

AXIOLOGICAL AND PEDAGOGICAL THOUGHT OF FR. PROF. JÓZEF TISCHNER (1931-2000)

Myśl aksjologiczno-pedagogiczna ks. prof. Józefa Tischnera (1931-2000)

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Introduction

Józef Tischner is a person not only known and valued in the Polish Catholic intelligentsia, but also in circles that are highly critical of Christian tradition and culture. The ability to see similarities and common perspectives of thinking, inner freedom and openness to others are just some of the characteristics that made him win over others. As a professor of philosophy, publicist, priest and active commentator on social life, he became a natural authority for many both in the past and today. Criticized by many, especially for his independent and polemical attitude towards the activities of the institutions of the Catholic Church, of which he himself was a devoted member. Especially in today's situation, deep crises and disputes around Christianity in Poland, he is a person willingly quoted and particularly valued. Scientific career in the field of philosophy of Józef Tischner begins in a dispute with his own intellectual tradition founded on Thomistic philosophy. Participant of seminars with Roman Ingarden sets new paths in Polish Catholic thought, which at that time was directly influenced by the tradition of thinking based on classical Thomism. Doctoral thesis written under the supervision of Ingarden entitled *The Transcendental Ego in the Philosophy of Edmund Husserl*, and then a habilitation dissertation entitled *The Phenomenology of Egotic Consciousness* profiled the author's innovative (based on Catholic thought) philosophical and intellectual interests¹.

The following text is an attempt to capture Tischner's philosophical work in the context of the issues of general education, thanks to which the conclusions contained herein fit into the discourse of general pedagogy. I'm talking here in particular about selected categories in the author's output, which fund a comprehensive and coherent pedagogical concept. The analysis begins with the category of good, which is the foundation of the philosophy education, then, I will describe the concepts of hope and freedom understood as goals and educational axioms. Thanks to these ontological and axiological perspectives, it will be possible to indicate the educational tools and methods of action, which here are the space for dialogue and meeting. The primary goal of the text is to combine the above elements into a coherent whole to select and specify the concept of the pedagogy of Józef Tischner's pedagogy of drama on this basis. Such a task seems extremely difficult, especially as the author avoided systemic and strict assigning his philosophical work to a uniform and hermetic tradition or trend. Accordingly, it could be possible to assign his thoughts to a uniform and coherent theory of upbringing if not because he admitted that his philosophy was founded initially on pedagogical responsibility. *I do not deal with the philosophy of upbringing directly, but I touch upon it insofar as it relates to man's philosophy. And it obviously is*². In the literature on the subject, discussions about the importance and role of pedagogical thought in the entire output of Józef Tischner continue to this day³.

1. The concept of good

¹ W. Bonowicz, Tischner. Biografia. Kraków 2020, pp. 179-203.

² J. Tischner, *Droga Sokratesa i perć Sabaty*, „Znak”, 11(1996), p. 42.

³ See: I. Strapko, *Apologia nadziei w filozofii i pedagogice Józefa Tischnera*, Kraków 2004; A. Ryk, *(Po)nowoczesny podmiot w doświadczeniu spotkania. Antropologiczne aspekty pedagogiki spotkania*, Kraków 2006; P. Walczak, *Wychowanie jako spotkanie. Józefa Tischnera filozofia jako źródła inspiracji pedagogicznej*, Kraków 2007; A. Ryk, *Pedagogika dramatu. Poszukiwania antropologiczno- metodologiczne*, Kraków 2008; K. Śmietana, *Myśl pedagogiczna Józefa Tischnera*, Kraków 2008; D. Wajsprych, *Pedagogia agatologiczna. Studium hermeneutyczno-krytyczne projektu etycznego Józefa Tischnera*, Toruń-Olsztyn 2011; S. Dąbrowski, *Pedagogika religii Józefa Tischnera*.

The concept of good (agathology: from the Greek *agathón*-good) occupies an essential place in the work of Józef Tischner, as it constitutes the understanding and justification of the axiological sphere. It includes a broad perspective on the interpretation of the hierarchy of values, ontology of the existence of the world and the human person, the theory of consciousness, and the structure of human development. A person in their existence participates in the sphere of axiology, which means that they, consciously or not, accept the structure of given values as valid, regardless of the decision about their objectivity or subjectivity. Values present themselves in a heterogeneous way, evoking fundamentally different and sometimes even opposite interpretations as to the understanding of their presence and activity in the world. Moreover, this presence may also reveal itself in a diverse and heterogeneous way for a particular person. How does that happen? According to Tischner, all typically human reality is constituted in a dialogical dimension, which means that the meeting of I with Thou is the primary and fundamental element of creating an individual identity. Dialogicality, i.e., the form of contact (existence) with the met another person, takes place based on the mutual experience of a separate, often unidentified hierarchy of values. On this basis, the agathological sphere is revealed, which introduces rules and indicates the presence of a possible, original order of the existence of these values. We are discussing man's existence in the unobvious dichotomy of the good and the bad. Meeting people is a plane in which each party reveals and understands this dichotomy differently. However, what merges both perspectives is a real and direct experience of what is good or bad in life. For Tischner, this experience reveals the primordial agathological nature of reality. Namely, when we experience evil in a meeting with another person (in various forms), naturally, we feel astonishment, opposition, rebellion, and disagreement. On the other hand, when in the same event, evil is overcome or limited in any way, there is a sense of justice and a conviction of restored order. Likewise, in the case of the experience of the good from the other person, where it is revealed and implemented in the dialogical sphere, there is a feeling of acceptance, satisfaction, and agreement. On the other hand, when it is reduced, negated, or marginalized in any form, there is resistance, disagreement, and a desire to restore order. Therefore, the sphere of agathology is not a space in which the good naturally dominates or wins. On the contrary, it is unknown, unpredictable, and impossible to control because the values of both parties in the meeting often appear as different and unidentical. The original reveals only in an actual meeting here and now, in a concrete reality in which different values come to the fore and, thus, quite often enter into a fundamental dispute. The agathological order reveals the heterogeneous and dynamic nature of human existence, in which the axiologically basic and primary reveals itself only based on the encounter between I and Thou. *The agathological makes one think. That which is axiological points at directions of action. That which is agathological causes existence to become a problem. The axiological points to ways of salvation. The agathological knocks man out of his present rhythm of day and night, knocks him into a border situation in which freedom accepts or rejects itself, reason wants to or does not want to be the reason, and conscience disavows or avows itself. That which is axiological is the space in which freedom, reason, and conscience operate. The size of this space depends on the sense of human power. Hence it is getting smaller or bigger. The agathological awakens a sense of power and powerlessness. Man is aware of the boundaries of humanity*⁴.

The concept of good on the educational grounds in the literature on the subject has already been described quite well and included in the framework of agathological pedagogy⁵. This perspective system-wise, but also tool-wise, indicates the following fields of interpretation that are very important for both pedagogical theory and practice: firstly, it refers to the dynamic structure of reality as a natural ontological state; secondly, it indicates a difficult to predict, since variable and heterogeneous, space of axiology affecting human activities and interactions; thirdly, it describes the dialogical (relational) plane of constituting human identity; fourthly, it reveals the origin of anthropological knowledge, the sources of which are always sought in immanent human experiences; and fifthly, it

⁴ J. Tischner, *Filozofia dramatu*, Kraków 2001, pp.51-52.

⁵ See: P. Walczak, *Wychowanie jako spotkanie*; D. Wajsprych, *Pedagogia agatologiczna*; S. Dąbrowski, *Pedagogika religii Józefa Tischnera*.

indicates the need for a self-critical attitude, especially in the field of practical implementation of the so-called cardinal values⁶.

In educational practice, each of these claims directly impacts actions. The thesis about the dynamic (processual) structure of reality entails recognizing that education, especially school as an institution, in its mission should include strategies for predicting future cultural and social processes and provide content preparing for life in "tomorrow". Creating concepts, curricula, or educational paths that take into account only today's challenges is definitely not enough. For instance⁷, there is the project called "education of tomorrow" that shows education as a sphere that is not so much supposed to socialize a person to a specific socio-cultural reality but rather to give them skills that will allow them to understand and find their place in the world both here and now, as well as in the future⁸. The second element, indirectly resulting from the first, speaks of the constant presence of an axiological difference between people, the effect of which is the unpredictability of actions and interactions. In connection with the above, there is a postulate of the necessary presence of axiological issues within the educational content (in the description and operation), which would not only enable recognition and understanding of own (student's and teacher's) hierarchies of values but which would also indicate the constant presence of another, sometimes opposite, way of understanding axiologically fundamental matters. Such awareness will not only make it possible to build self-reflection in the sphere of values of each learning process participant but also include competencies and skills related to coping with a diverse and non-identical world in the educational process. This, in turn, may lead to another practical proposal corresponding with the assumption of Tischner's dialogical nature of all interpersonal relations, namely, the phenomenon of constituting (building, accumulating, expanding) human identity based on a deep relationship with another human being. Here, dialogicality is a kind of dependence of I on Thou, but also Thou on I. It is the recognition of partnership as a principle that creates and determines how to understand the world in which another person appears. Understanding the other in terms of partnership is a recognition of equality between I and Thou in the ontological and axiological sense, not in the epistemological sense. The educational difference between teacher and student is irreducible, but their status as participants in the learning process is identical. In school practice, this is not only a proposal of close and direct relations between the teacher and the student but, above all, seeing this relationship as mutually constituting both parties of this process. Another postulate resulting from the claim about the sources of anthropological knowledge, which are located in the individual's inner experiences, is the need to adapt elements of practice, experience, and personal experience in the learning process. In other words, it is a proposal to base educational processes on the skills of a free transition from theory and knowledge to empiricism and application⁹. It is necessary to introduce not only elements of practice and individual experience and action at school (e.g., project method) but to recognize these elements as equivalent to the cognitive order – theory and knowledge. The last element, somewhat evaluative and critical of the above strategies, is the postulate of a special attentiveness towards the autocritical and self-reflective sphere of the participants in the educational process. With such a strong emphasis on the issues of the meaning and importance of inner experiences of the individual within educational processes, such mechanisms should be introduced that will protect one against totalizing and imposing one's own position on others. According to Tischner, we can defend our values even at the cost of betraying them¹⁰. When teaching freedom, it is easy to limit it; when educating for the good, it can be appropriated; when talking about respect and authority, it is often only about power. All the elements mentioned above constituting agatological pedagogy create the school's image as a place where one of the superior activities should

⁶ The arrangement of these categories directly corresponds to the structure of phenomenological analysis contained in the work *Spór o istnienie człowieka*. See: J. Tischner, *Spór o istnienie człowieka*, Znak, Kraków 2001, pp. 217-261.

⁷ An example of such a theoretical and empirical project may be publications within the framework of the Tatra Academic Seminars entitled "Education of tomorrow". See: *Edukacja jutra: Tatrzkańskie Seminarium Naukowe*, eds K. Denek, T. Zimny, Częstochowa 1999 and subsequent editions.

⁸ See: *Edukacja jutra: zróżnicowane obszary rozwoju edukacji instytucjonalnej*, eds A. Kamińska-Malek, P. Oleśiewicz, Warsaw 2020.

⁹ D. Klus-Stańska, *Paradygmaty dydaktyki. Myśleć teorię o praktyce*, Warszawa 2018, pp. 19-28.

¹⁰ J. Tischner, *Spór o istnienie człowieka*, Kraków 2011, pp. 17-18.

be the exercise of the moral sense. It is primarily a project that points to the need to build education based on deep interpersonal relationships, the common foundation of which is openness to contact with differences in understanding and perceiving values. This sphere seems to be an extremely important challenge for education (including religious education) of the 21st century¹¹.

2. The concept of hope and freedom

The categories of hope and freedom in J. Tischner's work are inextricably linked. Hope, in its most profound sense, is a space that reveals values to man so that he can discover himself as a value. Consequently, he revives in himself the strength and power to act, which brings him closer to the knowledge about himself. Without hope, he loses touch with who he is because his existence has no justification and thus cannot oppose evil. Evil is a threat that lurks against every I from Thou. It is the possibility of losing access to value, including the value that is man himself. For Tischner, I, by its very nature, is axiological and agatological, that is, seeking value and oriented towards the experience of good. Thanks to value and good, meaning and willingness to act appear. Good somehow opens man to the world and himself; hope, in turn, sustains the existence of values. Evil in the sphere of I reveals itself as opposed to activity and action, guides a man into self-destruction, and withdraws him from the world. Hope manifests itself most fully based on the theory of the good, while the theory reveals the existential axiom, which is freedom. *Freedom is a unique ethical value as its realization determines the realization of all other personal values [English translation source]*¹² According to Tischner, at the deepest experience level, freedom manifests itself on at least two fundamentally different levels. On one, freedom is understood as a choice that chooses itself; the motivation of its action is to realize the existence of freedom in the sphere of partial or total captivity. Only this moment allows man to transition to the second plane, where the choice is made as further action. It follows that the original existential experience is to exist in some kind of enslavement. This, in turn, is conditioned by the structure of a human being, in which the event of meeting another human being takes place, which opens up the possibility of, e.g., help and support or injury and rejection. Agathology shows the horizon on which a person can go, but this journey takes place in the company of another person. The other person, like I, also desires to realize values in various ways, including those that contradict the hierarchy of I. Here again, the category of hope reveals itself again, playing a vital role. Knowing the danger that another person can bring, one constantly looks for an ally and companion for the shared path. There is no question of the so-called blind or pure optimism of life, which in a way projects positive decisions for a reality that is much more heterogeneous and complex. Instead, it is about seeing a mutual situation of being entangled in a relationship, which by nature is a sphere of ambivalence and unpredictability. It is a sphere in which I can be attacked and denied by Thou, but it may well be strengthened and rescued by the encountered Thou. The unpredictability of the meeting situation is that we can experience acceptance and rejection in the same place. In other words, Tischner defines it as the dramatic sphere of human existence¹³. However, this difficulty does not end there. A similar process takes place not only in the I-Thou relationship but also in the inner I-I relationship. Here, too, hope plays a similar role. Where a man initially chooses freedom, then acts within it and makes choices in the logic of freedom, he can become an ally or an enemy to himself. The choice of freedom not only does not guarantee the choice of the good path as an opening and existentially positive action. It is the freedom that realizes and reveals the responsibility of I towards itself. This is a crucial moment. In an entanglement in evil, there may be a tendency to negate the value, which is I itself, in the sphere of freedom. The free man realizes his own participation and responsibility in the evil created by himself. This realization can drive him into denial and condemnation of his Self; he can undermine himself as a value. At this point, too, the most primal and basic structure of hope is revealed, which not so much does not allow for the loss of I as a value, but rather indicates

¹¹ S. Dąbrowski, *Myślenie filozoficzne w edukacji religijnej. Spór Józefa Tischnera z polskim tomizmem w perspektywie pedagogicznoreligijnej*, Toruń 2021.

¹² Idem, *Myślenie według wartości*, Znak, Kraków 2000, p.195.

¹³ Idem, *Filozofia dramatu*, Znak, Kraków 2001, p. 95

that I naturally have such a dualistic structure of being. Therefore, thanks to hope, I somehow sustain itself in existence as a value and justifies itself¹⁴.

The concept of hope and freedom in education is today not only the fundamental axioms but instead the tasks and goals in the socio-cultural reality of the 21st century¹⁵. "[...] *only those who have hope can teach and nurture. (...) [...] they teach by shaping the hopes of pupils. Education is work upon the spirit - work according to hope. [tłumaczenie własne]*"¹⁶. The relationship between hope and freedom - especially in education - reveals not only a fairly natural thesis that it is the teacher who is, at least in part, responsible for the condition of the student's hope. However, the issue is much more complex here. In the traditional understanding of education and the school system, it is the teacher who creates a space for the development and maturation of the student, in which he organizes the sphere of development and growth in freedom, including the transfer of the ability to associate the categories of responsibility with actions. These are pretty optimistic (idealistic) but also static views of the teaching process¹⁷. In the current pedagogical literature on the subject, the need to switch from the paradigm of teaching, i.e., a relationship based on the vertical hierarchy, to the paradigm of learning, i.e., a relationship based on a more horizontal hierarchy, in which the central point is the process of "learning"¹⁸ and at least a partial partnership between the teacher and the student. At this point, the logic of hope and freedom reveals one of the profound truths regarding the relationship between the teacher and the student in contemporary education. This is a situation of relationality, where the teacher evokes the student's hope and freedom, but also the student, in a way, in response, building his own construct of hope and freedom – provides feedback, which is the motive force for yet another evoking of the teacher's hope and freedom. This points to the situation that "(...) *you and I, a pupil and a teacher, ride the same wagon. No one stands on the roof. Our wagon belongs to us in common. If the wagon goes into pieces, if our hope turns out to be illusory, we all will suffer*"¹⁹. We are not dealing here with the logic of a vicious circle because hope and freedom begin hermeneutic work for the sake of oneself (I) and the other person (Thou) in the educational process. The vision of the learning process outlined here, correlated with the Tischner concept, reveals not only the sphere of optimism and a positive image of development processes. The relationality and reciprocity of the participants in this activity, in which the lack of hope and freedom, especially in the area of teacher's experience, directly determines and translates into the manner of implementation of each educational mission, comes to the fore. A man who chooses freedom can become a source of freedom and hope for others. On the other hand, the one who has given up his freedom and exists in the sphere of captivity, which means that he does not have access to his own hope, provides such an image of reality to himself and others. The conclusion for educational practice is quite clear. When the teacher has access to his own freedom and hope, the student has the opportunity to discover his own limitations and determination and thus can take autonomous actions to get out of this state and gain freedom. By experiencing freedom, he revives his own hope, which resonates with the teacher's hope. Otherwise, when the teacher participates in the structure of slavery, he thus confirms and legitimizes the universal enslavement of human existence. This experience establishes a relationship with a student who, without experiencing the testimony of freedom, does not experience the limits of his own enslavement, and therefore no hope is born in him. In empirical experience, this is often shown by the attitude of negation and resistance or passivity and withdrawal. The dependence of the structure of education on the category of hope and freedom is analogous to the so-called "self-fulfilling prophecy" process. When hope is realized and freedom overcomes slavery, change can occur, especially the bottom-up and personal one. Otherwise, there is acceptance of the existing reality and passivity but also resistance to minor change. In the theory and practice of education, the proposal resulting from the thought of Józef Tischner is not groundbreaking or innovative. Its originality is expressed rather in

¹⁴ Idem, *Spór o istnienie człowieka*, p. 282.

¹⁵ See: *Edukacja, wartości, kontrowersje*, eds S. Dąbrowski, M. Obrycka, Gdańsk 2017.

¹⁶ J. Tischner, *Etyka solidarności*, Znak, Kraków 1981, p. 88.

¹⁷ D. Klus-Stańska, *Paradygmaty dydaktyki*, pp. 59-109.

¹⁸ M. Żylińska, *Dydaktyka konstruktywistyczna*, Toruń 2013.

¹⁹ J. Tischner, *Etyka solidarności*, p. 91.

the unequivocal emphasis that the source and place of possible educational change is located in the sphere of the individual Self and the relationship between Me and You. It is a man who acts despite and in resistance to external systemic, program and organizational determinants who pursues his own goals, thus revealing to others the existence of such a possibility. This situation has the potential to trigger a bottom-up change, a qualitative change that can translate into a broader change²⁰.

Summery

The pedagogical thought of Józef Tischner, resulting from the concept of freedom and hope as well as agathology, focuses mainly on the relationship between the teacher and the student. It is a vision of education in which its participants are aware of their own role, commitment, but also co-responsibility. In the institutional space, it means seeing school as a meeting place with an axiological difference (normative, ideological, religious), i.e. with the other person's world, with all its potential, but also limitations and existential burdens. Three axiological elements, i.e. good as the foundation of education, hope as a tool and freedom as its goal, constitute the skeleton of Tischner's proposal. The vision outlined here assumes a very specific ontology or mission of education, which may be an important proposal in the 21st century education. Namely, it is recognized that the basic goal of human development is the pursuit of autonomy, emancipation, awareness, as well as the acquisition of a critical attitude towards participation in individual and social processes and interactions. It seems that on the basis of practice, a school based on the indicated axioms internally bursts traditional educational institutions whose goals are formulated around the categories of socialization, adaptation or control²¹. *The most exciting and beautiful problem is how a person can awaken in another person a sense of his freedom because we usually think about what I should do to direct the other the way we like it. However, to direct the other is to play a game with them. Maybe even take control of them. Meanwhile, the most profound educational problem is not how to control a person but how to awaken their humanity. And that humanity is freedom*²².

Streszczenie:

Tekst skupia się przede wszystkim na elementach twórczości filozoficznej ks. prof. Józefa Tischnera, aby wydobyć z nich ich potencjał edukacyjny. Tezą podstawową artykułu jest uznanie dorobku Autora jako źródła nie tylko inspiracji dla polskiej tradycji pedagogicznej, ale przede wszystkim widzianej jako całościowy i spójny koncept edukacyjno-wychowawczy. Dla uzasadnienia tezy sproblematyzowano podstawowe koncepcje: dobra, nadziei, wolności i autonomii, by na tej podstawie przynajmniej częściowo odsłonić spójną koncepcję pedagogiczną. Z kolei całej analizie przyświeca nadrzędny cel weryfikacji, czy propozycja ta jest nie tylko do dziś aktualna, ale przede wszystkim, czy ma potencjał odpowiadać na wyzwania postawione przed edukacją w Polsce w trzeciej dekadzie XXI wieku.

Słowa kluczowe: ks. Józef Tischner, filozofia, pedagogika, pedagogika chrześcijańska, edukacja XXI wieku.

Summary:

The axiological and pedagogical thought of Józef Tischner (1931-2000)

The text focuses primarily on the elements of the philosophical work of Józef Tischner to extract their educational potential. The basic thesis of the article is the recognition of the author's achievements as a source of inspiration not only for the Polish pedagogical tradition, but above all seen as a comprehensive and coherent educational concept. To justify the thesis, the following basic concepts of good, hope, freedom and autonomy were problematized in order to at least partially reveal a coherent pedagogical concept on this basis. In turn, the overall analysis is guided by the overarching

²⁰ See: *Alternatywy w edukacji*, eds B. Śliwerski, A. Rozmus, Kraków-Rzeszów 2018.

²¹ S. Dąbrowski, *Myślenie filozoficzne w edukacji religijnej*, p.15-20.

²² W. Bereś, A. Więcek Baron, *Tischner: życie w opowieściach*, p. 9.

goal of verifying whether this proposal is not only valid today, but above all, whether it has the potential to respond to the challenges posed by education in Poland in the third decade of the 21st century.

Keywords: Józef Tischner, philosophy, pedagogy, Christian pedagogy, education in the 21st century.

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