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The Concept of Subjectivity in the Light of Józef Tischner's Thought

Abstract: Reverend Józef Tischner was undoubtedly one of the most outstanding Polish philosophers of the second half of the twentieth century. What we owe to this student of Roman Ingarden is the flourishing of phenomenology and the philosophy of dialog not only in our domestic philosophical, but also sociological, psychological, and anthropological thought. His philosophy of drama is an original and very important current, which is enriched not only by the “Queen of the Sciences” but also offers great support to the related sciences, particularly sociological sciences. Within them, subjectivity is an extremely important subject of contemplation. This article is a sketch of the analysis of the benefits that a sociologist, researcher of subjectivity, can derive from reading Józef Tischner's works.

Keywords: Józef Tischner, person, subjectivity, agency, the agathological horizon, the drama of subjectivity, the metaphor of the face

A Brief Introduction to the Concept of Subjectivity

The process of subjectification, as I understand it, is the process of achieving full humanity, realizing human potential, and subjectivity itself is a state of such fullness. However, it is not agency, which is often assumed in the scientific, sociological, psychological, and philosophical literature.¹ What I have

¹ Cf. Krzysztof Wielecki, “Person, Subjectivity and Agency from the Perspective of Critical Realism,” *Journal of Critical Realism*, vol. 20 (4) (2021): 202; Krzysztof Wielecki, “Subjec-

in mind when I write about the fullness of humanity is that with birth each person has certain developmental potential. (Developmental) psychologists are concerned with something like a *schedule* for such development, which includes psychological and social characteristics and the time they typically appear in the course of life of the absolute majority of people. Such attempts by Erik Erikson² or Abraham Maslow are well known. The latter is especially known for introducing the so-called Maslow's pyramid. At its top, he placed the development of self-fulfillment needs, which is experienced by only 1% of people.³ Above, there is only the phase of domination of the transcendent needs. We can guess that they are even less common. Therefore, not all people, or even a decisive minority, achieve the fullness of humanity, not in some completely abstract sense, but as human developmental potential (implicitly) given to them. What is particularly shocking is the news about the negligible percentage of people that fulfill themselves, namely, the developmental opportunities they were born with. We can probably point towards some demanding philosophical and psychological, but, above all, I suppose, sociological understanding of this mass drama of subjectivity.

There is no space here to develop the concept of subjectivity. This paper is dedicated to Józef Tischner's thought and the help that a sociologist, philosopher or psychologist who deals with subjectivity could derive from it.

As I understand it, subjectivity is a process and state that requires understanding one's own existence as *being-in* (obviously, I am referring to Heidegger and his *being-in*, as well as *being-toward*, and in fact *being-toward-death*),⁴ of being limited in our existence and in the possibilities of own cognition, of being *immersed in conscious life*. However, subjectivity, in the shape that emerges from reading many of its concepts, also requires understanding oneself as—yes—*being-toward*, but toward good, truth, freedom, and subjectivity, and also, according to some philosophers, toward God and *the Other*. Subjectivity, as I interpret it, is being toward all that man cannot understand nor achieve enough to have a certain basis for his existence. Nevertheless, subjectivity is a certain feature and condition of life within the practice of life understanding its meaning as living towards the incomprehensible Good. Subjectivity, as *being-toward-*

tivity vs. Agency: The Meaning of Karol Wojtyła's The Acting Person," *Philosophy and Canon Law*, vol. 7 (1) (2021): 1/12; Krzysztof Wielecki, *Podmiotowość w dobie kryzysu postindustrializmu. Między indywidualizmem a kolektywizmem* [Subjectivity in the Times of Post-Industrialism Crisis. Between Individualism and Collectivism] (Warszawa: Centrum Europejskie Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2003).

² Erik Erikson and Joan Erikson, *Life Cycle, Completed* (extended version) (New York, London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998).

³ Abraham Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being* (New York: Start Publishing LLC, 2012), 151.

⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996).

Good, by the will of the subject and owing to *transcendent support*, can become the basis of an ontically separate, emergent, and causative being. What is important here is the will, the free choice of subjective life, thus life, understood as a process of self-direction towards subjectivity understood as a state. It is a function of the consciously practiced idea of the Good. Because of this Good and because it can never be fully understood, a man takes up the challenge of a difficult, creative, never fully satisfying, searching existence.

The Good for which the subject lives is multi-argumentative, I believe. It has a certain pattern in which individual features and components mean, get meaning only in combination with one another.⁵ This meaning is the result of what creates it and something qualitatively different from its components. We can argue that it is ontically something new and that it is emergent, but that would require a longer development, which I cannot do here. I believe that only subjective actions (*agency*), directed by subjective features, directed at subjective values, together create a full pattern of subjectivity.

Subjectivity exists when it is chosen and being realized. This means that it is primarily a relational feature and an attribute of action. Subjectivity actualizes the subjective potential of man and enables him to act. Let us add that these are activities (*agency*) that place an individual in certain relationships, mainly with other people, but also with nature, culture, social environment, and the sphere of transcendence. It is also about activities aimed at fulfilling the subjective pattern of the Good.

So far, I have only mentioned *the narcissistic structure of subjectivity*. However, along with the claim that subjectivity equals action, we point towards the fact that it means transcending oneself, transcending the subject owing to its reflectivity, and entering into a relationship with what is beyond it. Since it is what is complex in the concept of action.⁶ Now it begins to be interesting for a sociologist. If subjectivity means duty, then of course it is towards oneself, but towards others as well, that is, from the perspective of Emmanuel Lévinas—through the face of *the Other*,⁷ really close ones. If it is a choice, it is a certain kind of own social participation and affection for a certain type of society. Society, others, in a subjective society are not a factor that degrades the individual, but, on the contrary, they strengthen the individual's developmental opportunities. It is not little. However, we understand that

⁵ Cf. Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).

⁶ Karol Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, trans. Andrzej Potocki, <https://www.scribd.com/doc/57487848/TheActing-Person>, accessed October 28, 2020; see also: Krzysztof Wielecki, "Subjectivity vs. Agency: The Meaning of Karol Wojtyła's *The Acting Person*," *Philosophy and Canon Law*, vol. 7 (1) (2021): 1/12, <https://doi.org/10.31261/PaCL.2021.07.1.05>.

⁷ See: Emanuel Lévinas, *Time and the Other*, trans. Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1987).

it is a contractual, relational, dialogical value, and behind it, there are other values—*stronger ones*.

In the pattern of *the narcissistic structure of subjectivity*, we discover that the individual, individuality is the strongest. The relational nature of subjectivity means that the Other and his subjectivity are also good. Subjectivity is, therefore, a model that includes all the above-mentioned components in the order that regulates relations between people, but also relations of people with nature, culture, society and what is transcendent. This pattern states that for me the subjective value is myself, but I am self-limiting, due to the equivalent and complementary good for me-the Other (but also the aforementioned nature, culture, etc.), behind which stands the transcendent Good, the fourth dimension of subjectivity (next to the pre-subject, narcissistic and altruistic). We can also mention the phases of subjectivity. So, let us call the first one *pre-subjective*. It is characteristic of the so-called primary narcissism, typical of a child. In the second one, the narcissistic structure of subjectivity is developed. Based on Lévinas, it could be called *the state of intoxication with one's own identity*.⁸ The third, higher, subsequent in development, possible thanks to the practices of reflective reconciliation of reference horizons with the existential order and framework of action, possible but not necessary, would be the phase of socialized or *altruistic subjectivity*. A fourth phase can also be included—let us call it *transcendentally motivated*.

Of course, one may choose to *be-toward-Good* and, on the contrary, they may be incapable of such a choice, and rather *be-toward-Evil*, which also, as it seems, exist transcendently and causes horror.⁹ Heidegger argues that anxiety, using psychological language, horror, is the result of the eschatological epiphany of *being-toward-death* as the only real perspective of man and humanity.¹⁰

Tischner and the Concept of Subjectivity

I have already mentioned that subjective existence is associated with a certain difficulty. Its nature is easier to understand thanks to Tischner, who in this

⁸ Emanuel Lévinas, *Totalité et Infini: Essais sur l'Extériorité*, [Phänomenologica 8] (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1961); Emanuel Lévinas, *Humanisme de l'Autre Homme* (Montpellier: Montpellier: Fata Morgana, 1972).

⁹ See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 179–182.

¹⁰ See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 304–311; see also: Krzysztof Wielecki, “Concerns, Horror and Instrumental Rationality,” in *The Relational Theory of Society* [Archerian Studies, 2], ed. Klaudia Śledzińska and Krzysztof Wielecki (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2020).

area continued the ideas of Blaise Pascal and Søren Aabye Kierkegaard. Man, this *thinking reed*, as the French philosopher wrote, constantly facing the difficult choice “either, or,” as the Danish thinker claimed, according to the Polish scholar, is doomed to constantly *overcome radical uncertainty*, inseparable from human life, constantly under the pressure of *illusions*. For “the visible world is an illusion of the world,”¹¹ he wrote. The aforementioned thinkers meant two varieties of faith in God: easy and difficult, and the attitude of atheism. For Tischner, of course, it was also an important issue. He pointed out that atheism does not have to be comfortable, and a certain type of religiousness may be a false escape, a source of too simple and untrue hope. This thread, present in the works of the Polish philosopher, was noticed by Marek Rembierz. He wrote that Tischner “juxtaposes the existential experience of the one who believes and one who does not believe. On the one hand, there is the believer who protects himself in a cocoon of faith that protects him, and, at the same time, is secured by institutional religion.”¹² Rembierz refers to an excerpt from an interview given by the Cracow based thinker: “Faith is pampering to some extent. Man goes to church, imagines that God is looking at him, that he is listening to him, that he forgives his guilt. When leaving, he has a better mood. [...] It is very dangerous. We are at risk of feeling like “the only children of God.” The ‘only children of God’ are the calamity of pastoral service.”¹³ However, as Rembierz writes: “On the other hand, there is an atheist, that is, one who does not hide in a religious cocoon to protect himself from dangers.”¹⁴ The human drama is exacerbated by the fact that the dilemma of faith cannot be resolved definitively and indisputably. Nor is the believer free from suffering, but he does not seek easy refuge in his devotion.

It is where an essential premise of the suffering inherent in human existence is located. According to the Polish philosopher, it has a cognitive character. The world is unknowable enough, he argued, to make the inevitable decisions making process devoid of some foundation in knowledge. The ability to discover ourselves and the world, on which we depend very much, is a matter of being or not being, it is a matter of survival. However, it is also a sense of the meaning of one’s own existence and this world. Cognition is the search for truth. And “is man able not to seek? Is it possible to have faith that would

¹¹ Józef Tischner, *Myślenie według wartości* (Kraków: Znak, 1982), 490.

¹² Marek Rembierz, “Tropy transcendencji... Współczesne myślenie religijne wobec pluralizmu światopoglądowego i relacji międzykulturowych” [Trails of Transcendence... Contemporary Religious Thinking in the Face of Ideological Pluralism and Intercultural Relations], *Świat i Słowo*, vol. 2 (23) (2014): 32.

¹³ “Przekonać Pana Boga. Z ks. Józefem Tischnerem rozmawiają Dorota Zańko i Jarosław Gowin” [To Convince God. Józef Tischner Interviewed by Dorota Zańko i Jarosław Gowin] (Kraków: Znak, 2002), 36. Unless stated otherwise, translations done by Szymon Bukal.

¹⁴ Rembierz, “Tropy transcendencji”, 32.

purge itself of the longing to understand? Is it possible to think without wanting to use one more light [...]. The search is not only a matter of this or that doctrine, a doctrine can always be adapted to the needs—it is a matter of man’s existential truth.”¹⁵

It is an important premise, but not the only one. Another one is the loneliness of man. Admittedly, it allows one *to have oneself to oneself*, yet it is also unbearable. It applies both to loneliness in relation to other people and to the completely *Other*. “The other is a suffering, which does not allow one to have oneself to oneself. We cannot live without the Other, but we cannot live with the Other either,”¹⁶ we read. In this way, man appears to us as the persona of *the drama*. It applies to its very essence, which

is of a dramatic type. [...] It means that man is a participant in a drama, and to understand man is to understand what kind of drama it is. [...] There is not a moment when he is not involved in some drama. Drama is an essential dimension of human existence. It means that man has a different attitude to the outside world and a different attitude to the people around him. The first relation is the relation of man to a stage. The stage is what a person has under his feet, on which he walks, or on which he can walk. The second relation is a dialogical relation to another human being—a relation in which a conversation dominates. The dialogical relation is born when man utters the word “you” to another man. The word “you” is the discovery of some drama that arises at this moment between man and man.¹⁷

Returning to the question of subjectivity, we could probably say that drama (a sociologist would add, also a collective one) is a dramatically (sic!) important context of subjectivity. Its most important aspect is probably the previously mentioned *Good*, towards which man *exists*. As Tischner himself wrote: “What does it mean that man is a tragic being? It means that in man’s life it is always about realizing some good, and not realizing some evil.”¹⁸

It is necessary to explain the fact that sometimes the word *good* is written by Tischner and in this text, with a lowercase letter, at other times with a capital

¹⁵ Tischner, *Myślenie według wartości*, 341–342.

¹⁶ Józef Tischner, *Spór o istnienie człowieka* [Controversy over the Existence of Man] (Kraków: Znak, 2002), 226.

¹⁷ Józef Tischner, *Filozofia człowieka. Wykłady* [Philosophy of Man. Lectures], scientific elaboration Zbigniew Stawrowski and Adam Workowski (Kraków: Instytut Myśli Józefa Tischnera, 2019), 34. Tischner clearly refers here to Martin Buber, but also to Edith Stein. See Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, trans. Ronald Gregor Smith (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1937); Edith Stein, *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*, trans. Mary Catharine Baseheart and Marianne Sawicki (Washington, D.C.: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 2000); see also: Wielecki, “Person, Subjectivity and Agency,” 368–380.

¹⁸ Tischner, *Filozofia człowieka*, 34.

letter. What kind of goods are we talking about? How do they differ? Of course, the scholar sometimes meant other people, and sometimes God. Thus, the opinion about the existence or non-existence of God is crucial here. Does disbelief exclude a serious treatment of this philosopher's concept of man? I do not think so. After all, if we do not identify the Good with God, with that completely *Other*, then we can always identify it with the idea of good as such. If it were about some specific goods related to the needs and concerns of people, we would have to stay with a lowercase letter. The choice of the transcendent good, from *the outside world*, as we might say after Heidegger, requires, admittedly, the adoption of other assumptions, but it does not exclude such an attitude. Tischner himself explained this doubt as follows: "This above which nothing greater can be conceived is the absolute Good. Is it possible that the absolute Good does not exist? The good demands, as it were, its own existence. The Absolute Good demands to exist in an absolute way. What demands existence in an absolute way, cannot fail to exist. Its existence must be such as its demand for existence. God—as the absolute Good—exists."¹⁹

We can now return to Tischner's dramatic view that "*the Other* is pain." Pain is both *the Other* and like *the others* because they limit our *self-possession*. We could say that they are a hard barrier to our selfishness and freedom, especially understood as satisfying our egoism. However, as we remember, the drama of man is that he cannot live with *the Other* and *the others*, but he also cannot live without them. Our freedom consists in the possibility and even necessity (so enslavement) of choice. The consequences of which are always difficult and painful. The key, however, is this *completely Other*. Since as we read: "Man is a being, who needs grace above all else and is capable of receiving it."²⁰

The situation in which a person finds himself in relation to God, but also towards other people, is therefore tragic. Also, in connection with the inevitable feeling of separateness and loneliness, of one's own separateness, which, as Tischner repeated, not without inspiration from Lévinas: "Most generally saying: it must be a being-for-self—an internally mediated being—it must constitute itself through another being-for-self. Being-for-self becomes itself through another being-for-self. I am for-myself through you. And you are for-yourself through me."²¹

Let us concentrate on this duality of man in the face of which, *the authenticity*, often linked to subjectivity, raises great doubts. It would be a condition, sometimes a being, and sometimes the subjectivity itself. Many authors even write about the obligation of authenticity in this connection. The linking of sub-

¹⁹ Tischner, *Spór o istnienie człowieka*, 270.

²⁰ Tischner, *Spór o istnienie człowieka*, 132.

²¹ Tischner, *Spór o istnienie człowieka*, 219.

jectivity and authenticity with freedom is especially intriguing. Man has to be authentic—but with whom or with what? With which self, is it the self-in-itself, someone completely separate who exercising freedom becomes being-in-itself, or with the Other and others in us, through whom we become that being-in-itself, we become subject?

I believe the starting point for subjectivity is issue of choice. Also, the choice of what authenticity is important to us. Is it authenticity with one who chooses selfishness, or rather altruism? When do we also have more freedom, when we choose the *Good*, or when we choose *Bad*? We see how, apart from the issue of the *Good* and *Bad*, it is absurd to reflect upon authenticity, freedom and subjectivity. It is one of the many remarks in which the reflection on Tischner's thought enriches and deepens the concept of subjectivity. It is worth recalling the philosopher's statement that "The good that is free does not want to take away the freedom of another good; it cannot want not to acknowledge the good of other. Freedom is as much a means of existence for my goodness as for your goodness."²² Freedom, I do not think so. It is rather about choosing without being limited by anything other than our own will. But subjectivity, yes.

It is about this choice that we can say, following Tischner, that it is a matter of *grace*, which, as we have read, man needs so much. Grace, as I understand it, consists in the ability to make the right choice between the Good and Evil, or rather, between Hope and Despair. I believe that the Polish philosopher would not mind using capital letters here. Since he wrote about the metaphysical nature of experiencing the Good. He wrote: "The good in Greek is called *agathon*. The experience we are attempting to describe is a radical agathological experience. This experience is also a radical metaphysical experience [...]"²³ But perhaps the experience of evil is of the same nature. Perhaps this word should also be capitalized in this case.

Here, I do believe, we need to briefly introduce the concepts of fear, dread, anxiety, and horror. It will enable a deeper understanding of the peculiarities of hope and despair, as well as of Evil, especially distinguished from evil in general, and of the Good, irreducible to any good. Martin Heidegger distinguished anxiety from fear in the following way: "We are not entirely unprepared for the analysis of anxiety. Of course it still remains obscure how this is connected ontologically with fear. Obviously these are kindred phenomena."²⁴ For the purposes of this paper, this distinction is very important. The essence is the following: "That in the face of which one has anxiety is not an entity within-the word. Thus it is essentially incapable of having an involvement. This threatening does

²² Tischner, *Spór o istnienie człowieka*, 318.

²³ Józef Tischner, *Thinking in Values*, trans. Theresa Sandok (Kraków: Znak, 2002), 54.

²⁴ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 230.

not have the character of a definite detrimentality which reaches what is threatened, and which reaches it with definite regard to a special factual potentiality-for-Being. [...] In anxiety one does not encounter this thing or that thing which, as something threatening, must have an involvement.”²⁵ Anxiety, therefore, as can be guessed, is of a transcendent character in relation to the being *within the world*, and terror—contrariwise.

Perhaps, anxiety understood in this way has to do with the psychological concept of horror. Horror is not a feeling, but, on the contrary, a state of paralysis of feelings, their disconnection in the human psyche. Alexander Lowen writes:

According to the definition, “terror” denotes an intense fear, which is somewhat prolonged and may refer to imagined future dangers. ‘Horror’ implies a sense of shock and dread. The danger to which it refers contains an element of evil and may threaten others rather than the self. Although there may be an element of fear in horror (the Latin root of the word means “great fear”), it is not dominant.²⁶

Let us be clear: “Horror is not an emotion. It mostly impacts the mind. It is stunning.”²⁷ Man in the state of horror “is frozen with terror,” as Lowen in the same place writes. Although on the outside we do not have to see clear symptoms of horror, it acts as *local anaesthesia*. Horror is the result of an encounter with evil, as if not of this world, *non-inner world*, if we are allowed to transpose Heidegger’s saying. It is transcendent, in this sense at least, that it is a state of paralysis, something that is incomprehensible to man, something that transcends him, that is outside the world, that could be considered human, that somehow has the character of an eschatological experience. I understand this character as the opening of the subject to what is so bad and frightening that it has the characteristics of an experience of evil as such, the absolute evil that stands behind the experienced, concrete, and occasional evil “of this world.” Such evil overpowers the subject, makes him completely weak and helpless, it is like an extreme encounter that pushes the pole of the moral horizon of reference.

It is not my role to present Heidegger’s thought more broadly in this article. It is enough for us to conclude that anxiety can be a special case of care, just as terror is the extreme of fear, and horror is the extreme of terror. In turn, we can understand horror as anxiety. I would like to bring this topic to an end with a sentence from the German philosopher in which he argues that

²⁵ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 231.

²⁶ Alexander Lowen, *Narcissim: Denial of the True Self* (New York: Touchstone Books, 1997), 132.

²⁷ Lowen, *Narcissim: Denial of the True Self*, 133.

“Anxiety makes manifest in Dasein its *Being towards* its ownmost potentiality-for-Being—that is, its *Being-free for* the freedom of choosing itself and taking hold of itself.”²⁸

As we can see, the concepts of freedom in Heidegger and Tischner differ fundamentally, although the Polish thinker knew and highly valued the works of the German scholar. But why, we may ask, should man even take the perspective of Evil into account? Certainly, because it is universally present, it is the object of every human being, directly or indirectly. As Tischner wrote, “the visible world is an illusion of the world.”²⁹ Each person more or less frequently encounters suffering, sometimes it comes *from the outside of the world*, and he cannot help but ask about the sources of evil. And to this question, the philosopher answers not directly, but emphatically: “This question has one simple origin—the light coming from good.”³⁰ So here we have a peculiar variation on the concept of evil by St. Augustine: the belief in the absurdity and extraordinary nature of evil has its source in the feeling of the Good. It can liberate us from despair and direct us towards hope.

Thus, the stimulus and the force necessary to choose subjectivity would be the hope for the Good. However, to have hope is not easy. Tischner wrote a lot about the present day as a time of crisis. In *Thinking in Values* we can read: “We are undoubtedly in a state of crisis. The crisis has reached the very foundation of our humanity: it has shaken our relationships with one another and with God.”³¹ As can be inferred from the reading of the thinker, this negative state is the result of civilization processes, including cultural ones. These include the unfulfilled promises of Enlightenment. It reads: “The Enlightenment did not overcome the evil of history, but replaced the crimes of the ‘superstitious’ with the crimes of the ‘enlightened.’”³² The philosopher, when considering this crisis, pointed to “a deep crisis of interpersonal communication” “despite the technological achievements, despite the radio, television, film,” the effect of which is, among others, “the growing loneliness of man in the crowd.”³³ He even wrote about *the horizon of betrayal* as a growing awareness of “loneliness and powerlessness.” He explained this concept more closely: “The horizon of betrayal is nowadays a component of the world view (or perhaps ideology) of man who has already abandoned the old cultural environment, and is still not fully rooted in the new one. Rapid social and political changes, migrations of populations and the disappearance of the existing stereotypes of

²⁸ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 232.

²⁹ Tischner, *Thinking in Values*, 54.

³⁰ Tischner, *Thinking in Values*, 54.

³¹ Tischner, *Thinking in Values*, 59.

³² Tischner, *Spór o istnienie człowieka*, 35.

³³ Józef Tischner, *Świat ludzkiej nadziei* (Kraków: Znak, 2014), 102.

behavior create a feeling of insecurity and loneliness.”³⁴ We read it and immediately remember José Ortega y Gasset’s words³⁵ about the rebellion of the masses. But contemporary civilization processes come to mind even more, with their migrations, secularization, and the disintegration of a culture. They undermine the foundations of individual and collective identity. As we read: “The boundaries between what is constant and what is variable are blurring. Since nothing in the world is certain, there is no basis for stability in it.”³⁶ It is the basis of the fairly widespread confusion of people and the resulting disorientation, the choice of Evil.

In ideologies that respond to these ailments of the world and of man, there is a more and more common belief that the betrayal in question is inevitable, that it is even something necessary. As we read: “It is even said that it is simply a necessity: do we not have to constantly betray what is passing in order to be able to commune with what is to come? Whoever is afraid of betrayal ossifies in conservatism [...] The whole man is changeability and passing; the obligations of youth cannot be fulfilled in old age, because those who made them are long gone. Sometimes a betrayal is introduced in being with the other quite consciously. It is said: we will be together as long as we share happiness; when this is over, each of us will go and look for new happiness. Betrayal is an expression of freedom and the price to be paid for momentary happiness since non-momentary happiness is beyond all hope.”³⁷ Here again I will slightly protest to add that betrayal is as much an expression of freedom as fidelity is. For freedom is a choice. On the other hand, the choice of good is a subjective choice, and the choice of evil—is the opposite.

Tischner seems to be extremely accurate in describing the contemporary transformations of morality, which feed on many varieties of humanistic reflection, with postmodern philosophy at the forefront, which have “strayed under the thatched roofs” to such an extent that they sometimes reach the cobblestones of mass culture. But what drives me here is primarily the question of human subjectivity, as well as hope and the Good, the importance of which for subjectivity was the subject of earlier reflection. Tischner has no good news for us. He writes:

This contemporary “uprooted” and “being uprooted” man is still struggling to free himself from the obsession of loneliness and to feel next to a loved one who would not abandon him in the moment of test. [...] The aim is, therefore, to bind one’s neighbor with the kind of attachment that exists between

³⁴ Tischner, *Świat ludzkiej nadziei*, 103–104.

³⁵ José Ortega y Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses*, trans. authorized by Sr. Ortega y Gasset (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1957).

³⁶ Tischner, *Świat ludzkiej nadziei*, 104.

³⁷ Tischner, *Świat ludzkiej nadziei*, 104.

creatures incapable of hope, an almost animal attachment. To this end, it is necessary [...] to undercut the awareness of independence and freedom in the neighbor. Being unable to comprehend neither the mystery of the trust of hope nor the act of accepting someone else's hope, one strives to become the sole object of one's neighbor's hope. [...] The aim becomes to capture one's neighbor completely."³⁸

Krzysztof Wieczorek wrote about this thread of Tischner's thoughts and about his philosophy of meeting which would help to understand the mentioned phenomena and processes:

Philosophy's response to this tragic nature is the search for a foundation in the lasting values, in mature, strong hope and in building a community around these values and around this hope. [...] The philosophy of encounter [...] sees a deep crisis in the motivation of human actions, and in the search for ways out, it is not content with suggesting ad-hoc solutions but acquires a universal dimension by pointing to the need to implement the highest values available to man.³⁹

Thus, we were again directed to the issue of values, and in particular to the category of the Good, the key category, as we already know, for human subjectivity. As Pavol Dancák aptly writes:

According to Tischner, man is an agathological being, he is someone directed towards good and capable of overcoming evil. Goodness is visible not only in individual actions but most of all in the whole way of being a person. It radiates through his speech, his way of thinking and relating to others. Even if this man does nothing, we can all sense: he is a good man. There is one thing that draws attention to this behavior: a good man "allows everyone to be." You talk and he listens, letting you be. He speaks, and you know: he lets you be. It is different with bad people. You feel that they would gladly chase you off. A good person discovers goodness in you. When working on your own goodness, you need to see the good around you. Who sees evil at every turn thinks to himself: am I going to fool myself? Well, no. The world is full of goodness, the evil ones rather fool around.⁴⁰

³⁸ Tischner, *Świat ludzkiej nadziei*, 104–105.

³⁹ Krzysztof Wieczorek, *Dwie filozofie spotkania. Konfrontacja myśli Józefa Tischnera i Andrzeja Nowickiego* [Two Philosophies of Encounter. Confrontation of the Thought of Józef Tischner and Andrzej Nowicki] (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 1990), 95.

⁴⁰ Pavol Dancák, "Człowiek – wolność – dobro – prawda jako horyzont myślenia o wychowaniu w filozofii Józefa Tischnera" [Man – Freedom – Good – Truth as a Horizon for Reflecting on Education in Józef Tischner's philosophy], *Polska Myśl Pedagogiczna*, vol. 5 (2019): 111–112.

I think that Dancák very accurately characterized the essence of Tischner's view of man, pointing to good, but dialogical good, not devoid of tension, which is the dimension of the drama. For Tischner's predilections to *encounter*, to *dialog*, to *the drama*, which takes place between *personae dramatis*, point to other people as those who betray or not, isolate us or accompany us, subjectify us or on the contrary—they objectify us. The Good is a source of hope, even, perhaps especially, in suffering. As Tischner wrote while explaining his understanding of the metaphor of *face*:

The face is the expression of an existential movement in which man tries to justify the fact that he is, placing his existence under the protection of the good that brings him hope. Because man believes: only the good is capable of saving. So, there is no revelation of a face without some crucifix in its background. But the face is not a reflection of the crucifix, but rather an incarnation of the glory that comes from the way in which a person addresses his crucifix.⁴¹

Tischner, referring to Husserl, wrote about the experience of the face as *the basic experience*. Its *revelation* is the source of the drama. Tischner also uses the term *introductory description*, “Introductory description, as opposed to the pointing description, directs our attention to the horizon, that is, to the background, thanks to which the face can reveal itself, then to the subject that is able to receive such a revelation, then again on the bond it creates between the revealer and the revelator. [...] The first horizon is the agathological horizon. Lévinas wrote about it in more detail, emphasizing that it is constituted by an infinite good that ‘is’ beyond being and non-being. As for the subjective aspect, I left it as Lévinas put it: the subjective condition of the experience of the face is desire, as opposed to desires, and the bond between me and others is the bond of responsibility, which includes both thinking and freedom.”⁴²

Here we come to the essence of Tischner's view, which, I believe, brings us to the question of subjectivity, as I have presented it in this text. *The face* is the key. For “the face reveals itself as a gift of an agathological horizon, a horizon in which good and evil take the form of a drama, and the drama heralds the possibility of a tragedy or a human victory.”⁴³ This victory, I believe, opens up the perspective of subjectivity. It is the result of a choice that Heidegger rather refused us, and which possibility was firmly confirmed by Józef Tischner. But the face is also a bridge between what is individual and what is collective. Also between intrinsic motivation (desires, needs, cares and drives), various indi-

⁴¹ Józef Tischner, *Filozofia dialogu* [Philosophy of Dialogue] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 2006), 64.

⁴² Tischner, *Filozofia dialogu*. 63.

⁴³ Tischner, *Filozofia dialogu*, 64.

vidual *specific goods* and the common good in binary and plural relationships (including relationships with collective abstract entities where there is no direct communication). The face is also the medium of the relationship between man and people in their communities with *the Face* of this completely *the Other*, and through it, also with culture and nature. The metaphor of the face defines *the space* of meeting all those dimensions in which the issue of individual subjectivity and—what sociologists are more interested in—different communities is contained and resolved. It defines *the space* of the drama of subjectivity and the choices that are decisive for it.

To summarize, one of the most important axes along which the drama of subjectivity unfolds, and the subject of one of the most dramatic choices is the orientation towards the *Good* or *Evil*, and what this entails, the choice between hope and despair. As Tischner wrote: “Despair is a chosen state. It does not come to man without his consent. However, man does not choose despair for himself. Despair comes when man chooses evil and does so against the Good which has chosen him [...] Living his curse, man consents to be in despair—despair is his breath.”⁴⁴

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⁴⁴ Tischner, *Filozofia dialogu*, 246.

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Le concept de subjectivité à la lumière de la pensée de Józef Tischner

Résumé

Le père Józef Tischner était sans aucun doute l’un des philosophes polonais les plus remarquables de la seconde moitié du XXème siècle. On lui doit en grande partie (il fut un élève de

Roman Ingarden) l'épanouissement de la phénoménologie et de la philosophie du dialogue dans la pensée philosophique polonaise, mais ses oeuvres ont également marqué la pensée sociologique, psychologique et anthropologique. Sa philosophie du théâtre est une tendance originale et très importante qui non seulement enrichit la « reine des sciences » elle-même, mais en même temps offre un grand soutien aux sciences connexes. Ici, en particulier, je pense aux sciences sociologiques. En leur sein, un sujet de réflexion extrêmement important est la subjectivité. Le présent article est une esquisse de l'analyse des bénéfices qu'un sociologue, chercheur de la subjectivité, peut se procurer grâce à la lecture des travaux de Józef Tischner.

Mots-clés: Józef Tischner, personne, subjectivité, agence, l'horizon agathologique, le drame de la subjectivité, la métaphore du visage

Krzysztof Wielecki

Il concetto di soggettività alla luce del pensiero di Józef Tischner

Sommario

Il padre Józef Tischner è stato senza dubbio uno dei più illustri filosofi polacchi della seconda metà del XX secolo. A lui, allievo di Roman Ingarden, dobbiamo in gran parte (fu allievo di) lo sviluppo della fenomenologia e della filosofia del dialogo nel pensiero filosofico polacco, ma le sue opere segnarono anche il pensiero sociologico, psicologico e antropologico. La sua filosofia teatrale è una tendenza originale e molto importante che non solo arricchisce la “regina delle scienze”, ma allo stesso tempo fornisce un grande supporto alle scienze correlate. Si pensa in particolare alle scienze sociologiche. Al loro interno, un tema di riflessione estremamente importante è la soggettività. Questo articolo è uno schizzo di analisi dei benefici che un sociologo, ricercatore della soggettività, può trarre dalla lettura dell'opera di Józef Tischner.

Parole chiave: Józef Tischner, persona, soggettività, agency, l'orizzonte agatologico, il dramma della soggettività, la metafora del volto