

**Artur Jochlik**  
(Katowice)

## **THE ANTI-HEGELIAN ASPECT OF TISCHNER'S THEORY OF TRUTH**

### **Abstract**

It is stated both by Tischner and his scholars that he follows the footsteps of Hegel. Yet thus far no one – including Tischner himself – was talking about exactly this aspect of Tischner's thought that is anti-Hegelian. The best way to do that is to address the issue of truth. Tischner's theory of truth is anti-Hegelian because Tischner puts emphasize on the word "feeling", while at the same time describing his distrust for ontology, which leads him to two things: he thinks about truth first and foremost as a kind of value which is not privileged among other values, and he thinks too little about society. So it is anti-Hegelian because it denies the requirement of Hegel's science as being the true knowledge of spirit about spirit. In order to understand more from Tischner's philosophy independently of the issue of Hegel's philosophy, one should take into consideration Tischner's theory of evil.

**Key words:** Tischner, truth, Hegel, freedom, evil.

In this article I put forward two theses: A) The anti-Hegelian aspect of Tischner's understanding of truth comes from the emphasis on the topic of feelings. B) In order to understand Tischner's view on truth, one has to start not with Hegel (one cannot free himself from Hegel by only constantly negating him), but with that what is to a large extent independent of the context of the history of philosophy. Only then one can proceed to look for that context, keeping in mind the original insight that Tischner brings to the table. We can find that original insight within Tischner's considerations of evil.

## 1. The truth in Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit

Hegel tells us that the true shape in which truth exists can only be a scientific system (*PhG*: §5),<sup>1</sup> that is: truth can have an element of its existence only in a concept (not in an ordinary image) (*PhG*: §6). Moreover, one must express the truth as being a subject (*PhG*: §17). Truth is also the whole which makes progress to its finished shape (*PhG*: §20). That is to say, truth is not a mere correspondence of thinking to the facts, as Hegel demands here something more. One does not reach truth quickly or calmly, because it is said that spirit reaches the truth only when spirit finds himself in an absolute disruption (*PhG*: §32) and that truth is not like a coin which you can quickly put into your pocket (*PhG*: §39). What is more, falsehood is not viewed by Hegel as a simple untruth, but rather as something which must be put to a better shape, like an ore into an ingot (*PhG*: §39). The same holds for truth. It is not something static that awaits us on the other side of the road (*PhG*: §47). Finally, we arrive at the famous metaphor of Bacchanalian Revel (*PhG*: §47). It hints us that it is not easy to talk about truth. It also tells us that truth is only seemingly just something static and well-defined (i.e. as an object, something that I can easily grasp, if not by hand, then by mind), while really it has as well a lot to do with the *movement* of participants – i.e. particular forms of consciousness (unhappy consciousness, flower religion etc.) – that remove themselves from the torrent, while the torrent itself moves on. As Kainz puts it: “They are all drunk with their own versions of the truth”.<sup>2</sup>

There are two important issues when it goes for the Bacchanalian Revel. The first is the fact that the main opposition within truth is not subjectivity and objectivity, but motion and rest. In short, truth is its own movement of the content (*PhG*: §48).<sup>3</sup> The second point is that it seems (although it is not stated explicitly) that the fate of every particular stage of philosophy within the history of philosophy itself is to be left behind, in the dust of history. Should we understand from this that it is that also the fate of Hegel's philosophy? We will not find an answer within *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. The truth has nothing to do with probability, and thus with the future, with that what only *might* be, what only *may* happen, with the chaos of possibilities. After all, when one asks simply “What will happen in the future?”, we do not even know what particular topic should be brought here, we can only

<sup>1</sup> Abbreviation used: *PhG* = *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. T. Pinkard, Cambridge 2018.

<sup>2</sup> H. Kainz, *Hegel on the Bacchanalian Revel of Truth*, „Philosophy & Rhetoric“, 28, 1995, p. 150.

<sup>3</sup> Y. Yovel, *Hegel's Preface to the Phenomenology of Spirit: Translation and Running Commentary*, Princeton 2005, p. 39.

anticipate the topic, which will nevertheless be obscure. We, as philosophers, struggle just to reveal the present within the context of the past. That is a hard task by itself.

The one point which perhaps has inspired Tischner, or at least was similar to that which Tischner was making, is that truth never comes to us too early, but always when the time is right (*PhG*: §71).<sup>4</sup> That, perhaps, will explain the above-mentioned question about the future. When we speak about Hegel from the point of view of a Hegelian, we notice that it was the right time to reveal philosophy in all of its growth thus far. Hegel is certain about the truth coming always at the right point of time because he is picky about the audience which he will consider genuine, not in the sense that philosophy is esoteric, but in the sense that doing philosophy is a demanding endeavor (*PhG*: §71). It is not a matter of agreement among those who have the ability to speak, but rather those who can think speculatively, who can – bearing in mind the limits of their own time – see the whole picture. A serious artist, theologian or philosopher does count as the one who witnesses the truth that is coming forth in a certain epoch, because he is also the one who seeks truth in the first place. They have the possibility to see, in one way or another, that the concept presents itself as a whole (*PhG*: §4).

So what is now “the whole picture” in Hegel’s time – what is “the whole picture” within the absolute knowledge? The whole picture is that the truth has the form of the knowledge of itself, in the sense that all the topic-matters of philosophy were being purified into being a concept, so that they represent spirit’s own activity (*PhG*: §701). And that is to say that nothing is foreign for spirit. Spirit has come to the realization of hearing himself when faced with the content. Spirit did not only gain “some kind of” self-knowledge, but the self-knowledge itself is presented to spirit as its phenomenology, as *The Phenomenology of Spirit* – it is the self-knowledge in all its details. Not only that, spirit has gained *science* or rather *has become science* (*PhG*: §798). That very science is about to be revealed as the sequels to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (whether the actual books that Hegel wrote afterward – all three of them – were the same books that he was planning to write during the Jena period is not important here). It is as if spirit looked himself in the eyes in the mirror and heard every stage of progress that he went through, and now, because of it, he had the firm grasp on reality, on nature itself and on other topics that are worth the name of knowledge. His *absolute knowledge* is 1) that essential knowledge of *self* (and indeed, “*this I* and no other”, this particular “me” who is reading the book, not some abstract I that Fichte was thinking about – i.e. ‘I’ as Hegel and, perhaps, the philosopher who is reading him right now) 2) with

---

<sup>4</sup> J. Tischner, *Krótki przewodnik po życiu: Nieznane teksty*, Kraków 2017, pp. 80-81, 122-124.

the realization that such knowledge is at the same time the knowledge about that what is beyond “*this I* and no other”, so that I have learned about what is both common and yet important (*PhG*: §799).

From now on that what is true about some object but, nevertheless, left without a connection with the self, is simply trivial (*PhG*: §799). That very need for trivialities in philosophy is already behind us (*PhG*: §800).

## **2. The Hegelian aspect of Tischner’s theory of truth**

Tischner became an adult in the late 40’s during the Soviet occupation of Poland and became a catholic priest in the next decade. In the 80s he became an unofficial “first chaplain” of the famous *Solidarność*, the first independent labor union in a Warsaw Pact country. While he was, like all the representatives of Church in Poland, an evident adversary to the Soviet ruling class and to Marxism-Leninism in general, he was never considered by the Church as a truly orthodox thinker due to him being influenced, even to a greater extent than it was the case with John Paul II, by those who in some sense follow the footsteps of Husserl. The other, perhaps even more important reason was that he remained a critic to the Polish Church (not to the Catholic Church as a whole) during a time when the Polish Church needed unity the most (even though Tischner himself was dreaming about a united nation, not divided between the working class and “the intelligentsia”, i.e. the highly educated people). He accused the Church of being too unforgiving and having too little real-life examples of good behavior (which could today remind us of Pope Francis), while the Church accused him of supporting philosophers who have nothing to do with God’s message (and that would be, as a rule, all the modern philosophers). He accused the Church of speaking too much about the nation and too little about an individual. Ironically, the Church accused him in the 90s of being too invested in politics, or, to be more specific, the Church accused him of being all too willing to address the need for a dialogue even in such controversial topics as abortion, which devalues the meaning of truth. The controversy, however, was never serious enough to even discuss Tischner’s removal from the Church, for three reasons: his great reputation that he earned during the crucial years of *Solidarność*, his impeccable manners, and (this is not a minor issue) his unwillingness to participate in strictly theological debates. On the other hand, he remains an object of not so subtle criticism to this day, almost twenty years after his death, never really being considered a hero among those who name themselves “conservatives”

(except for the Polish Highlanders, as Tischner was born among them and was always proud of his cultural heritage). He always claimed to be first and foremost a human being, then a philosopher and only after that a priest.

As for the motives which will help us understand his interest in Hegel's philosophy,<sup>5</sup> we should first keep in mind that he reads the *Phenomenology of Spirit* under a great influence of Kojève and secondly that he tends to think about his fellow Polish people as "homo sovieticus", meaning that they are deeply influenced in their behavior and thinking by the communists, *even when they think that they are fully against them*, particularly when they demand in the 90s that someone should make their lives better, yet are unwilling to take any action themselves. That opens the issue of freedom, which motivates Tischner to look for inspiration among the modern philosophers. One of them is Hegel. Tischner, however, does not want to make from this some kind of synthesis of the ethical thought of modernity; for him that what is ethical must be that what every one of us needs to experience by himself.<sup>6</sup> What is sufficient right now is to remember that Tischner tends to put emphasis on subjectivity in philosophy. He tends to write about the experience of that what is good and not on the content of that what is good. To approach this from another angle, one would say this: Tischner is unlike Aristotle and Hegel when they write about the human being from the third perspective. Tischner is like St. Augustine when he writes about the human being from the first perspective. The other similarity with St. Augustine is that Tischner avoids asking about the essence of truth, thinking that only illusions can come from such a question. In some respect, they both view something that is true as that what is self-evident. Tischner goes further because the moral of his story seems to be that one cannot destroy *our subjective truths* by using facts (e.g. "I have faith in Jesus Christ").

In order to go deeper than that, we must understand Tischner's theory on truth and evil. Just like Hegel, Tischner demands more from the word "truth" than the mere correspondence of thoughts to the facts. The word "truth" has a great significance to him. When Tischner is teaching us that truth never comes to us too early, he is telling us this so that "we" (or rather the readers living during the Soviet era) will not become impatient and thus, in the end, left without hope. Yet the striking fact for Tischner is that, unlike the first Christians who lived among John the Baptist and who were waiting for their Christ (like, if

---

<sup>5</sup> Something which is obvious for us when we read: "The thinker's task is mainly to discover the essence of an appearance" (J. Tischner, *Wędrówki w krainie filozofów*, Kraków 2008, p. 18).

<sup>6</sup> A. Michnik, J. Tischner, J. Żakowski, *Między panem a plebanem*, Kraków 1995, p. 97.

I might mention it, Hegel himself was waiting for his Theseus at one point of his life), “we” are no longer waiting for the chosen one, but instead we accept the view that nothing can be done about the (political, communist) system, which itself is presented to us as if no one was really there, as if the system was just a spectrum, an absurd machine that is moving by itself – and nobody knows where and nobody knows how and nobody cares. Without our understanding of the problem there is no hope for a solution, and thus no hope for the future, no hope for the new savior (be it Christ or Theseus).<sup>7</sup>

Tischner at this point will not argue in a Hegelian manner that we ought to leave Christ’s grave behind us and find the spirit who is always present in us. Tischner will not do that, because the transcendent God is that what is important for Tischner’s topic of truth. Despite that, Tischner wants to jump into Hegel’s way of thinking, hoping that he will find there, among the greatest thinkers of our past, that what is still valid for our future, that little missing thought on freedom which will help us to define the present. *He wants to find that what can still be saved in modern philosophy,*<sup>8</sup> which, of course, is to assume that something is seriously wrong with modern philosophy, or rather with modernity itself. This approach works to some extent because Tischner is not asking about Hegel’s view of God, which would complicate things for him because the issue that he wants to address is freedom, which is *deeply* dependent on our view of God, as it was clearly shown by Luther and Calvin. But since he quotes Kojève, it is hard to imagine that he was not aware of this issue.

Tischner thinks that he has found that crucial thought of modernity in no other place than in the famous master-slave dialectic. Earlier on I have mentioned Kojève’s influence on Tischner. Kojève gave us an existential reading of the master-slave dialectic, in which the working slave is far more important than the issue of self-consciousness’s moving away to the realm of thought in order to find freedom.<sup>9</sup> In other words, he puts too little focus on the latter part of that chapter. Kojève also thinks that Hegel is the very culmination of the history of philosophy, that essentially nothing new can be said after Hegel, because the end goal of the history of thought was to show everyone that our thought is historical, i.e. the goal, which now is fulfilled, was always to grasp the *history of philosophy*.<sup>10</sup> He also expresses the

---

<sup>7</sup> J. Tischner, *ibid.*, pp. 122-123.

<sup>8</sup> J. Tischner, *Spowiedź rewolucjonisty: Czytając Fenomenologię ducha Hegla*, Kraków 2016, pp. 33-34.

<sup>9</sup> A. Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. J. Nichols, London 1980, pp. 41-42, 47-48, 259.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 163, 165-166, 262.

thought that what really drives the master is the desire *for the other man's desire*.<sup>11</sup> Finally, at one point Kojève focuses on the role of the thing which bounds the slave with the master<sup>12</sup> – that will also be the case for Tischner's interpretation of Hegel.

Tischner, just like Kojève, speaks of the master's desire for the desire, which he calls "the obsession of owning other people".<sup>13</sup> The master wants to be recognized as the master, so he desires that the slave will desire what the master owns.<sup>14</sup> Unlike Kojève, Tischner does not develop that issue explicitly. What he does say is that to be a master is to *own* something that would normally, in normal circumstances, be a belonging of the other: to get what was yours and what you need, to do it in a way which will force you to acknowledge your new situation of servitude. Without the "consciousness" (without the concept) of *ownership*, there can be no lordship. So, in short, Tischner is more focused on the perspective of the serf (I shall call him – *der Knecht* – a serf from now on).<sup>15</sup> By owning something which the other really needs, you basically own *him*. In the mind of the serf that dependence is as strong as the fear of death (see *PhG*: §190).<sup>16</sup> So the frightened serf is attached to the earth "like a tree to the ground",<sup>17</sup> which implies that he has no hope for the afterlife. According to Tischner, Hegel thinks that the serf is certain of his self-sufficiency thanks to the self-sufficiency of the thing that he works with, "the stuff" that he converts into something useful.<sup>18</sup> "A slave is first a slave of his possession, and as the thing is a property that belongs only to him, he does not feel any lord above his head. But when someone else becomes the owner of the thing, then, because of that bond towards things, a slave becomes the owner's property".<sup>19</sup> For Tischner, the serf is a realist in this sense that he believes only in the reality of material things.<sup>20</sup> This makes the serf a coward because outside of the realm of things there is nothing (there is nothing left if one is dead),<sup>21</sup> yet within the realm of things there is nothing that would have

---

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>12</sup> A. Kojève, *Wstęp do wykładów o Heglu*, trans. Ś. Nowicki, Warszawa 1999, pp. 86, 195-196, 516.

<sup>13</sup> J. Tischner, *Filozofia dramatu*, Kraków 2012, p. 198.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 196.

<sup>15</sup> In Miller's translation into English and Landman's translation into Polish, as well as in Kojève and Tischner, we have a "slave". In Pinkard's new translation into English and in Nowicki's new translation into Polish, we have, as we should have, a "serf".

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 192-193.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 194.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 195.

<sup>20</sup> Kojève was speaking about the master being an idealist. However, perhaps we would want to point out that it is the serf who runs to the world of his inner thoughts as the Stoic, Skeptic and the Unhappy Consciousness.

<sup>21</sup> Tischner reads §194 as if the master was only a relative master, unlike death. This is interesting, because Tischner is speaking about a particular illusion, namely: the serf thinks that the master is the reason of his

sufficient value for him to take joy in the work itself. To live is to own. One owns what he desires.<sup>22</sup> Now, this makes the situation of the master troublesome because he cannot expect the serf to expose himself to danger in the name of his lord. The serf cannot fight and die for him. It was exactly the mortal combat in which he failed in the first place.<sup>23</sup> He is useful for the master only when he works and gives him the spoils of that work. That work will eventually make the serf free. In that work, in that process of changing something with one's own hands, the belief of the self-sufficiency of a thing diminishes. So the work cures the serf of the naivety of realism. What counts is one's own effort, not so much the material result which it produces.<sup>24</sup> We can say that the experience or the wisdom or the independence is that what is important, not the apple juice or the brick from the clay-bearing soil, because the latter is only necessary for survival, but life, at least at some point of the development of consciousness, is not all about survival. And that was the case for the master and his "chivalrous" bravery,<sup>25</sup> with that crucial difference that from now on only the working man creates our history, while "the passive loafer" – the master – just so happens to be standing in the way.<sup>26</sup>

What is truly missing in Tischner's view on Hegel is the theological side of Hegel's philosophy (be it from the early theological writings, or from the Berlin period), as well as the logic which is an important foundation for it (again, be it the early drafts, or *The Science of Logic*). Without this logic and without the philosophy of religion (especially Hegel's reflections on Christ, on evil, and on the proofs of the existence of God) Hegel seems to be closer to the Marxist standpoint than he really is because we simply ignore a large part of that what makes Hegel an idealist. That is the topic which would surely interest Tischner if only he knew about it – not everything in Hegel is primarily about history, there is always a lot of Schelling left inside of his writings.<sup>27</sup> It is just that, due to the Marxists influence, this one passage about the Serf and the Master is widely considered in Poland as the heart of the so-called "Hegelian dialectics". In other words, the illusion is created due to the lack of an

---

enslavement. The truth, however, is that the serf created a master "in his soul" (ibid., p. 198), which implies that the serf had created an image of death which haunts him, and because of that image the serf turned out to be a coward. What Tischner is not writing about, yet what he undoubtedly has in mind here, is the existence of a soul. That is something that he – Tischner as a priest – will never doubt about. The serf will not truly die, but he does not know that yet.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 196.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 194.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 195.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 196.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> See V. Leško, *Filozofia dziejów filozofii: Silne i słabe modele*, trans. B. Szubert, D. Bęben, Katowice 2017, pp. 79-90.



independent research of Hegel's philosophy in Poland, since, on the one hand, the competent researchers of Hegel, such as Marek Siemek, had begun their inquiry on Hegel from the already gathered knowledge of Marx (it was never the other way around), and on the other hand those researchers were never interested in Tischner. Thus, those others who do indeed take into consideration the philosophy of the Polish priest do not have fundamental knowledge about Hegel. There is a clear gap of knowledge here, either one is interested in the former or in the later philosopher. Since Tischner is almost unknown outside of Poland, it is not surprising that no one has pointed this out. That is to say that for those who spent a lot of time reading Plotinus, St. Anselm or St. Thomas in Poland Tischner's way of thinking will seem to be more "fluid" than that<sup>28</sup>, and that will create an association with Hegel, where in fact that way of thinking, in front of Plotinus, Anselm and Thomas, could as well be described as similar to the thinking of Marx (yes, indeed!), Husserl, Heidegger, Lévinas or Derrida. Those who do not favor the classical philosophy, if they are still seriously invested in philosophy as a whole (that is not a condition for being interested in Tischner's thought), tend not to be interested in Tischner at all. In this sense, Tischner is, unfortunately, the oddball of Polish philosophy.

Tischner now asks a series of questions. They all really come together to one specific: Why is the enslavement permanent, going from generation to generation?<sup>29</sup> And what could Hegel tell him? Hegel could respond, as he did later on when referring to the servitude of the Middle Ages – when the Germanic people were the Serf, and the Church was the Master – that it was necessary for molding the barbaric, animal-like character into that which will make a condition for the future, authentic freedom.<sup>30</sup> So even though the master was not planning to make the serf free, freedom was indeed the result of that continuous struggle.<sup>31</sup> And there is no "shortcut" for freedom! Without the existence of an easy route, we ought not to think about this whole process as a tragedy. Can a brute truly think? If not, then let him have his lesson appropriate to his capacities.

Tischner is also, in a way, pointing out to such a slow process when he tells us: "In order to be free, one must think; but on the other hand, in order to think, one must be

---

<sup>28</sup> There is a justification to think that way about Tischner's philosophy, for example: "One sees a moment which persists only on the faces of the dead people" (J. Tischner, *Spowiedź rewolucjonisty*, p. 120), i.e. there is pretty much nothing persistent in this world.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 198-199.

<sup>30</sup> G. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, pp. 733, 795; G. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History, Volume 1: Manuscripts of the Introduction and the Lectures of 1822-3*, trans. R. Brown, P. Hodgson, Oxford 2013, pp. 473-474.

<sup>31</sup> See T. Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason*, Cambridge 1994, p. 267.

free”.<sup>32</sup> He is not calling this a vicious circle, but simply “a circle of education”.<sup>33</sup> At the same time, a man is for Tischner first and foremost a laborer (which is interesting, considering Tischner’s obvious anti-Marxism). This is how a human being is similar to God and this is the topic which, according to Tischner, should be discussed more often.<sup>34</sup> Tischner draws a similarity between human fruits of labor (a chair, a window, etc.) and words. All those things around us are filled with meaning. This special “language” – the human labor – is stateless, bound to no nation, understood by all.<sup>35</sup> Even the imperfect goods (a spoiled can of food that was supposed to be good) are similar to lies.<sup>36</sup> This is, in my opinion, an important comparison, because it enables the thinker to think about truth as that which can manifest itself as a true judgment on the one hand, *but also as the true work of art or a true friend*.<sup>37</sup>

With that comparison comes the promise that we can find a connection with Hegel’s and Tischner’s way of speaking about truth. None of them think about it only as an agreement of a proposition to a state of things, because a thing or a person can be worthy of the claim of being true, just as the wild beehive can be described the same way as a person: “it is rational”. The beehive is rational even though it is not a way of thinking. A colleague is a true friend even though he is not an agreement of a proposition to a state of things. The promise of a common ground between Hegel and Tischner is backed up by the fact that Tischner associates an image (like an image presented in myths) as that which keeps us afar from truth rather than that which helps us find the truth,<sup>38</sup> just like Hegel sees in the image that what is non-conceptual, full of arbitrariness (*PhG*: §10), far from becoming a knowledge of a knowledge (*PhG*: §795). It is also backed up by Tischner’s view that a culture is a mirror in which one sees the truth about himself (when he *does not*, that culture is already dying)<sup>39</sup> and by his acceptance of the positive Infinite, if not “positive” in a strict Hegelian manner, then at least that of Descartes, where infinity cannot be thought as a simple negation of the finitude, with all the philosophical implications that come with such a way of thinking.<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup> J. Tischner, *Krótki przewodnik po życiu*, pp. 77-78.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 84-85.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 193.

<sup>40</sup> J. Tischner, *Filozofia dramatu*, p. 49. Tischner was convinced by Lévinas that Hegel established his way of thinking about infinity thanks to Descartes (*ibid.*, pp. 55-56).

### 3. The anti-Hegelian aspect

The anti-Hegelian aspect of Tischner's theory of truth becomes clear when Tischner tells us, perhaps in a fashion similar to Jacobi's philosophy, that one must *feel* the truth and by feeling it one must meet one's commitment to it. At that point we, the readers, understand that the talk about positive Infinity was supposed to make room for a transcendent God. One must feel the truth and face its expectation because otherwise one is left with a disruption that must, either way, be healed, the disruption that is taking place when thinking is separated from feeling.<sup>41</sup> So, according to Tischner, thinking, or *the concept* (as Hegel would have it), has no privilege over feelings. If anything, it looks as if it is the other way around, since every culture is always in a sense "a culture of feelings",<sup>42</sup> so that the concept is not what is crucial, not what is self-standing in its worth, not what can freely develop itself. Even that what brings order to all the different feelings is not at all reason (reason as a faculty), but simply beauty.<sup>43</sup> Even if an image, no matter how beautiful, does not, *as an image*, help us to reach the truth, truth is not a value to which other values must submit themselves as less important.<sup>44</sup> It is the other way around, a value (like beauty) is strengthened by the truth *which is the subordinate value by itself*. That is not to say that one does not reach the truth about the world, God or another man by simply "feeling it". One does it by understanding, by collecting all the information and distinguishing the essential from the unessential.<sup>45</sup> So Tischner is not advocating some kind of irrationalism that has nothing to do with the old *Logos* that we read about in ancient books. All that Tischner is saying is that knowing something is simply not what is most important in our lives. In that way, he is going the same route that Nietzsche once took when he asked about why exactly do we accept the absolute value of truth without ever thinking about the reason for doing so. Of course, Tischner has something much humbler in mind than the revaluation of all values. He simply wants a situation in which a man is in harmony with the Christian world. Those philosophies that are "totalistic" ("totalistyczne"), i.e. those that want to encompass the whole reality with the word "being" (and other words that are closely connected to it – that even includes, to a lesser degree, Hegel's and Heidegger's philosophies)<sup>46</sup> will, according to Tischner, tell us a different story, a story about philosophy being something self-sufficient in the context of human life. According to those

---

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>42</sup> J. Tischner, *Krótki przewodnik po życiu*, p. 204.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., pp. 204-205. J. Tischner, *Filozofia dramatu*, pp. 131-134.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., pp. 138, 154.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 9. J. Tischner, *Krótki przewodnik po życiu*, pp. 15-16.

<sup>46</sup> J. Tischner, *Filozofia dramatu*, pp. 29, 50.

philosophers, truth is here to save us from evil, from that which destroys. In order to express that, one needs not to invest himself in metaphysics, because metaphysics does not really ask the most important question: who is a person?<sup>47</sup> This is basically the same thing that Westphal said, but in Tischner it would become an accusation: “Philosophy is essentially a totalizing gesture”.<sup>48</sup>

Now what exactly the truth would be for Tischner, aside from being a value? Here lies the problem, because we read that truth is a value which is undefined.<sup>49</sup> That we cannot simply accept no definition at all is something which is “unfortunate”. Perhaps it would be great if we could, but we cannot, not within the realm of philosophy – only poetry would allow that.<sup>50</sup> This is not a reason to fall into Kierkegaardian angst. On the contrary, Tischner often deals with that with a joke. For example, one of his sayings, which certainly was not meant to be taken seriously (Tischner spent quite a lot of time in front of a camera, where he often had to acknowledge the broad audience), became a Polish aphorism, namely that there are three types of truths: *the* truth, *also* truth, and BS. But that is not the only instance of grappling with the truth with the help of irony. For example, he also writes: “I must *confess* here my intimate secret: I carry in myself a strong conviction that no thesis that belongs to the philosophical wisdom can be a true thesis, unless it can be translated into the speech of the Gorals from Podhale. The translatability into Goralish is my private criterion of truth. It helps me a lot”.<sup>51</sup> So this is a tongue-in-cheek way of saying that philosophers have an obligation to talk and write in simple terms. Why? Because it ought to be either comparable with our feelings or incomparable with them... but never irrelevant. And here the word “feeling” returns to us like a boomerang: “The truth consists in some kind of agreement: the agreement of thought with reality, the agreement of feeling with value, the agreement of a man with himself. Truth consists in an agreement of that which the man feels with that who and what he really is. (...) The truth is always ready to be achieved, because there always was, always is and always will be a subtle distance between my feeling and value, between my thought about the thing and the thing itself, between me and myself. The value of truth realizes itself throughout the whole life”.<sup>52</sup> Let me repeat: truth is not even viewed by Tischner as the end-

---

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 107. See P. Bortkiewicz, *Koncepcja dialogu w twórczości ks. Józefa Tischnera*, „Poznańskie Studia Teologiczne”, 12, 2002.

<sup>48</sup> M. Westphal, *History & Truth in Hegel's Phenomenology*, Indianapolis 1998, p. xi.

<sup>49</sup> J. Tischner, *Krótki przewodnik po życiu*, p. 106.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 107.

<sup>51</sup> J. Tischner, *Spowiedź rewolucjonisty*, p. 115.

<sup>52</sup> J. Tischner, *Krótki przewodnik po życiu*, p. 107.

goal, but, being a value, it always needs to be in company with another value (politeness, trust, love, beauty, justice etc.).<sup>53</sup> So sometimes silence is a better solution than telling the truth.<sup>54</sup> However, truth is not for another value a form of decoration. Let us consider one example from Tischner in order to understand this issue better: “Everyone talks about ‘honesty’. The intellectual ought to be first and foremost honest. Honesty will solve every problem. Let us count on it... A king’s ransom to the man who thinks [and is willing to prove that he is right] that the notion of honesty itself does not bring to our table new problems”.<sup>55</sup> Truth needs to be in the company with another value as something important to it<sup>56</sup> and it needs to remain there a truth “to the very end” (that is to say, basically, that we should avoid half-truths).<sup>57</sup> To determine that “being-to-the-very-end”, we need to be aware of the aim of the action that is connected to the value (like the decision of a judge in connection to justice etc.) *in order to figure out if it is evil or not.*<sup>58</sup>

*Evil* is an interesting topic for itself in Tischner’s philosophy because he does not view it as a simple negation, as a Thomist would have it (Thomism being a greatly influential system in Poland). If it was just a negation, that would basically mean that evil is an imperfection.<sup>59</sup> Now it is true that whether we identify the Good (as in Plato’s sun) with being, or whether we do not identify it that way, we, either way, fall into all sorts of metaphysical problems.<sup>60</sup> As Izabela Marszałek describes it: “Here comes the fundamental difficulty which consists of the Good being indefinable. Aristotle had to deal with this problem his whole life and, as Tischner used to say, nothing or almost nothing has really changed from that point of time”.<sup>61</sup> To avoid this problem one can, just like Kant did, avoid the question itself by claiming that one does not dwell with metaphysics, and in this sense, Tischner is indeed a Kantian thinker. We do not know it, we cannot know it, otherwise we would be at least a little closer to the solution within those two and a half thousands of years. Since we do not know what is the Good, then how can we solve the problem of evil from the

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 109. J. Tischner, *Filozofia dramatu*, p. 113.

<sup>54</sup> J. Tischner, *Krótki przewodnik po życiu*, p. 110.

<sup>55</sup> It is apparently Hegel who thinks in those lines in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, but I find it difficult to support that claim. By talking about other philosophers, Tischner is really unveiling his own philosophy. He reads Hegel with the lenses of his own theories (which, we have to admit, is something that philosophers often do, including Hegel himself). J. Tischner, *Spowiedź rewolucjonisty*, p. 142.

<sup>56</sup> J. Tischner, *Krótki przewodnik po życiu*, p. 109.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 113.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 115.

<sup>59</sup> J. Tischner, *Filozofia dramatu*, p. 182.

<sup>60</sup> A. Niemczuk, *Traktat o złu*, Lublin 2013, p. 17.

<sup>61</sup> I. Marszałek, *Józef Tischner i filozoficzne koncepcje zła: Czy zło jest w nas, czy między nami?*, Kraków 2014, p. 223.

perspective of existence? Let us drop the question altogether, so that we can focus our energy on that which will give us some hope of a satisfying solution to the question: how to deal with the fact of the presence of evil, how to understand that presence?<sup>62</sup>

Why is that strategy important for Tischner? Because he opposes the Thomism's (or perhaps rather the Lublin Thomism's) way of argumentation that comes in two steps. First one assumes that in order to explain a being as something that has clear, distinct properties, one cannot point out to that what is a mere thought (that approach invites "the modern" philosophers to debate with the Thomists on a ground that is favorable to them); secondly, and this one is more basic, one proves something by showing that the negation is absurd. Here the absurd part would be for a Thomist that within Tischner's philosophy evil has an independent being, that it is self-standing (to make that kind of judgment is tempting when one sees that so much has been written by Tischner about evil seemingly independently of the topic of the Good). Yet Tischner does not claim that evil has an independency. He simply wants to approach this issue differently.<sup>63</sup>

It seems that what Tischner is getting at is something like "where there is a lack of thought, there is also evil",<sup>64</sup> but he avoids making such a simple claim because of the previously mentioned unwillingness to start talking about evil as just a negation.<sup>65</sup> There *must* be some positive way of expressing it that would be adequate to our feelings when we face evil (this, of course, makes each confrontation unique, we are not obsessed any longer with the *essence* of evil or even with the lack of essence).<sup>66</sup> Tischner needs to approach it this way in order to not get "invited" by the Thomists to the unfamiliar ground from which his position would be accused of being absurd. As a priest living in Poland, he can surely expect that to happen.

Yet both Tischner and the Thomists have something in common. We need to be aware that the dependence of truth on other values does not carry in itself a risk of us falling into a post-modern trap, because there is, after all, a final point of reference in Tischner when one is asking for truth, namely Jesus Christ, "I am the way and the truth and the life"<sup>67</sup> (we have to remind ourselves that Tischner is a priest, even if he sometimes seems to downplay that

---

<sup>62</sup> J. Tischner, *Spór o istnienie człowieka*, Kraków 1998, p. 20. J. Tischner, *Filozofia dramatu*, p. 261.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 182, 189. J. Tischner, *Spowiedź rewolucjonisty*, pp. 146-147, 163.

<sup>64</sup> See J. Tischner, *Świat ludzkiej nadziei*, Kraków 2014, pp. 336-340.

<sup>65</sup> See I. Marszałek, *Józef Tischner i filozoficzne koncepcje zła*, pp. 13, 26, 93, 130, 140-141, 147.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 166.

<sup>67</sup> J. Tischner, *Krótki przewodnik po życiu*, pp. 118-119.

distinguishing mark). In this sense we already are granted the recognition of evil as already being determined by the Bible.

And what is the main inspiration from the Bible within Tischner's philosophy? It is Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel – the initial recognition of evil.<sup>68</sup> To recognize something is not to cause something, we are not flirting with Berkeley's philosophy here. If so, it is not the truth that is the source of evil (the truth thanks to which one *sees* evil). On the contrary, truth gives us hope of overcoming it.<sup>69</sup>

But why would we even consider that to be the case that 1) *truth* has something to do with 2) *evil*? It does not have to be a causal relation, all we need to know is that when the topic of truth emerges, the topic of evil emerges as well, as the two ringing clocks in Leibniz's example. And they indeed are like those clocks, because evil is always *similar* to the truth, it always comes to mind.<sup>70</sup> Now, what does that mean?

Evil is similar to the truth in that sense that it also, just like truth, depends on something that it can connect to. Due to that characteristic Tischner calls it a phantom.<sup>71</sup> A phantom is neither real nor unreal – it becomes, it appears to be. What *appears* in this sense cannot be described simply as unreal, because it focuses our attention on that what is undoubtedly real (a tree... or perhaps a corpse), while twisting its meaning so that it is not only real but *painful* and calls for vengeance.<sup>72</sup> “It is not important how evil exists, but what does it want. (...) It makes no sense to ask if evil exists or not. Evil is given to us as a meaning”.<sup>73</sup> That phantom's task which is to focus the victim's attention to his own suffering is not difficult since life – as Buddhists are well aware of it – is full of it.<sup>74</sup> All it needs to do is to find an enemy for its angry victim, someone to blame. Thus, what is needed are two people and their dialogue, even if that dialogue is already in the past when the phantom is being born, even if it is only a memory of the so-called victim. The truth is not needed here, but the semblance of dialogue – and thus a semblance of truth, of “the personal

---

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 22. J. Tischner, *Filozofia dramatu*, pp. 21, 25, 48, 172-175, 235, 274, 296. I. Marszałek, *Józef Tischner i filozoficzne koncepcje zła*, pp. 172-174.

<sup>69</sup> J. Tischner, *Krótki przewodnik po życiu*, p. 20.

<sup>70</sup> See J. Tischner, *Spowiedź rewolucjonisty*, pp. 85, 119, 168; J. Tischner, *Spór o istnienie człowieka*, pp. 17-19; J. Tischner, *Filozofia dramatu*, pp. 139, 143-145, 153, 159-165, 171-173, 189.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p. 189.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., pp. 173-174.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p. 261.

<sup>74</sup> J. Tischner, *Krótki przewodnik po życiu*, p. 171.

truth” – still is (Tischner 2012 : 186).<sup>75</sup> Example: *You have hurt me with your words, that is the truth, so I can hurt you back by cheating on you.*

What is the result of this course of action? Let us see for ourselves how Tischner describes the modernity before the emergence of Marxism:

Let us ask: how is it possible that deception became the way of being for almost all the society? The answer is simple. Let us not forget that we are here in the times when Christianity has forced upon the world the duty of education, with Christ as the role model. So “to be a completed man” means here “to imitate Christ”. We see the result of this: instead of millions of Christ, we have millions of minor or major charlatans. These charlatans deceive not only others but also themselves. Is it possible to deceive yourself? Yes, indeed, you primarily deceive yourself!<sup>76</sup>

So what has begun as an isolated act, an exception (*But he cheated on me!*), transformed into a habit. Already Aristotle would be well aware of something like that. But what is more, Tischner thinks that deception is like a plague, it goes from one “I” to the other.<sup>77</sup> So the habit is not “blind”; the charlatans know what they are doing, they gather the knowledge through experience: “The greater the need for a lie, the clearer the consciousness of that what is true”.<sup>78</sup> In order to be a whole person again, to be a true man within oneself, one needs to break from the evil that comes from the interaction with the other by understanding one’s own worth that is *independent* of the fact of participation in some group. I am true to myself as a man, only secondarily as a husband. That understanding comes from experience. It comes with the situation when there is no intrusion of a thought about a group presented to the mind in the broken mirror,<sup>79</sup> but just *this man*, a partner of dialogue (danger still awaits us, because the dialogue was also the fuel for a phantom in the first place), in which, however, both at some point are interested in that what is true. Merely *to talk* is not enough. That “being interested” manifests itself in the authentic desire of knowing what the other side is willing to tell us. In this sense, we can say that truth is a fruit of an event. It is a value for which we all have to strive individually, something that, in its most authentic

---

<sup>75</sup> J. Tischner, *Filozofia dramatu*, p. 186. Yet in the *Controversy over the Existence of the Man* Tischner seems to return to the classical, Christian notion of evil as a negation of that what is good (J. Tischner, *Spór o istnienie człowieka*, pp. 14-15).

<sup>76</sup> J. Tischner, *Spowiedź rewolucjonisty*, pp. 222-223.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 223. J. Tischner, *Filozofia dramatu*, p. 174.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 153.

<sup>79</sup> “Reason sees that the world is his own mirror” (J. Tischner, *Spowiedź rewolucjonisty*, p. 114).



sense, cannot be inherited by future generations. The culture gives us a greater possibility to find truth, but we are still alone in the task of reaching for it.<sup>80</sup>

Again, we do not need to insist that the event is somewhat beyond the being (like Alain Badiou does, and many others) or within the being. The issue of being has been dropped altogether. And now let us go back to the beginning of this article. What has been said there as far as Hegel's philosophy goes? The truth can exist only as a scientific system which will explain to us in detail "what is", and convince us that we are dealing with the whole which makes progress to its finished shape. Yet in Tischner there is no "whole" in a Hegelian sense, there is no progress of *Weltgeist*. It is just you and me with the decision to listen to or the lack of such a decision. If there is progress, then only in the sense of the experience of handling with the truth on the part of the decent man, and another experience of truth on the part of the charlatan. These two experiences do not need to differ that much. They are the parts of the same story because the charlatan feels the need to talk.

#### **4. Religion as the topic of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit***

In order for us to truly understand Tischner's and Hegel's incompatibility when it comes to the topic of truth, we need to know the limits in Tischner's interpretation of Hegel's *Phenomenology*, i.e. the chapter from the *Phenomenology* which is the most omitted by Tischner in his writings, chapter seven. In it Hegel is very consistent in that he does not ask about God, only about religion as a consciousness. So now what is the most important connection between chapter four (i.e. the focus point for Tischner and Kojève) and seven of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* when it comes to the issue of religion, outside of the perspective of Tischner's philosophy (the perspective of a dialogue that is being mediated by God's law)? There must be a connection between those chapters of *Phenomenology*, since we reach again in chapter seven, just as we did in chapter four, the unhappy consciousness, but this time we are going there from the happy consciousness of the Greek comedy.<sup>81</sup> The connection lies within the topic of *a thinking and willing subject* (i.e. we have again a hint of some kind of praxis-theory, as much as we can get something like that from the *Phenomenology*). If we accept that in the *Phenomenology* we are dealing with the subject which presents himself ever more clearly in the progression of the different shapes of religion, we find out that in chapter

---

<sup>80</sup> J. Tischner, *Filozofia dramatu*, p. 215.

<sup>81</sup> See L. Rauch, *Hegel's Phenomenology of Self-Consciousness*, New York 1999, s. 118.

four he was moving away from the unbearable reality into the kingdom of inner self (as the stoic, skeptic and unhappy consciousness), while in chapter seven the subject is ever so more visible within that same *kingdom of the inner retreat* (so it is more and more the case that we have two subjects, the one who is seeing or praying or building... and the one who is seen or prayed upon or built, i.e. a believer and his deity).<sup>82</sup> While the subject is something given from the start in chapter four as the abstract I=I (which must become concrete in that chapter later on), in chapter seven it is the self-consciousness which we – the readers, the “in itself or for us” – are seeking when we already know what to seek for: the self-consciousness as the unhappy consciousness. Together with Hegel we dive into the topic of religion, knowing well that what we will find is not some truth about the afterlife (as a guidance on how to spend our lives here on planet Earth), but the truth about ourselves. *And we seek that within the topic of community*, which was presented to us in detail in chapter six but was missing in chapter four. We can say that in chapter four the subject was all alone or, so to say, “alienated”. The “I that is we” was only at that point a foreshadowing presented to us by Hegel.

It is important to point this out, because chapter six is also something that Tischner avoids, both literally and by the fact that he avoids mentioning about groups (he focuses his attention on dialogue). From that very chapter seven we already know that self-consciousness (i.e. the nations from the past, especially during the Middle Age) is, in a way, cursed to seek another self-consciousness (within the stories told by the priests) in the place where only silence can be heard, because it does not fully know that it ITSELF is that what is being made double, it is its own subject that is susceptible to changes and object that shows itself as the Unchangeable (*PhG*: §207). A position unacceptable for Tischner, for whom God remains the ultimate point of reference, even if Tischner does not bring this up as often as the other members of the Church would want him to. Hegel brings what is divine down to earth. So let us ask the crucial question now: What is the most important difference between chapter four (which is close to the mind of Tischner) and seven (which is not) when it comes to the issue of religion? Chapter seven shows us that the same spirit is really there in both ethics and religion, while it is not the case with chapter four, which directs our attention more to the individual (the serf, the stoic, etc.).<sup>83</sup>

But if we wish to move beyond the aspect of a mere subject and start to talk about spirit (i.e. if we want to move away from the Hegel of Kojève and Tischner, the Hegel with

---

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> See R. Stern, *Hegel and the Phenomenology of Spirit*, London 2002, pp. 185-186.

the heavy emphasis on the working serf), then what is the relation of spirit to truth for Hegel? What is it that both of these terms have to do with each other? The true shape of truth is the scientific system (*PhG*: §5), which means that only the concept can be an element of its existence (*PhG*: §6). *The science* (i.e. Hegel's system) is the main topic, not a man working in sweat and tears, and history is important because of that broad science, not because of our present struggle in the world. Now that is not to say that spirit is limited in such a way to the concept that what is non-conceptual (i.e. the image of Virgin Mary, The Last Supper, etc.) has nothing to do with spirit whatsoever. After all, we talk about spirit even if the topic has little to do with that what is conceptual (like in chapter seven before the section on the revealed religion). Yet the scientific system, "the genuine science of spirit", is the result of spirit's advancement towards absolute knowledge (*PhG*: §89), in which spirit achieves conceptual knowledge (*PhG*: §797) and *ends* his journey (*PhG*: §805). The journey ends, because there is nothing foreign to spirit anymore, nothing that must be overcome in order to gain some substantial self-knowledge – spirit knows itself *as spirit* (*PhG*: §808), and we, the readers of *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, see the proof of that. We witness the articulation of spirit in philosophy. That is absent in all of Tischner's books. The point of reference in Tischner's philosophy simply moves from a person to a person.

Within Hegel's philosophy, when something is conceptual it is supposed to be familiar in one way or another to a philosopher, which is not the case if something is presented in imaginary representations or shapes (*PhG*: §197). But the imaginary representations or shapes (like that of a flower or a dog, or a Pegasus that we see on TV) is something that is easily grasped by our common sense (by that which is common in our thinking with uneducated and educated people alike, the part of thinking that does not find itself in any trouble whatsoever) (*PhG*: §69). We witness that which is already shaped, and then we – as philosophers – must remind ourselves that it is our representation (*PhG*: §197). We tend to be lost in that what is given when there is no need for a conceptual struggle (i.e. when there is no need for knowing something that is difficult). That struggle, however, requires some effort and not all are ready for it; because of that, *truth cannot be obtained by common sense*. Not only "easily obtained" – it cannot be obtained at all by common sense, otherwise either truth would be trivial ("my shirt is blue") or we would not really talk about the simple, obvious, *common* sense, the one and only which (supposedly) stays the same despite the cultural and historical differences.<sup>84</sup>

---

<sup>84</sup> That demand for an authentic, boundless common sense is, of course, a great topic for itself, but there is no place for it in this article.

The truth for Hegel cannot be something “private”, mine and mine only. There is no such existentialism in Hegel’s philosophy. Yet it is in Tischner’s philosophy, and that is because in Tischner’s philosophy we mediate the truth by feelings, which are “mine and mine only”, unique. Tischner does not connect truth with common sense directly, but, just as it is the case with evil, he makes our understanding of truth dependent on our feelings, on personal experience, on memory. Moreover, he searches and describes the truth in a concrete situation: the situation of a communist regime. From Hegel’s standpoint, even in the more “primitive” shapes of religion (in everything that comes before the revealed religion in chapter seven) we observe the value in that which gives us at least some glimpse of a concept (i.e. we see the beginning of that what is unfolding).<sup>85</sup> And even when we finally reach the topic of the Holy Spirit, Hegel is telling us that what is missing here is the concept, because the Holy Spirit is not properly seen as *the community* and instead too much emphasis is put on the reincarnation (*PhG*: §762-763), on the given situation from the Scripture. We will also learn from the *Phenomenology* that the Creation from the Biblical story, alongside images such as the image of Father and Son, is just the concept presented as picture-thinking (*PhG*: §771). We just speak like that when we preach, but we understand some deeper, philosophical meaning. Even in chapter four, in the description of the religious practice connected with the unhappy consciousness, we read about “the shapeless roar of the pealing of bells, or that of a warm vapor filling a space, or that of a musical thought which does not amount to concepts, which themselves would be the sole, immanent, objective mode of thought”, etc. (*PhG*: §217). So Hegel is asking all the time for a concept, the concept which is often missing. He does not want to make the truth context-dependent the way Tischner wants it. That way of Hegelian thinking is not something which is reserved for one’s individual feeling. It is historical thinking which invites us to search for patterns. It does not so much invite us to look at the Present through the lens of the Past, and even if that is the case, that has only secondary importance, since that would somehow deny philosophy its merit as wisdom for the sake of wisdom. The emphasis on learning from past mistakes would make philosophy something instrumental.<sup>86</sup> If so, philosophy is not in the service of a so-called *life*. If anything, it is exactly the process of life, even the very basic forms of life (as described at the beginning of chapter four) which is the backbone of the flourishing philosophy (together with other aspects of spirit, such as law etc.). That basic life was not even that important for the *Phenomenology*

---

<sup>85</sup> Y. Yovel, *Hegel’s Preface to the Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 3.

<sup>86</sup> R. Winfield, *Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit: A Critical Rethinking in Seventeen Lectures*, Lanham 2013, pp. 322-324.

as, say, morality and religion.<sup>87</sup> The topic of life as something common (be it among fellow people, or among all the animals) is only something that Hegel *must* include in order to reach the topic of spirit, while Tischner makes such a topic of life (*via* feelings) something important in his philosophy.

### 5. A man should be free

Before I wrap up this article I would still like to return to the issue of this one passage from the *Phenomenology* – the Master and the Serf – so that I will not leave the reader with the impression that Tischner pointed out one fragment and never developed his thought from that place. He did, but he did it in a kind of bizarre, unfamiliar to a Hegelian way. Why is that so? There is a crucial point to be made when we, the readers, are dealing with social philosophy, namely that society requires organized cooperation of those who know something really well, like a craftsman, a scholar and so on. It is not that Tischner would disagree,<sup>88</sup> it is just that he is further away from making that simple point than Hegel, and thus he is less willing to conceptualize human interactions. Instead, he sees every one of them as unique. The feeling, or rather *the one who feels*, is not someone who is willing to be defined. In front of a definition, he is ready to tell us that we simply do not understand, because we have not experienced it.<sup>89</sup>

Now “less willing to conceptualize” should be a clue for us that one wants to talk about Hegel outside of Hegel. An image or story is not something that will satisfy a Hegelian. Tischner is aware of that, since he describes Hegel’s standpoint like this: Religion is nothing else than the wisdom that has been written down for the masses. The people from the masses think through images. The speech of religion adapts itself to the needs of the masses and speaks through the means of imagination”.<sup>90</sup> The point is that perhaps he himself is close to that way of religious thinking. In Tischner’s *Controversy over the Existence of the Man* we are reminded once again about the cunning nature of evil and the disarming smile of the system.<sup>91</sup> We are told that when we talk about a human being, we must leave behind ontology and focus on agathology. That is so because modernity throws us back into thinking about evil as a kind of fate, something that we have no control of (think about Descartes’s evil spirit

<sup>87</sup> See H. Harris, *Hegel’s Ladder II: The Odyssey of Spirit*, Indianapolis 1997, p. 764.

<sup>88</sup> See J. Tischner, *Myślenie według wartości*, Kraków 2011, p. 544.

<sup>89</sup> J. Tischner, *Krótki przewodnik po życiu*, pp. 22, 32.

<sup>90</sup> J. Tischner, *Spowiedź rewolucjonisty*, p. 232.

<sup>91</sup> J. Tischner, *Spór o istnienie człowieka*, p. 11.

or about the teachings of Martin Luther). Apparently, it is Hegel who must remind us that a man is indeed free and that the man's truth is his deeds.<sup>92</sup> The diagnosis is really grim: "Independently of the motives of Descartes's decision [to write about the evil spirit who, for some reason, deceives us], one issue seems to be important here: Descartes is giving expression to the new understanding of historic evil – evil that has appeared at a concrete time and place and which leads to the very worst, that is to say: it leads to that what is happening all around us. (...) How one is supposed to explain a religious war between Christians? Neither hunger nor the need for a "living space" can explain that".<sup>93</sup>

The answer? The perpetual lack of truth. Only within the topic of a powerful lie that we have not created can we explain that war between Christians, only under a common lie is that war possible.<sup>94</sup> Without Hegel's help, it will seem to the moderns, the moderns who are "blind"<sup>95</sup>, that "a deed is the tip of an iceberg, with the main part being hidden underwater",<sup>96</sup> i.e. a good deed or a bad one is, supposedly, only a result of that what is already within the realm of necessity. It does not matter what will you do, no one is to blame. Freedom is an illusion. Hegel, according to Tischner, is the one who saw things deeper than that. He saw whole structures of consciousnesses and with that also *the superstitions* that needed to be overcome in order for a man to be free.<sup>97</sup> In other words, Hegel "will try to reveal the origins of the deed from the point of its dark beginning up to the very end".<sup>98</sup> Hegel will show us that a man gains a better understanding of freedom throughout history. He will combat the common lie. The common lie is that a man is really not free at all. The common lie is heavy under the influence of that what Hegel would simply call a mechanical way of thinking – as if people were just balls thrown in the air. After all, that, too, has a lot to do with the times of Descartes. It is a viewpoint which was foreign to the minds of Dante Alighieri's peers, who believed that people are punished severely only when they behave in an evil way and when they do that with full awareness; there was no place in Dante's time for Socrates and his: "He who knows what good really is will do good". Once upon a time, there

---

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

was a special place for willpower and freedom.<sup>99</sup> Now, when we read philosophical books, it seems to be largely gone.

We can definitely get something like that from Hegel, but we must be willing to read between the lines. What is important is that we ought not to think that Tischner is here caught up in Hegel's way of thinking, that he is his late disciple. As we have seen, he simply appreciates some of Hegel's insights, he is searching for some kind of inspiration. He is not the disciple, because within the issue of freedom (an issue very important to Hegel) Tischner is focused on those who take away our freedom, and the Master-Slave dialectic was only the starting point for that reflection. That is why he feels the need to understand evil so that at one point he might say:

The parasite is conscious of the fact that when it goes to creating values, everyone is better than he is. He is not the one who makes the flowers grow, or the sun shine, or the water flow. What is, then, the reason for his existence? Why, in his own mind, should he be? The existence of a thief is without a reason. A thief also feels inside of him a voice of the instinct of self-preservation. He wants to live. He wants to live even if he does not know why is he living. Let us ask: how does the irresistible will to live expresses itself to the outside? It expresses itself by the increased desire for power. The desire for power is an obsession of those who are unable to justify their own being on this earth by other desires. According to them, "to be" always means: to rule. The one who does not rule, in fact, *does not exist*.<sup>100</sup>

### Conclusion

Hegel is thinking about science that has emerged from the history of philosophy. Tischner thinks about the difficult situations that the modern man faces, particularly religious wars, totalitarianism and the problem of living in a country that is once again free (i.e. in Poland after the collapse of the Soviet Union). We will find no clear, metaphysical background which would unite the two views on truth. In fact, Tischner avoids metaphysics as much as he can. He knew well enough that Hegel was not an enemy of religion and certainly that he was not an enemy of freedom. But once Tischner goes on speaking directly about truth – either for himself or when speaking about Hegel's philosophy – we start to see the main difference between them: Tischner is far more interested in ethics (i.e. the ethical aspect of religion and the ethical aspect of the life that is lacking a religion) than in history or

---

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., pp. 12-13.

<sup>100</sup> J. Tischner, *Spowiedź rewolucjonisty*, p. 203.

in building a system. Tischner thinks about that what should be true for a man (an everyman, not particularly a philosopher or a priest) when a man faces evil. He also thinks about the reason why dictatorship came to be in the first place. That opens the question of freedom.

A Hegelian, perhaps, could answer with something like: *Understanding (Verstand) is a great power... up to the point when it is forced to explain itself.*<sup>101</sup> The point of a Hegelian would be that Tischner does not think about making a clear method for his philosophy, nor does he think about remaining faithful to his own method. Tischner's remarks on truth or evil, one could think, are all over the place and are always only fragmentary, as if he was just a modern poet. Tischner's approach to philosophy is much humbler. Despite all of that, Tischner appreciates Hegel's effort. He admitted quite clearly: "I am certain that this work [*Phenomenology of Spirit*] belongs to the few masterpieces that the European philosophy has ever created. Like all great works, it requires an ever continued reading. But it is not the point to make one more commentary and to add it to those that already exist, but rather to read it from one's own self and for one's own self – from one, that is from the deepness of today's spiritual need, and for one, that is for satisfying the hunger of understanding the situation in which we are currently living".<sup>102</sup> Unless Tischner figures out that a particular philosophy is harmful to the moral behavior of the reader, he will be very careful with his criticism. Since there is pretty much no critique of Hegel from him, one could assume that Tischner is following his footsteps. This is false. He merely prepares the ground for his own inquiry, not so much about truth, but about our own freedom. It begins and ends with the experience of our day to day life.

### Bibliography

- Bortkiewicz P., *Koncepcja dialogu w twórczości ks. Józefa Tischnera*, „Poznańskie Studia Teologiczne” 2002, no. 12.
- Harris H., *Hegel's Ladder I: The Pilgrimage of Reason*, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997.
- Harris H., *Hegel's Ladder II: The Odyssey of Spirit*, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997.
- Hegel G., *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, Leiden: A. H. Adriani, 1908.

---

<sup>101</sup> See H. Harris, *Hegel's Ladder I: The Pilgrimage of Reason*, Indianapolis 1997, p. 36.

<sup>102</sup> J. Tischner, *Spowiedź rewolucjonisty*, pp. 19-20.



- Hegel G., *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History, Volume 1: Manuscripts of the Introduction and the Lectures of 1822-3*, trans. R. Brown, P. Hodgson, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2013
- Hegel G., *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. T. Pinkard, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018.
- Kainz H., *Hegel on the Bacchanalian Revel of Truth*, "Philosophy & Rhetoric", 1995, no. 28.
- Kojève A., *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. J. Nichols, London: Cornell University Press, 1980.
- Kojève A., *Wstęp do wykładów o Heglu*, trans. Ś. Nowicki, Warszawa: Fundacja Aletheia, 1999.
- Leško V., *Filozofia dziejów filozofii: Silne i słabe modele*, trans. B. Szubert, D. Bęben, Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2017.
- Marszałek I., *Józef Tischner i filozoficzne koncepcje zła: Czy zło jest w nas, czy między nami?*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM, 2014.
- Michnik A., Tischner, J., Żakowski, J., *Między panem a plebanem*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 1995.
- Niemczuk A., *Traktat o zlu*, Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 2013.
- Pinkard T., *Hegel's Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Rauch L., *Hegel's Phenomenology of Self-Consciousness*, New York: State University of New York Press, 1999.
- Stern R., *Hegel and the Phenomenology of Spirit*, London: Routledge, 2002.
- Tischner J., *Spór o istnienie człowieka*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 1998.
- Tischner J., *Wędrówki w krainę filozofów*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 2008.
- Tischner J., *Myślenie według wartości*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 2011.
- Tischner J., *Filozofia dramatu*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 2012.
- Tischner J., *Świat ludzkiej nadziei*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 2014.
- Tischner J., *Spowiedź rewolucjonisty: Czytając Fenomenologię ducha Hegla*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 2016.
- Tischner J., *Krótki przewodnik po życiu: Nieznane teksty*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 2017.
- Westphal M., *History & Truth in Hegel's Phenomenology*, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998.
- Winfield R., *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit: A Critical Rethinking in Seventeen Lectures*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2013.
- Yovel Y., *Hegel's Preface to the Phenomenology of Spirit: Translation and Running Commentary*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.

dr Artur Jochlik - Uniwersytet Śląski w Katowicach  
 arturjochlik@wp.pl