to the same degree as it obstructs it. The naivete of access, mediated via language, to the originary was certainly foreign to Tischner's thinking. 167

ALEKSANDER BOBKO: I did not mean to suggest that Tischner was naive and did not notice this problem, but this exceptional linguistic sensitivity and certain ease in using various elements of various languages was in some sense troublesome for Tischner: it made the short term analyses easy, but it shook up the formalised philosophical design.

CEZARY WODZIŃSKI: And I would see a virtue rather than a flaw in the fact that Tischner draws on many dictionaries and they do not come down to one shared idiom. This makes his thinking alive till the end, precisely because of the cracks, the implicit and inexact statements. Precisely because of the intrinsic translation work of Tischner's language. A Tischner-Ingardenist would be inconceivable and he would inspire nobody.

KAROL TARŃOWSKI: I also think this is the richness of Tischner. But I would like to get back to what the article called the aporetics of the language of ontology or metaphysics. This is the fact which will not pass by any of the philosophers. When Heidegger talks about being, he does everything so that it would not be, so that nobody would say that being is etc, but in reality he 'ontises' this being in a certain way, and nothing can be done about it. Language is always subjective to a certain degree. Lévinas gives a methodical tip, a slightly humorous one, when he says *dédire le dit* – one has to abandon this *le dit* ontical, material plan, one has to try to do it in many other ways, sometimes by means of metaphors. These are the ways of escaping from what cannot – what should not – be reified.

CEZARY WODZIŃSKI: It is obvious that aporia linked with the act of the overcoming metaphysics is always present, and is both inevitable and unmissable. The real problem appears when we look at the ways of accepting these aporetic situations. In any case, one has to agree to them, because otherwise it would be polite to fall silent and take to shoveling snow or the like, and not deal with metaphysical works. Here we are dealing with ambivalence: as accepting aporia does not imply accepting it uncritically. The entanglement in the language of metaphysics, from which we free ourselves, can have different degrees and different levels of intensity. The natural, so to say, virtuality and multilingualism of metaphysics itself defends us from the full acceptance of aporia. Tischner knew this well, he had a fantastic linguistic sense of hearing. He was able – constantly practising – to return virtuality to language, infuse letters with spirit,

168 much as his metaphors allowed him to break the stiff notional systems and provoke questions which would be impossible in these systems.

The question of the ontical illusion which I take up here, is connected with the question of what sense is given to the notion of ontology when we say that we go beyond or abandon it. In Tischner's works first the axiological, then the agathological wants to be beyond ontology, to go beyond it, to free itself from the fetters of ontology. It seems to me that when Tischner sometimes talks about freeing oneself from ontology, what he has in mind is not so much ontology in the Heideggerian sense, i.e. abandoning the dimension of the ontological difference, but the simple, traditionally metaphysical ontics, the order of existences and the difference between existences, forgetting about the fact that Heidegger's ontology cannot be brought to this dimension. What I meant is only this type of Tischner's terminological inconsistency which obviously carries with it various consequences on the level of serious decisions, precisely ontological ones.

KAROL TARNOWSKI: In this respect, I think that Tischner was a student of Lévinas. Lévinas can also be accused of treating his being ontically, of somehow totalitising it, or of making a caricature out of the Heideggerian being; but on the other hand, I think that Tischner was simply not troubled with the ontological question in the Heideggerian sense.

CEZARY WODZIŃSKI: Is Tischner's basic question: 'Who is a human being?' No. In my opinion, Tischner never asks such a question. Tischner asks in the Heideggerian style: 'How is a human being?' A question formulated in the categories of substance and an answer formulated in these categories with reference to a human being does not appear in Tischner's works. Starting from his dispute with the Tomists. He is interested in how, which means that he is interested in the being of a human being, to be precise, in the way of being a human being.

KAROL TARNOWSKI: Well yes, but the question about who is a human being is a question about some sort of *eidōs*, meaning some sort of sense which is still ontological.

CEZARY WODZIŃSKI: Yes, ontology, but not ontics. It is precisely a question dealing with the meaning of being, and not the presence of existence.

ADAM WÓRKOWSKI: I would like us to get back to the article by Professor Wodziński. It begins like a hit, like in Hitchcock, with a total earthquake, that is, with showing what was indeed the closest to Tischner, namely the originariness of experience. Yet, the discussion which is now taking place concerns language and dictionaries, which somehow interweave with one another in Tischner's works. And it is true: there is

a whole lumber room of languages in it, but I am wondering why this lumber room does not fall apart, why it functions as a well-set-up building. Well, that is because all these languages are ancillary, meaning they have instrumental functions towards this experience, they are always in the background. 169

Wodziński's article starts from experience, but unfortunately the term 'dictionary' soon appears, and it seems to me that an attempt at translating Tischner starts from this word, from translating his notions into the precise and well-composed languages which are used by Cezary Wodziński in the following sequence: the language of late Heidegger, the language of strongly Derridian Lévinas, and finally the language of Wodziński himself. Then the whole construction of the article takes place on the 'meta' level – the author translates Tischner's notions into the consecutive languages, and then shows that these translated notions give rise to various aporias and paradoxes. It is very interesting, but it poses the danger of stopping at a very intelligent intellectual game.

Two examples show how easy it is to damage the subtle and close relation between description and experience, which was so important to Tischner.

1. In Wodziński's article a quote from Tischner appears: "Evil is an apparition, an evil apparition – at the same time the adjective 'evil' only analytically expresses what is hidden in the notion of apparition." However, later incredible consequences emerge from certain aporias of Tischner's notion of apparition, translated into the language of Wodziński. The author asks, for example: Can one consider an apparition of good along with an evil apparition? Let us note that the notion of 'apparition' has already ceased to express evil analytically, since one can talk about the apparition of good.

2. Wodziński also wonders about the demonism of Tischner's Good. But one page earlier in the article, there is a quote from Tischner's work saying that the Good is what does not suspend freedom, but assumes it. And we recall how strongly Tischner associated demonism with the lack of freedom.

Aleksander Bobko once wrote a very interesting text for "Znak" showing the evolution of Tischner's thinking, which led from axiology to agathology. At the beginning these two orders are different, but they complement each other; whereas in the last book the axiological description becomes slightly suspicious, as it poses the danger of the aesthetisation of Good. However, the axiological order never disappears in Tischner's case. Yet, in Wodziński's article the translation of these notions into a slightly different language brings about the appearance of an abyss between axiology and agathology. Since axiology translated into Wodziński's language embraces the sphere of ethical good and evil, then out of necessity agathology has to be thrown out beyond good and evil in the traditional sense. This seems to me extremely dangerous both theoretically and practically. If we cut off the Good from the level of good (with a small 'g') and evil

170 (with a small 'e'), then it actually 'daydreams,' and what is more, according to Wodziński, it seems to go beyond existence and non-existence. At the same time, if we remember that in the world of Tischner evil is beyond existence and non-existence, then Good and Evil meet in the area of the 'beyond.' It even seems that, from the perspective of experience, they become indistinguishable. This hypothesis of Cezary Wodziński (as far as I understand it) is exceptionally interesting – but it shows in the sharpest way not only the difference of languages or ways of philosophising, but also the discrepancy between Tischner's and Wodziński's perception of the world.

CEZARY WODZIŃSKI: We are beginning to touch upon the fundamental issues. Adam Workowski has enumerated the difficulties which have come up here with a characteristic accuracy; all the more accurate, given these are the difficulties I have encountered and taken on since I took up philosophy. Language and experience... I admit, and it is not for the first time, that I have problems – even more, I will have them and I appreciate the fact that I have them – with a precise distinction between these two orders. Not only am I unable to distinguish between them, but they also overlap, and sometimes, and I really appreciate these moments, they seem to be one and the same order, which is artificially and illegitimately divided in two. In this philosophical tradition, which is close to where I stand, it is not a coincidence that language is not an instrument. No, language is a record of experience, and it is not an exterior record, but an immanent one. Obviously, it is not that these two orders always fit tight. There are very interesting moments when they come apart and – in a manner of speaking – argue with each other. Nonetheless, I always take the consideration of linguistic problems seriously, as I suspect that these are the problems with the expression of experience itself. The text we are discussing also wants to constitute the evidence of this issue. Experience always looks for language; language always looks for experience. And the situations of being found and getting lost are interesting, or even fascinating. In my opinion there is no crack here which would, up to a certain point, make me speak of experience, and after that make me begin to speak of language. No, the linguistic problems which I am here trying to become aware of are the idiomatic and intrinsic problems of the experience itself, of the language of experience.

The second issue. I allow myself, not without reason, to suggest in the conclusion that through an incorrect but fully deliberate use of such terms like 'the apparition of good' or 'the demonism of god' – which at the base of Tischner's thinking are absurd, as here both 'apparition' and 'demonism' are the definitions of ways in which 'evil' appears – I open the area of controversiality which Tischner fails to see or which he omits. But I deliberately bend grammar here, I provoke the language to carry out a certain experiment. Since we talk about the order beyond good and evil – I emphasise: 'beyond good and evil' in the axiological meaning – then

we enter an extremely dangerous area. It is dangerous both from the standpoint of 'good,' if I might say so, and from the standpoint of 'evil.' Since in this area we begin to experience things which are impossible to describe in the categories of the axiological difference. We still say 'good,' we say 'evil,' but their ways of appearance, the ways of experiencing these 'apparitions' are completely different from the ones in the language of the axiological difference. This language is dead here, or at least illusive – it suggests something which does not agree with our experience. And because there is no other ready language to express these experiences, one needs to violate the grammar of the available language. Here one has to think and experience against language. ¹⁷¹

The third issue. In the text, I do not propose a thesis concerning the fact that good from the order of beyond good and evil, from the beyond-axiological order, unites with evil. No, I want to show that we do not have a language to describe what is beyond good and evil. That by using the traditional axiological measures in this area – Tischner calls it agathological – we blur its personality and otherness. As I have mentioned, this area is dangerous, but we should open up to these dangers, and not close ourselves off from them. The devout axiological wishes and ungodly exorcisms will not help us here. It seems to me that this dangerous dimension opens in Tischner's thought discreetly rather than ostentatiously, it opens and closes, as if it was intimidated by itself and by possible further discoveries. If I then allow myself to speak about 'the demonism of good' or 'the apparition of good,' it is by urging language to greater courage and innovativeness. To otherness, since we deal with the radical otherness of ways of 'apparitions' revealing themselves from 'beyond good and evil.'

ADAM WORKOWSKI: It seems to me that it is worth making a distinction between three elements: at one end – the language using reasonably precise terminology, at the other end – the dumb experience, and finally in the middle: the area of the experience description which has no set dictionary or precise terminology. As far as linguistic fluency is concerned, Tischner very much resembles Bergson. We remember that Bergson called for constructing a metaphysics based on artistic notions, adjusting their meanings to the experience. The same goes for Tischner's case: the fluidity of notions, musicality, the metaphorical nature, which we occasionally bridle at, have an integral connection with experience.

Professor Wodziński's reasoning seems to be the following: since experience has to express itself linguistically, it does not make sense to separate experience from language. I think that you can separate the level of experience description from the level of language based on a precise dictionary. Wodziński admittedly quotes a description of Tischner's experiences, but he exclusively translates terms and notions into other languages. It is not surprising that the notions which are fluid and live in contact with experience take up other and unforeseeable meanings in a different environment.

And a slightly malicious comment to end with: I think that Tischner was in the possession of language for the description of the good – a language which was metaphorical, sometimes bizarre, making use of dozens of different authors. But when he spoke his own language, when he described the good, he did occasionally fall prey to paradoxes and aporias. Perhaps this language of Tischner's was optimal for describing the dramatic experience? Perhaps there is no need to translate it into another one?

CEZARY WODZIŃSKI: Thank you, I feel reassured by this maliciousness...

MAŁGORZATA MOTYKA: I am afraid that Professor Wodziński's acceptance of the thesis on the uncanniness of good, and on these grounds his pointing to three illusions of Tischner's thinking, might lead to our ignoring or omitting the intuition of Tischner, who tried courageously to show that it is possible to express Good in the categories of interworld good and evil, i.e. with the intuition of the embodied good explicated in *A Dispute about Man*. According to this intuition, consistently talking about specific human experience should not mean avoiding reference to religious perspective. The event of the Incarnation of Christ, however, lets itself be understood as the giving of the Absolute Good to a human experience. To my mind, Tischner consistently draws certain conclusions on a philosophical ground from the experience of conversion, in which the crucial closeness of the axiological and agathological perspectives reveals itself. They are close enough for one to say, frankly, that the Good embodies itself, that is, it lets itself be expressed in terms of the world of good and evil. Just like in the life of St. Paul when his conversion takes place. The encounter with Christ verifies his former axiology. Good, which entrusts itself, leads to constituting a new axiology. One might say that contact with the agathological space creates a new axiological space in the life of St Paul. Good happens as a creation of the axiological space.

ADAM WORKOWSKI: It seems to me that one has to create a division between two vantage points: on the one hand, Good *embodies* itself in goods, which shows *inseparability* of the spaces of agathology and axiology, but on the other hand, Good itself does not let itself be *expressed* in terms suitable for the description of goods, which then points to the *difference* of both spaces. We often argue about which of these vantage points is the right one. At the same time, Tischner does not reject any of them and maintains a balance between them.

ADAM HERNAS: Perhaps one cannot understand this strange relation between axiology and agathology analogically with the ontological difference. However, this is something totally different. Moving to the region of agathology, we do not find ourselves in a new space of meta-meanings,

but the situation of the subject changes totally, that is, the situation of the one who experiences good in the sphere of the axiological drama. The good of agathology is neither a meaning nor a notion, it has a very precise name – for Tischner it is the Christian God (just as it is the Jewish God for Lévinas). In Tischner's case, we can see an attempt toward further reflection, but it does not consist in transition to the side of theology (in the case of Lévinas there is only the silence of a victim – the hostage of the Good). This theology is not a continuation of philosophical thinking, a simple extension of some free speculation, but it is rather a form of naming the religious drama. 173

KAROL TARNOŃSKI: I think that one has to – in the professorial way – distinguish between three types of understanding of good. In *Thinking in Values*, good is a *sine qua non* for the possibility to protest against evil, an invisible light which stirs up a rebellion against evil. In this sense, this good has something of the Platonic Good in it. Later, especially in *A Dispute about Man*, the second plan, a Christian one, appears, in which the good is indeed called God. And finally in the third sense, this good is with a small 'g' – a condition for the meaning that involves overcoming small-'e' evil towards the precise good. Tischner plays with all these meanings, showing an incredible richness of this notion.

CEZARY WODZIŃSKI: I have just become aware of the fact that I have taken up, in a way, a risky task in this text. I try to recognise and describe a certain awkwardness connected with the transitions and the relations between the agathological order and the axiological order in Tischner's thinking, but in the meantime, from my philosophical perspective, it turns out that I do not have the right qualifications to do so. Neither do I know nor am I able to know – as I do not have the language, and in effect I do not have any experience – what agathology is. When a word appears – in the context defining its sense, in the Christian context – then thinking rebels against me. It talks to me and gives me another context to think about, a Greek one, but that is another story. On the other hand, I have no idea what axiology is. Because, following Heidegger or along with him, I walked the way of thinking against values and it is, in some sense, my own way. Thus, I do not possess the language to settle in the axiological experience either. My thinking about the relations between axiology and agathology seems to be missing the legs to walk on the hard ground of the difference between good and evil, and the head to stick out above the clouds.

You are right, Ms Motyka – in Tischner's case the connection between axiology and agathology is fundamental. Tischner shows how Good operates in the world. It is just that I would not be faithful to the experience, if I did not want to distance these two orders from each other as much as possible. And I do it by exposing otherness, distance, separation. As one who does not have access to either of them, I have a certain right to have it

174 though, as the experiences and problems from the sphere between them are familiar to me. Yet, my text does not dictate any thesis. This speculation about the uncanniness of the Good – let it be with a capital ‘G’ – comes from considering the otherness of ways in which the phenomena from the axiological and agathological orders reveal themselves. The uncanniness of Good does not mean that there is no Good, to be precise – that Good is not. ‘The Uncanniness of Good’ says that Good reveals itself differently and as another in relation to the encountered and encounterable in the axiological order. Using the terminology of Lévinas I could say: the real Good is absent. The language which it uses is a language neither from a dictionary nor from ontics, nor axiology; it is not translatable in a straightforward and graceful way into the language of the ontological difference either. It is a language which is born in the tensions and the cracks between these dialects, but it cannot be reduced to any of them.

KAROL TARNOWSKI: Indeed, someone who does not notice the axiological dimension might claim that Tischner’s Good is beyond good and evil. Yet, Good which is a light, a condition for the possibility of problematising the world, only because it affects the space of revealing itself, because it stirs up a rebellion, it calls upon us to do the specific good. Good is not beyond good and evil – it is a *sine qua non* for the possibility of understanding evil as evil.

CEZARY WODZIŃSKI: Our dispute is merely verbal at the moment – I am simply less afraid of the very formula: ‘beyond good and evil.’ Thinking about the space of ‘beyond good and evil’ does not imply any annihilation of our interworld good-and-evil. In spite of the otherness of the ways of revealing itself – or better: of experiencing us – ‘beyond good and evil’ does not happen in the beyond of our world, nor does it touch us from any beyond. It takes place – as will sometimes happen – here and now, in our world obeying the laws of the axiological difference, irrespective of how many readers find Heidegger’s works. We live in the world of chiaroscuros, which does not mean that light does not play any role in this game. Much like the Platonic *idea tou agathou* – the image of which is, as we all know, the Sun, the source of light, which is a *sine qua non* for this game. Much like the the sphere of darkness.

ADAM WORKOWSKI: I do not entirely understand what this axiology is about. Professor Wodziński places himself beyond good and evil because he supports Heidegger. It is more or less known that Heidegger rejected values for ontological reasons. But I do not believe that Cezary Wodziński does not live in the normal space of judgements, I am convinced that the hierarchical space of what is important and what is less important is close to where he stands. Moreover, I feel close to and disturbed by what probably constitutes ‘the heart’ and the source of uneasiness in many texts by Professor Wodziński.

One can paradoxically say that Tischner's Good has 'totalitarian' ¹⁷⁵ tendencies, not only does it attack us, but according to a certain interpretation, it violates what in the earlier books was called an interpersonal drama. Speaking without metaphors: asking about the relation between a religious drama and a drama of interpersonal encounter, we have two possibilities of response: either a religious drama illuminates more and protects the encounter between people, or it eradicates the autonomy of these encounters: we are no longer capable of thinking of the interpersonal drama beyond the religious perspective. If a religious drama absorbs all human dramas, then how can a man untouched by the grace of faith meet another person and think of this encounter?

It seems to me that, on the one hand, Tischner's vision puts off Wodziński; on the other hand, it allows him to discover, within this violation of the Good, a very important human experience, beyond religion, but with the same structure as a religious drama. The strength of the description of the religious drama in Tischner's *A Dispute about Man* seems to 'break' the previous descriptions of the human drama 'down' and make them out of date. Similarly, in *The Chiaroscuros of Evil*, Wodziński expresses evil which comes from some sort of transcendence, from beyond existence and non-existence, and shakes a human being out of the warmth of everyday existence. It seems to me that this uneasiness comes up in many of Professor Wodziński's books. I really am sorry, maybe the professor should speak for himself..

CEZARY WODZIŃSKI: Allow me to make no comment to this introduction to 'Professor Wodziński.' I am very content, however, to see the possibility of implanting all these limbs that I have myself amputated.

The above text is a fragment of the discussion held during the symposium of the Józef Tischner Institute in Łopuszna on 5 March 2005.