



Krzysztof T. Wieczorek

University of Silesia in Katowice

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7987-168X>

In Defence of Utopia Józef Tischner's Thinking about the Social Ethos

Abstract: An important trend in Tischner's philosophical output was the observation of the phenomena that would occur in the current social life of Poles. The trend gained particular significance at the turn of the 1970s and the 1980s, when the processes that finally led to the systemic transformation began. During this period, Tischner made a successful attempt to reconstruct the Polish social ethos. It turned out that its integral element is the presence of utopian projects to rebuild the social order in the country. Tischner stated in his analyses that these utopias play a constructive role in the social life because they motivate people to engage in the political struggle for deep system reforms. The article presents the content of Tischner's reconstruction of Polish utopias from the 1970s and the 1980s and the correlation between social ethics, ideological discussions, and political practice of the declining period of the Polish People's Republic.

Key words: Józef Tischner, utopia, social ethos, Polish political system, criticism of the socialist regime, solidarity

Historical Background of Józef Tischner's Concept

It is 1980, when Józef Tischner publishes the text entitled "Myślenie o ethosie społecznym" [Thinking about the Social Ethos].¹ The time of the breakthrough

¹ The article appeared in the March issue of the Krakow monthly *Znak*, no. 3 (309) (1980): 290–300. Reprinted in: Józef Tischner, *Myślenie według wartości* [Thinking in Values] (Krakow: Znak, 1982), 453–465.

in the Polish public life is closer and closer. The political system of the Polish People's Republic is faltering. Almost no one believes in communist ideals or in the official content of the state-building propaganda anymore. The leaders of the Party and the country have taken a pragmatic course and are trying to manoeuvre between the threat of the USSR intervention and radicalized attitudes of the Polish society. Alarming signals come from the economy, which in the present system of central management is becoming more and more inefficient and faces the risk of collapsing.

Tischner—a philosopher, observer of social life, and, at the same time, a priest deeply involved in everyday human affairs, listens carefully to the moods, views, fears, and hopes of common people.² He begins to notice widespread fatigue with grey and hopeless everyday life, growing impatience with the indifference of the authorities to real, pressing human problems, and hopes directed towards the future arising from these moods. He notes:

The basic dimension of hope is looking to the future. [...] Hope awakens some more or less defined project of tomorrow in consciousness. This project often takes the form of social utopia. We should not have a negative approach to utopia. Utopias say more about man than many statistics, and besides, they always shape our real world to some extent [...]. In the content of utopia, if we search well, we can discover a set of values without which a person is not only unable to understand a person in a specific place and time, but is not even able to fully feel him or herself.³

In the 1970s Poland, there was no grassroots, organized social movement that could become a vehicle for a specific model of social utopia. Therefore, the quoted words of Tischner sound a bit exaggerated. Nevertheless, it was already possible to notice the formation and growth in strength of various groups and environments opposing the apparatus of state power. It is true that they were strongly dispersed and anchored in various ethical traditions (from the Marxist left wing to the extreme-right post-Endet formations,) but from year to year they radiated more and more into the society, inspiring thinking about the need for systemic changes. There was also the Church, which at that particular time played a unique role in Poland. A role not found anywhere else, owing to which it became a significant force stimulating mental and institutional changes in the country.

² Cf. Józef Tischner, “Filozofia i ludzkie sprawy człowieka” [Philosophy and Human Affairs of Man], *Znak*, no. 1 (223) (1973): 18–30; Wanda Czubernatowa and Józef Tischner, “Wieści ze słuchanicy” [*News from the Audience*] (Kraków: Znak, 2001). All translations by Szymon Bukal, unless stated otherwise.

³ Tischner, “Myślenie o ethosie społecznym” [Thinking about the Social Ethos], in *Myślenie według wartości* [Thinking in Values], 457–458.

Utopia as an Exercise of Political Imagination

What kind of utopia did the Reverend Tischner have in mind when he attempted to rehabilitate it in the quoted text? Certainly, he did not mean this style of thinking, which is illustrated by Przemysław Czapliński in the following way: “The utopia of universal happiness, supported by scientific socialism and mythological Prometheism, seems to be a thing of the past [...] the identification of utopia with totalitarianism sometimes seems so tight that it entails the belief that the collapse of the Evil Empire signifies the end of utopian thinking.”⁴ Tischner would probably be the last to approve of utopian thinking aimed at restoring totalitarianism or any other revolutionary solution, and approving violence as a means to an end.⁵ Besides, in Poland of the declining years of the Polish People’s Republic, no one thought seriously about a revolution. It was obvious that there was no other option but to accept the boundaries of reform efforts determined by the geopolitical status quo. It seemed then (and it was true until 1989) that any breach in the structure of the international order, guarded and guaranteed by the world’s greatest powers, was absolutely unacceptable. This, in turn, entailed (at least on the eastern side of the Iron Curtain) the necessity to yield to the hegemony of the USSR, which imposed its rules of the game.

However, it was possible—at least in thoughts, but also in philosophical discussions—to pose bold questions that a decade earlier seemed to be impossible to be discussed in public. The basic question was how far are these boundaries, the impassability of which is guarded by the global geopolitical order. In Poland, which since the mid-1950s (since Władysław Gomułka came to power) followed its own “Polish road to socialism,”⁶ in many respects more liberal than in other countries of the Eastern bloc (except Yugoslavia), it was possible to count on more freedom of movement. However, we had to take into account the geopolitical reality and imponderables. Thinking about social utopia, it should therefore be placed within the political system prevailing in Poland at the time, and, at the same time, not arousing suspicions of violating Hegemon’s imperial interests. Thus, there were fierce disputes in the opposition circles about how far we could go in the reform projects. However, Tischner was not interested in

⁴ Przemysław Czapliński, “Wątpliwe rozstanie z utopią” [Doubtful Parting with Utopia], *Teksty Drugie*, nr 4 (40) (1996): 92–93.

⁵ “The cult of violence means the suicide of utopia”—he wrote in the quoted article (Józef Tischner, “Myślenie o ethosie społecznym,” 459) and a little earlier: “Violence abolishes freedom, and where there is no freedom, there is also no place for an honest ethos” (“Myślenie o ethosie społecznym,” 456).

⁶ See Leszek Nowak, *Polska droga do socjalizmu. Pisma polityczne 1980–1989* [The Polish Way to Socialism. Political Writings 1980–1989] (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Adama Mickiewicza, 2011).

specific programs of political or social transformations. As a real philosopher, he wanted to go deeper—to the axiological foundations of the newly designed social ethos.

Józef Tischner, as he often admitted, from young age was keenly interested in the Marxist philosophy (which was also the reason of many problems in his own environment). From his youthful readings, reflections and discussions, he derived a conviction that the ideals of socialism, which constitute (it is a pity that only in the declarative layer) the basis of the state system, have much in common with both the Christian tradition and the universal values of humanistic culture. On this basis, it was possible to think about building social utopia, referring, at least in part, to the same values and ideals referred to in some propaganda texts of the ruling party's ideologues.

A separate issue was the fact—which was already an open secret at the end of the Gierek decade—that the actual line of action of the party-state authorities enormously differed from the verbally declared program of building a “developed socialist society,” containing a number of social demands compatible with or agreeable with the projects of social utopias that were emerging in opposition circles. This internal dissonance should not be spoken of aloud; but there was no such need, as practically all citizens knew about it—both representatives of higher and lower levels of government, as well as the society, or at least its enlightened circles, actively participating in the changes taking place.

Communist Newspeak *versus* Aesopian Language

It is worth recalling here that in the public discourse of the countries of the Soviet Bloc, a kind of game of understatements was constantly going on. It is significant, however, that on both sides of the barrier separating the apparatus of power and propaganda from the rest of society, fundamentally different rules of the same game were in force. On the side of the Fathers of the Nation, there was an undisturbed seriousness, often taking the form of pathos and anointing, and the understatements consisted in consistently concealing everything that could be inconvenient or compromising for the authorities. Persistent adherence to the rules of this game led to a more and more total, all-encompassing distortion of reality, the more so, the more the plans and intentions of these in power were not reflected in the actual effects of their actions and with the expectations of the broad social masses. As a result, a bizarre system of apparent communication of the authorities with the society was created, called PRL's Newspeak or

Newspeak in Polish⁷ and having much in common with the Orwellian world, described in *1984*, and with the *Lingua Tertii Imperii* functioning in the Third Reich.⁸

On the other side of the border between languages, there were statements by citizens who were not connected with the government apparatus. More and more often they included content critical of the system or of specific symptoms of its malfunctioning. On this side, the rules of the language-game dictated that no criticism undesirable by the authorities⁹ should be expressed *expressis verbis*. Under the pressure of these linguistic taboos, a style of expression different from the discourse of power, but similarly enigmatic and non-literal, developed, referred to by linguists as the “Aesopian language.”¹⁰ There was no seriousness here, so a joke, irony or satire were allowed; the creators of cabaret programs as well as the authors of theatre and film comedies took advantage of this opportunity abundantly. Political jokes became a permanent element of social life—more fleeting and ephemeral than written texts, but always up-to-date and often painfully accurate.

This peculiar kind of rivalry between the official Newspeak (usually blatantly artificial, stiff, and bloated, though at times trying to break the conventions that bind it) and the brilliant, intelligent, inventive, and creative Aesopian language that gave colour to everyday life and made it more bearable, or at least more tolerable and interesting.

The elements of Aesopian language appeared not only in satirical and cabaret works, which were, as was often said, a kind of safety valve that allowed venting bad emotions and turning them into laughter; maybe even bitter and powerless, but always at least a little comforting in spirit and fulfilling an important therapeutic function on a social scale. Due to the ubiquitous presence of censorship, officials of which had the right to interfere with all texts presented publicly in speech and writing (it is no coincidence that the office dealing with censorship of the statements of the citizens of the Polish People’s Republic was called the Main Office of Control of Press, Publications and Shows), anyone who wanted to say or write more than officially allowed had to master the unwritten

⁷ See Michał Głowiński, *Nowomowa po polsku* [Newspeak in Polish] (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo PEN, 1990).

⁸ See Victor Klemperer, *LTI — Notizbuch eines Philologen* (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1947).

⁹ The authorities of the Polish People’s Republic allowed for a certain strictly rationed form of criticism of selected elements of everyday life, such as the slowness of waiters in restaurants, unreliability of sellers (especially in a few private commercial establishments), etc., thus creating the appearance of freedom of expression. However, transgressing these permissible frames of criticism could have had far-reaching consequences. An interesting picture of this apparent freedom of speech was presented, among others, by Jacek Fedorowicz in the book *W zasadzie tak* [All in All, Yes] (Warszawa: KAW, 1975).

¹⁰ See Ryszard Nycz, “Literatura polska w cieniu cenzury: wykład,” *Teksty Drugie*, nr 3 (51) (1998): 9.

rules of the game of understatement. This situation also applied to scientific publications and philosophical texts. For this reason, books, articles, and essays, including the most serious and important theoretical problems, were often written with the intention of neutralizing any censor's interference. Therefore, they should be read in an appropriately modified way, with careful consideration of the historical and socio-cultural context and with the awareness of the presence of hidden content that the author wanted the reader to understand using the rules of this particular game.

A similar interpretative strategy should also be used in relation to Tischner's philosophical writings from the times of the Polish People's Republic. While discussing his texts, I will try to extract from them also what is hidden and consciously understated.

We may wonder if there is more than a coincidence in the fact that in the same issue of the monthly *Znak*, which published the article by Tischner, "Thinking about the Social Ethos," the editors published a translation of the text by Hans-Georg Gadamer with the meaningful title *The Incapacity for Conversation*.¹¹ It is true that the philosopher from Wrocław mainly discusses existential and cultural barriers that make it difficult for people to successfully establish an understanding—he writes, for example: "When two people come together and enter into an exchange with one another, then there is always an encounter between, as it were, two worlds, two worldviews and two world pictures. [...] And it's true: every human viewpoint has something contingent about it."¹² There is no doubt, however, that the readers of the monthly *Znak* knew all too well other reasons, from the sphere of political conditions, for the inability to conversation. However, similarly to the obstacles indicated in the quoted Gadamer's text, also in the case of political and censorship limitations, there were ways of overcoming barriers and overcoming communication difficulties. Owing to their application, it was possible to see that—as Gadamer notices—"Thus conversation with the other, the other's disagreement or agreement, the other's understandings and also misunderstandings, become a kind of extension of our individuality and a testing of the possible community we share, toward which reason encourages us."¹³

¹¹ Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Niezdolność do rozmowy" [The Incapacity for Conversation], trans. Bogdan Baran, *Znak*, no. 3 (309) (1980): 369–376, trans. from: Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Die Unfähigkeit zum Gespräch," *Universitas*, vol. 26 (1971): 1295–1304.

¹² Hans-Georg Gadamer, "The Incapacity for Conversation," *Continental Philosophy Review* 39 (2006): 354, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11007-006-9041-2>.

¹³ Gadamer, "The Incapacity for Conversation," 354.

Tischner's Stance on Communism

Józef Tischner was not a thinker with radically anti-communist views. It was only in the 1980s when finally the illusions suggesting that a constructive dialogue with the representatives of the highest authorities of the party and the state could be held proved unrealistic, that the tone of his writing changed significantly and became colored with uncompromising criticism against the most important, in the author's opinion, structural and ethical flaws of the system. However, in the years leading up to Martial Law, a peculiar, perhaps even surprising feature can be noticed in Tischner's work. Both in descriptions and diagnoses of the then-current social reality, as well as in projects and forecasts leaning towards the future, the thinker does not seek to confront the authorities or their ideological discourse, but patiently looks for possible planes of dialogue and understanding. The new tone comes later—in publications dated 1982 and subsequent. Tischner begins to write differently: he no longer counts on the possibility of bringing views closer or on mutual understanding, therefore, he does not conceal his critical assessment of reality, and sometimes even his irritation: the emotional temperature of the polemics written at that time with the pathological features of the real socialism system can be quite high.

It should be noted that the above remarks do not apply to the book *Thinking in Values*, which was important in Tischner's intellectual output and published by the Kraków publishing house Znak in 1982. That year of publication (after the famous speech of General Jaruzelski) is only the result of many months of publishing procedures and decisions. The texts in this collection, however, come—all without exception—from the years preceding the introduction of Martial Law. By the way (it is a curiosity not necessarily widely known to Polish readers and enthusiasts of Tischner's work) over a year before the Polish edition, an Italian-language edition of the work was published, entitled *Il pensiero ei valori*.¹⁴

Returning to the issue of Tischner's surprising restraint in relation to the reality of the Polish People's Republic and its political and social dimension: this conciliatory tone seems all the stranger as at the same time the Kraków philosopher became involved in a sharp, ruthless polemic with the main ideological current of Polish Catholicism, that is, with the Thomistic trend of Catholic philosophy and theology and the style of teaching in pastoral practice that follows this trend.¹⁵

¹⁴ Józef Tischner, *Il pensiero ei valori* (Bologna: CSEO Biblioteca, 1980).

¹⁵ See Zbyszek Dymarski, "Debata księdza Józefa Tischnera ze szkołą lubelską" [Father Józef Tischner's Debate with the Lublin School], *Logos and Ethos*, no. 1 (1998): 239–245, and Marek Jawor, *Spór Józefa Tischnera z tomizmem — między konfrontacją a dialogiem*

Could Tischner be closer to the Polish United Workers' Party's Marxism than to the Thomist interpretation of Catholicism? Certainly not; such an assumption would be absurd. The explanation is different: the sharpness of the polemics and the persistence with which he criticized "Thomistic Christianity" (this is, what he called this spiritual and intellectual formation¹⁶) and defended his own beliefs, based on other types of philosophical culture, resulted from a deep concern for the Church and an equally deep emotional involvement in pastoral activity. I remember Tischner's statement from 1993 at a meeting promoting the newly published book *The Unfortunate Gift of Freedom*. Responding to the objection that, as a Catholic priest and thinker, he should defend the Church instead of criticizing her, the philosopher replied: "The more every believer loves the Church, the more he is allowed to criticize her."

Unlike matters of faith and pastoral ministry, the Reverend Tischner's attitude towards Marxism is indifferently objective, and his interest in the subject was purely scientific. Another thing is that by acting in public life as a defender of open, critical Catholicism and participating in countless meetings and talks involving various groups of debaters, in the 1970s he got closer and made friends with several representatives of leftist circles sympathizing with Marxist thinking and believing more or less orthodox in the ideals of socialism, but, like him, open-minded and capable of substantive discussion without prejudice, and even to a critical revision of their own beliefs (these were, among others, Adam Michnik, Jan Strzelecki, and Jacek Żakowski). Owing to these personal contacts, he probably acquired a more emotional attitude to some postulates of leftist thought, and certainly the contact with the most valuable figures from the circle of the "secular left," as he called it, had a significant impact on his own attitude, thoughts, and axiological preferences.

The Crisis of Hope and an Announcement of the Coming Changes

At the time when the text "Thinking about the Social Ethos" was written and the foundations of Tischner's approach to the problem of social utopia were being formed, the situation in the country was as follows: on the one hand, the crisis

[Józef Tischner's Debate with Thomism—Between Confrontation and Dialogue], *Filozofia Chrześcijańska*, vol. 10 (2013): 211–227.

¹⁶ See Józef Tischner, "Szyłek chrześcijaństwa tomistycznego" [The Decline of Thomistic Christianity], *Znak*, no. 1 (187) (1970): 1–26.

of power was deepening, especially in the political and economic dimension, the consequence of which had to be a rapid and radical change of course.¹⁷ On the other hand, a crisis of hope was growing among the Poles—this crisis was felt by Tischner with strong empathy,¹⁸ and he tried to subject it to an in-depth analysis using the tools of philosophical description, primarily the instruments of phenomenology and philosophical hermeneutics. On yet another hand, the destabilizing state and the shaky state power was threatened by a crisis of international relations, which could threaten relative stability in the region, and perhaps even on a larger world scale and therefore had to be avoided at all costs.

If there was a research tool that could be called a “barometer of social sentiment,” then in the late seventies this barometer would indicate the predominance of conciliatory attitudes and a good atmosphere for meetings, talks, and attempts at understanding between the most important social circles in the Polish People’s Republic. This could be recognized, for example, by the fact that the language of official public statements on the side of the authorities¹⁹ had changed—slightly but significantly, but also in Catholic circles, there was an atmosphere of hopeful expectation of a “new opening.” The atmosphere at workplaces was similar, including the largest, flagship industrial conglomerates, which were supposed to perform, apart from production tasks, also a formative function for the new type of working class,²⁰ while there was an unexpected process of gradual em-

¹⁷ The change did take place—in December 1981, but the leadership of the Party and the state took a course exactly opposite to that expected by the circles seeking agreement on both sides on the basis of social utopia projects.

¹⁸ “My philosophy was deeply influenced by the conditions I had lived and worked so far [...] first I started learning philosophy, and only then did I really meet a Man. [...] What was the result of those meetings? It was the discovery that our modern Man has entered a period of deep crisis of hope. The crisis of hope is a crisis of foundations. In the past, people killed one another in the name of believing that their own hope was superior to someone else’s. Today they are choking on their own hopelessness.” Józef Tischner, “Czym jest filozofia, którą uprawiam” [What Is the Philosophy That I Practice], in *Myślenie według wartości* [Thinking in Values], 9–10.

¹⁹ One example of such a change is noted by a keen observer of Polish newspeak, Michał Głowiński, in a note made on June 8, 1981: “A new phenomenon is undoubtedly the church connotations in the speeches of members of the ruling party. In a TV interview aired on Friday, June 5 after the news, [Deputy Prime Minister] Rakowski spoke of the government as a service to the nation. [...] This is [...] a further example of the impact of the Church’s rhetoric on the party language. The word service, directed in this way, is usually used in those declarations that are mild, in which the public is not frightened or blackmailed, it seeks to mitigate conflicts, not to fuel them. This was the nature of Rakowski’s interview. Michał Głowiński, “Zła mowa. Jak się nie dać propagandzie” [Bad Speech. How to Avoid Propaganda] (Warszawa: Wielka Literatura, 2016), 196–197.

²⁰ See Sławomir Kamosiński, “Praca jako obowiązek a praca jako źródło satysfakcji. Studium historyczne roli i znaczenia pracy w dziejach Polski (po 1945 roku)” [Work as a Duty and Work as a Source of Satisfaction. Historical Study of the Role and Significance of Work in the History of Poland (post-1945)] (pl. *Annales. Etyka w życiu gospodarczym*, vol. 19, no. 2 (2016): 63–79, <http://dx.doi.org/10.18778/1899-2226.19.2.05>.

powerment of workers and humanization of labor relations. All in all, nothing foreshadowed the next great national drama, which was to begin shortly after—as it seemed at the time—the great triumph of reason, moderation and the spirit of interpersonal solidarity, which was the result of, among others, the August Agreements between the factory strike committees and government delegations in Gdańsk, Szczecin, Jastrzębie, and Katowice Steelworks. Before this drama took place, it was reasonable to assume goodwill on the part of all the important social and political forces that could influence the way out of a multi-symptomatic crisis. One could also hope that in the ongoing talks across the country, it would be possible to finally give up the language games imposed by the sick political situation and replace them with a new kind of game: a game of social utopia. The philosophical and social texts of Tischner from the turn of the 1970s and 1980s fit into this climate of expectations and moods, and in this spirit their contents should be interpreted, bearing in mind the traces of Aesop's speech present there.

New Intellectual Climate around the Concept of Utopia

For a fuller understanding of the meaning of Tischner's program of rehabilitation of utopian thinking, we must take into account one more important element of the cultural context of those times: the stage of modern utopian history at that time and the associated evolution of the social perception of utopian thinking. The outline of the history of utopia, from Thomas More to the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, went through many different phases. Interesting comments on the changing fate of the historical role of utopian thinking can be found, among others, in the works of Bronisław Baczko²¹ and Przemysław Czapliński.²² Baczko devoted an extensive, 376-page-long study *Utopian Lights: The Evolution of the Idea of Social Progress* (trans. Judith L. Greenberg) to the

²¹ See Bronisław Baczko, *Lumieres de l'utopie* (Paris: Payot & Rivages, 2001); Bronisław Baczko, *Światła utopii*, trans. Wiktor Dłuski (Warszawa: IfiS PAN, 2016); Bronisław Baczko, *Les imaginaires sociaux. Mémoires et espoirs collectifs* [Social Imaginations. Sketches on Hope and Collective Memory] (Paris: Payot, 1984), trans. Małgorzata Kowalska (Warszawa: PWN, 1994).

²² See Przemysław Czapliński, *Resztki nowoczesności* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2011); Przemysław Czapliński, *The Remnants of Modernity. Two Essays on Sarmatism and Utopia in Polish Contemporary Literature*, trans. Thomas Anessi (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang Edition, 2015); Przemysław Czapliński, "Wątpliwe rozstanie z utopią," 92–105.

following issues: “Utopia and History: this book aims to bring out the complex relationship between them by examining the social imagination active in the 18th century, especially during the revolutionary period.”²³ The author also ruminates on the parallel between the two *fin de siècles*: “At the end of the 18th century, the utopia gives the impression of a rubble landfill. [...] We also find the ruins of a utopia in the cultural and ideological landscape of the end of the 20th century. However, every age decline is different. [...] At the end of the [20th] century, which ends in pain, amid its absurdities and murderous madness, the status of the utopia is very uncertain.”²⁴ Despite these reservations, the author begins with the *Preface* to the work—similarly to Tischner in his article written during the publication of Baczkowski’s work so close that there is a suspicion that its reading was a creative impulse for the philosopher from Kraków²⁵—with a praise of utopia:

When utopian dreams light up on the horizon of collective and individual expectations and hopes, they illuminate the social landscape in a new way. [...] Utopian images arrange and separate black and white, opacity and transparency, the visible and the invisible differently. [...] The glances engulfed by the flames of utopia turn towards the visions of *a different society*, reconciled with reason, history, prosperity, i.e., the opposite of the existing society [...] thus receive historically variable opportunities to participate in conflicts and strategies, the stake of which is symbolic power over the social imagination.²⁶

In turn, in the first chapter of the work, the author shows what current cognitive values are revealed to the researcher of utopia:

The center of his interests is not the relationship between utopia as an announcement and the future that should have been foreseen. He rather wonders how [...] the reality of certain present, its ways of thinking, beliefs, and its imagination are expressed in utopias [...], how utopias participate in the present, trying to go beyond it. [...] Utopias in a specific way show and express a certain epoch [...] the area of its expectations and the path taken by the social imagination.²⁷

²³ Baczkowski, *Światła utopii*, 15.

²⁴ Baczkowski, Preface to the 2001 edition of *Światła utopii*, trans. Wiktor Dłuski (Warszawa: IfiS PAN, 2016), 7, 11–12.

²⁵ The first French edition of this book was published in 1978, and an Italian translation was published in 1979. It is highly probable that at least one of these editions was known to Tischner.

²⁶ Baczkowski, *Światła utopii*, 15.

²⁷ Baczkowski, *Światła utopii*, 22.

For the purpose of comparison, let us juxtapose this mini-apologia of utopia with the expectations that Tischner has towards it:

We should not think wrongly about utopia. Utopias say more about man than many statistics, and besides, they always shape our real world to some extent [...]. In the content of utopia [...] we can discover a set of these values, without which a person is not only unable to understand a person in a specific place and time, but is not even able to fully feel himself [...] utopian projects of tomorrow are and will be a permanent companion of social life. It is them that constantly problematize our social factuality and are themselves problematized by this factuality.²⁸

Therefore, if the presence of utopia in the space of social imagination brings so many profits, then why is this fear of utopia, to which (as to its presupposition) refers Tischner's objection "we should not think wrongly about utopia"? We can also find an explanation in Baczko. By leading us—century after century—through the history of utopian thinking, the outstanding representative of the Warsaw school of the history of ideas underlines a significant re-evaluation of utopias that took place at the turn of the 1960s and 1970s: "In 1968 and in the following years, utopia was fashionable."²⁹ In the texts of old utopias, "people admired the ability to transgress social and cultural prohibitions, they admired the discovery [...] of an active, audacious, inventive imagination seeking social otherness."³⁰ On the other hand,

since the end of the 1970s, it has been fashionable not to admire utopia, but to find in the same texts the negation of the individual or even crimes against the individual in the name of a rationalist and artificial system that destroys spontaneity and vitality. Utopia is not at all liberating and subversive; on the contrary, it is precisely the enemy of freedom [...]. Utopia would be an anticipation of a totalitarian world, not to say concentrative. [...] Behind the multitude of different utopias, there is one and the same utopian project, totalitarian in its essence.³¹

A similar diagnosis concerning the crisis of utopian thinking—but more extended in time—is formulated by Przemysław Czapliński:

If we delve further into the past, we can see that in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries literary and philosophical utopias were laboratories for new political systems and new forms of governance. Numerous texts participated

²⁸ Tischner, "Myślenie o etosie społecznym," 457–458.

²⁹ Baczko, *Wyobrażenia społeczne*, 135.

³⁰ Baczko, *Wyobrażenia społeczne*, 136.

³¹ Baczko, *Wyobrażenia społeczne*, 136.

in a form of free intellectual play that involved inventing worlds that were better than the present one, that were free of imperfections, and, above all, that stimulated the reader to challenge the existing order and join ranks in a mass rebellion of dreamers.

The beginning of the twentieth century was a turning point for the utopian movement. Utopia ceased to mean “unrealistic thinking.” Mass movements for emancipation were creating an awareness in both writers and political activists that utopia was not so much about creating a future as instilling public awareness.

The victory of utopia would not arrive when a specific plan was put into effect, but when the strongest collective entity (the proletariat, for instance) began thinking about the future according to a common template.³²

As a result of this utopian turning point at the end of the century, “the Marxist-Leninist system [was interpreted] as a realisation of utopia,”³³ and

the concept of a lasting utopia, which had its roots in ancient Greece and culminated in twentieth-century totalitarianism, thus entered university campuses and journalistic discussion, and became a universal idiom. The reader absorbed a language that established clear boundaries between planned history and the history of free development. When a few years later philosophical stock was taken (which will be discussed further in the chapter ‘The Orphaned Children of Prometheus’), modernity could no longer be defined by means of utopia, or utopia by means of violence.³⁴

However—Czapliński adds in his other text—although “the utopia of universal happiness, supported by scientific socialism and mythological Prometheism, seems to be a thing of the past—most intellectuals seem to agree on this”³⁵; nevertheless, uncertainty appears: “But does the defeat of totalitarianism in the confrontation with human striving for freedom and social striving for prosperity mean the final break with utopia?”³⁶ The source of this doubt is the following observation:

There are good reasons, however, to believe that utopia is not necessarily synonymous with totalitarian power (that is, power that controls the economic, political, and cultural areas of society at the same time), and that parting with

³² Przemysław Czapliński, *The Remnants of Modernity. Two Essays on Sarmatism and Utopia in Polish Contemporary Literature*, trans. Thomas Anessi (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang Edition, 2015), 122.

³³ Czapliński, *The Remnants of Modernity*, 103.

³⁴ Czapliński, *The Remnants of Modernity*, 104.

³⁵ Czapliński, “Wątpliwe rozstanie z utopią,” 92.

³⁶ Czapliński, “Wątpliwe rozstanie z utopią,” 93.

Prometheus, a mass exodus from Orwellian anti-utopia, does not mean the end of utopia in general. Not only does the end of the twentieth century not result in parting with utopian thinking, but it leads to its rebirth in a different form.³⁷

Therefore, Tischner's attempt to think positively about utopia coincides with a moment in the history of European thinking when the term utopia is perceived primarily negatively and arouses fear or aversion rather than hope. Therefore, we must praise the courage and pioneering sense of the Kraków-based thinker who dared to repeal the common idiom of the criticism of utopian thinking and recall the values of such thinking, which were neglected or ignored in the discourse (both scientific and public) at that time.

However, he also noticed the weaknesses and dangers of an excessive trust in utopia. In the quoted article, he warned: "The weakness of utopia is that it does not appreciate the power with which evil enters the world and remains there. Utopias usually minimize the power of evil, weigh it lightly. [...] only when trying to implement the utopia it turns out how illusory these assumptions were."³⁸ This weakness is an additional reason—apart from the undoubted cognitive values for a historian, philosopher, sociologist, and political activist—for whom "social utopias demand disclosure, description and criticism. Since it would be a mistake to say that they do not exist, since they cannot be banished from our imagination, we need to look at what they are."³⁹ The basic tool for a critical analysis of utopian projects is to define its attitude to the Machiavellian idea of allowing violence as a means to an end: "Utopian consciousness cannot do without criticism based on seeing what is factual, otherwise it risks falling into the cult of violence. The cult of violence occurs when the attachment to dreams is too great and the reality is too resistant to dreams."⁴⁰ We do not need a very skilled eye to see in this passage a veiled (Aesopian language!) criticism of the revolutionary utopias under the sign of the hammer and sickle.

Utopian thinking—yes! (Tischner seems to say), but not the one that distorts reality and closes its eyes to evident evil. It is high time to part with this version of utopia and, instead, let new utopias—those that are already stuck in the social imagination, but so far, in a world monopolized by an increasingly declining totalitarian utopia, could not become the subject of analysis, criticism, and discussion.

³⁷ Czaplinski, "Wątpliwe rozstanie z utopią," 93.

³⁸ Tischner, "Myślenie o ethosie społecznym," 458.

³⁹ Tischner, "Myślenie o ethosie społecznym," 458.

⁴⁰ Tischner, "Myślenie o ethosie społecznym," 459.

Ethics of Solidarity as a Study of Social Utopia

“Thinking about the Social Ethos” is more of a prolegomenon than a study of utopian thought. Therefore, we find in it the plan and directions of work worth undertaking to describe, criticize, and organize the utopian projects hidden somewhere in the social imagination. However, there is no description of any such projects. Did the author of the 1980 text continue the directions of thinking announced in it and continue his critical analyses? He certainly did not do it systematically; he did not leave behind an orderly study of Polish social utopias of the declining PRL period. Not only because such work would require systematic, academic study of the problem, and Reverend Professor never had enough time for such activities,⁴¹ but also because of a sudden historical turn, which took place in December 1981 and radically invalidated a whole series of projects both intellectual and those concerning the future shape of social practice.

Before this turn took place, however, Tischner wrote a whole series of short studies, which made up an orderly and critical description of at least one—at that time the most important and most promising—social utopia, emerging spontaneously in discussions across the country. It is about *The Ethics of Solidarity*, a series of twenty-one texts originally published in subsequent issues of *Tygodnik Powszechny* from October 1980 to May 1981,⁴² and then collected and published by the Znak Publishing House in Kraków in August 1981. This publication can be considered a philosophical and ethical study of a solidarity utopia. It is certainly not a systematic study of an academic nature, but a collection of instantaneous written impressions.⁴³ When put together,

⁴¹ “From time to time I dream about what philosophy should really be practiced today [...]. I used to believe that these dreams were planning. Today I know that nothing will come of it. What arises is a compromise between a dream and the need of the moment [...] I do not do what I should. I always have to dig half a meter further than where I believe is my treasure. [...] And I think it will be like that for the rest of my life.” Tischner, “Myślenie o etosie społecznym,” 7, 13.

⁴² The first and last text in the collection are records of two sermons delivered by Rev. Tischner at Wawel on October 19, 1980, and May 3, 1981; see Józef Tischner, “Solidarność sumień” [Solidarity of Consciences], *Tygodnik Powszechny*, no. 43 (1980): 1; Tischner, “Z ducha Konstytucji” [From the Spirit of the Constitution], *Tygodnik Powszechny*, no. 19 (1981): 1, 2; between these dates, the development period for the published material ends.

⁴³ The author himself characterized his work as follows: “My texts were a hermeneutic interpretation of events, they did not want to project reality, but to describe it [...] it was an analysis of the ethical substance of human self-awareness without digging into political and economic contexts. The point was to show readers that such a sphere—the sphere of social self-awareness—exists and is important.” Anna Karoń-Ostrowska, *Spotkanie. Z ks. Józefem Tischnerem rozmawia Anna Karoń-Ostrowska* [Meeting. Anna Karoń-Ostrowska Talks to Józef Tischner] (Kraków: Znak, 2003), 98–99. Wojciech Bonowicz comments: “Two moments

however, they show a surprisingly accurate reconstruction of a set of values that enable a deep understanding of Polish hopes, expectations, and ambitions to build together a new, better reality on the historical foundation given here and now.

Today we know that those hopes, expectations, and ambitions were brutally destroyed and squandered as a result of an ill-considered decision to introduce Martial Law in Poland, and after its abolition, historical circumstances changed so much that the implementation of the solidarity utopia recorded by Tischner turned out to be impossible. What was created in the aftermath of the process of systemic transformation and what was called the Third Polish Republic differed from that project in so many important details that it is not worth making comparisons here. However, it is worth making a short reconstruction of *The Ethics of Solidarity* to show how Tischner's theoretical contemplations in "Thinking about the Social Ethos" were given a specific shape on this one example.

I would like to emphasize once again that *The Ethics of Solidarity* is part of the theoretical model of reflection on social ethos, whose formal outline was presented by Tischner in the article "Thinking about the Social Ethos." A brief reconstruction of this pattern is as follows:

1. The subject of reflection is social ethics understood as "the way we live our social life, that is, [...] the way of responding to events [and] participating in them,"⁴⁴ as well as "the possibility of choosing between various hopes and involvement in their implementation" grounded in personal freedom.⁴⁵

2. A researcher of social ethics has at his disposal three styles of thinking: positivist (a precise description of facts obtained through experience, programmatically free from judgments and evaluations), normative (based on an a priori recognition of the structure of obligations and looking for the best ways to obey them), and axiological (examining the essence of ethical awareness by reaching the sphere of values and ideals).⁴⁶ The author unequivocally supports the third of these possibilities.

3. Instructive examples of "descriptive-axiological reflection on social life"⁴⁷ is sought by Tischner in two sources: *The City of God* by St. Augustine and in *Phenomenology of Spirit* by G. W. F. Hegel.

should be emphasized here. Firstly: *The Ethics of Solidarity* was a hot-written text. Secondly: *The Ethics of Solidarity* was not a text written in a fever. Tischner liked to repeat that philosophy does not cause the fever of the world, but measures it well. In this case, the idea was to show what really caused the 'explosion' and what the ethical significance of the event was." Wojciech Bonowicz, "Od Wydawcy" [Publisher's Note], in Tischner, *Etyka solidarności* [The Ethics of Solidarity], 286.

⁴⁴ Tischner, "Myślenie o ethosie społecznym," 453.

⁴⁵ Tischner, "Myślenie o ethosie społecznym," 454.

⁴⁶ Tischner, "Myślenie o ethosie społecznym," 455–456.

⁴⁷ Tischner, "Myślenie o ethosie społecznym," 457.

4. The basic objective of a researcher of social utopias is to understand the axiological content of hope directed towards the future by reconstructing a set of values that people expect to be realized in a specific place and time.⁴⁸

5. “Social utopias require disclosure, description, and criticism”⁴⁹ in order to “introduce some order among them,” verify which of them are internally contradictory and therefore impossible to implement, and what is their attitude towards “social reality, to which they refer,”⁵⁰ since utopias detached from reality and going too far beyond the scope of possible action here and now or in the foreseeable future disqualify themselves,

6. A ‘good’ utopia (eutopia) “consists in fulfilling a creative synthesis of the past and the future,”⁵¹ therefore it should not radically cut itself off from tradition, but preserve everything worth preserving as a result of “preferential reading of the past.”⁵²

7. Hope, determined by the project of utopia, “also determines the way of connecting man with the present”⁵³ offering here and now a program of “action with meaning,”⁵⁴ including responsibility for our actions, the obligation to give testimony to the professed values and a willingness to sacrifice.

Now I would like to turn to showing how the various elements of the model are reflected in *The Ethics of Solidarity*. The first point can be considered as realized in such a way that the entire text is, firstly, a reflection—as faithful as the author managed to accurately reflect the spiritual atmosphere of the communities involved in the Solidarity movement—of the way of experiencing and participating in the events of the beginning of the 1980s which brought great hopes. Secondly, a passionate appeal to choose the hope indicated in the text and to actively join the movement. The second point determines what research perspective should be adopted during the reflection, and the philosopher is invariably faithful to the descriptive-axiological method indicated there, not only in the text currently under discussion. Third point is the following, in *Thinking about the Social Ethos* Tischner wrote that St. Augustine recommended building the future on what is worth saving from the past, and that his choice “is the result of a preferential reading of the past.”⁵⁵ St. Augustine asked if “everything Roman was to perish” and answered that not everything, because “Rome is passing, but the Roman virtue remains.”⁵⁶ From Hegel, in turn, he

⁴⁸ Tischner, “Myślenie o ethosie społecznym,” 457.

⁴⁹ Tischner, “Myślenie o ethosie społecznym,” 458.

⁵⁰ Tischner, “Myślenie o ethosie społecznym,” 459.

⁵¹ Tischner, “Myślenie o ethosie społecznym,” 460.

⁵² Tischner, “Myślenie o ethosie społecznym,” 461.

⁵³ Tischner, “Myślenie o ethosie społecznym,” 462.

⁵⁴ Tischner, “Myślenie o ethosie społecznym,” 463.

⁵⁵ Tischner, “Myślenie o ethosie społecznym,” 461.

⁵⁶ Tischner, “Myślenie o ethosie społecznym,” 461.

proposes to adopt the idea of the art of learning from one's own opponent: "The reference to the past made by [...] Hegel is of a special character. It is essentially a reference beyond opposites. Here, we make the opponent's virtue our own. It is not about [...] continuing what is already related. It is about alluding to what is related in difference, in opposition."⁵⁷ When applying the decoding method contained in the text of Aesopian language, two leads can be discerned. First, there is a temptation to see a parallel between St. Augustine, bishop of Hippo, and John Paul II, bishop of Rome, and to trace in Tischner's works the sources of inspiration in papal teaching from the first years of his pontificate, especially in relation to the idea of wise combining tradition with innovation (here, however, the amount of material would be so abundant that this thread should be left for another occasion). Secondly, for Tischner—at least to some extent (admittedly, not much)—a modern analogon of Rome from the time of St. Augustine could be what from the 16th century was called "Third Rome," so the Moscow Empire (of course, in its twentieth century form, known as the Soviet Union). No matter how risky a thesis that the author of *The Ethics of Solidarity* looks for something like "Roman virtues" in the communist ethos taken from the East would be, it cannot be completely ruled out that it is precisely in the form of "learning from the opponent" that he considers the possibility of such a reinterpretation of some leftist ideals that would enable an authentic dialogue with the non-confrontational part of the supporters of the PUWP's political line. It is how the content of the four central chapters of *The Ethics of Solidarity*, entitled: *Democracy, Socialism, Revolution, Ruling*⁵⁸ can be interpreted.

The fourth point concentrates the attention of Józef Tischner to the greatest extent. Once again, it can be said that all chapters of *The Ethics of Solidarity*, without exception, constitute a reconstruction of a set of values that make up the axiological foundation of a social project. In each episode of the cycle, the focus is primarily on values—positive (such as community, democracy or thriftiness) or negative (such as suffering, illusion or betrayal). These values are not only indicated, named, and discussed, but also "set for implementation." In the text opening the publication, Tischner writes: "The house needs to be tidied up. It is exactly what needs to be done that binds us together and inspires us to act,"⁵⁹ and in the following fragments we talk about what exactly needs to be done to make utopia a reality.

The fifth point is realized in such a way that everything written by the author of *The Ethics of Solidarity* is the disclosure, description, and critical reflection on the individual elements of the solidarity utopia. There is not a *reductio ad*

⁵⁷ Tischner, "Myślenie o ethosie społecznym," 462.

⁵⁸ See Tischner, *Etyka solidarności*, 46–67.

⁵⁹ Tischner, *Etyka solidarności*, 7.

absurdum⁶⁰ construction in the text, as the author has already selected social utopia that meets the condition of non-contradiction. On the other hand, there is a constant concern that subsequent calls to implement the values that make up the characteristics of the solidarity ethos are constantly confronted with the realities of the current Polish social and geopolitical reality.⁶¹ Tischner does not want to create an abstract model of an ideal world that we can only dream about and sigh about, but tries to provide motivation for all people of good will, regardless of their ideological and philosophical orientation, to build a community of action leading to the implementation of the disclosed and described set of values.

The sixth point is a particularly sensitive issue. The attitude towards the past in the minds of a large part of the generation painfully experienced by the Stalinist crimes and a whole range of pathologies of the real socialism, euphemistically called in the language of propaganda “periods of errors and distortions,” was definitely critical. So when, as a result of the progressive erosion of the economic and political system in Poland, the prospect of far-reaching changes began to open, the expectations and hopes of many Poles were related to leaving behind everything that was associated with the ideals of socialism and communism, and which, instead of fulfilling the promises of a better life, brought disappointments. In the more radical fractions of the democratic opposition, there was direct talk of the need to depart from the path of socialist development and enter the path of rapprochement with Western democracies. However, such a radical turn is not envisaged by Tischner’s project of social changes. Basing largely on Hegel’s idea of progress, following the path of *dialektische Aufhebung*, Tischner prefers a strategy of creative synthesis of the past and the future, that is, in practice, inscribing a set of values centred around the central idea of solidarity into the existing reality without violating its political system foundations and the geopolitical *raison d’etat*. Such a scenario was considered by the Kraków philosopher to be realistic and providing an optimal chance of achieving the indicated goals. Therefore, it can be said (somewhat humorously)

⁶⁰ With the exception of those passages that refer to unacceptable from the point of view of the new social ethos and requiring mental overcoming of the relics of the Marxist concept. An example: Why should ‘people’s rule’ be—according to some—so highly commendable? The answer is about two positions. Some say: because the people are the bearer of the truth, because the people are always right. Others say: because the people are the most numerous, they have the greatest strength. [...] The issue of democracy is, as you can see, a complex matter. We can easily discover that the two extreme views of the idea of democracy mentioned at the beginning are absurd.” Tischner, *Etyka solidarności*, 46–47.

⁶¹ For example, in the chapter *Administering* the author writes: “Today we need to better understand the nature of the bond that connects the farmer with his farm. We need to properly grasp the nature of farm work. We are in danger of treating this work as if it were the work of an industrial entrepreneur. These two images are overlapping each other today, and as a result we hold someone else responsible for one mistake.” Tischner, *Etyka solidarności*, 69.

that the second patron of Tischner's thinking about the choice of the path of realizing the ethos of solidarity, next to Hegel, is Reinhold Niebuhr, to whom tradition attributes the authorship of the prayer (often quoted in Tischner's oral statements): "God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference."

The seventh point concerns the question of what we must do together here and now so that the present becomes a bridge from the past known to all of us and having a number of flaws towards the implementation of the model of social utopia, contained in *The Ethics of Solidarity*. Among the whole number of postulates addressed to the readers of the series, it is worth mentioning a few most important ones, starting with the call for shared responsibility for the implementation of the idea of interpersonal solidarity: "The word 'solidarity' brings together our anxious hopes, stimulates courage and thought, and binds together people who stood far apart yesterday. [...] Each of us feels the enormous weight of the contents hidden in this word."⁶² Another important call concerns the need to "work on work."⁶³ Tischner writes: "Our ethos of solidarity today is [...] concrete. It was born among working people to free human labor from unnecessary pain [...] it is, above all, about the truth about the unnecessary suffering of working people. This truth should be as concrete as suffering is concrete."⁶⁴ Further elements of the "program of action with meaning" concern such areas of social life as: democracy (46–50), ruling (62–67), management (68–73), education (74–78), family (84–87) and homeland (96–100). Among the values that should be treated with the greatest care, Tischner listed freedom as the subject of the work of conscience: "Conscience defines in us the field of possible, free choice. [...] Owing to conscience, playfulness is transformed into freedom, and freedom is not mere understanding and adaptation to necessity. [...] The Polish real freedom is determined by the wise voice of conscience that knows the situation of people."⁶⁵ In the same chapter, entitled *Homeland*, the philosopher emphasizes the importance of testimony as a basic condition for commitment to better Poland: "Choosing Poland means: bearing testimony. [...] The basic testimony revolves around the sense of human dignity."⁶⁶ The last issue that needs to be addressed here is the awareness of the need for sacrifice and commitment, embedded in the ethos of solidarity. Their goal is,

⁶² Tischner, *Etyka solidarności*, 5.

⁶³ The phrase "work on work," referring directly to the words of John Paul II, appears for the first time in Tischner's article entitled "Niepodległość pracy" [Independence of Work], *Tygodnik Powszechny*, no. 38 (1981), 1. Marian Graczyk writes about the role of this formula in papal teaching: "Jana Pawła II idea 'pracy nad pracą'" [John Paul II's Idea of "Working on Work,"], *Seminare. Poszukiwania naukowe* 11 (1995): 169–188.

⁶⁴ Tischner, *Etyka solidarności*, 17.

⁶⁵ Tischner, *Etyka solidarności*, 96.

⁶⁶ Tischner, *Etyka solidarności*, 96–97.

above all, the well-being of another human being. Tischner explains: “If we had to somehow define the meaning of the word ‘solidarity,’ we would have to [...] refer to the Gospel and look for its origin there. The meaning of this word is defined by Christ: ‘Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.’ What does it mean to be in solidarity? It means to bear the burden of an another person.”⁶⁷

Conclusion

When Thomas More wrote his *Utopia*, he hoped that the intellectual unrest he caused would contribute to a real improvement in the conditions of social life. The reality did not confirm his expectations. The discussions that flared up around his work were purely theoretical, and the world continued its course. It happened probably because people most interested in implementing at least some of the recommendations of the just system project were completely deprived of influence, and those who had a real influence on political decisions preferred to pursue their own particular interests.

Even worse was the implementation of another great utopian project: the twentieth-century totalitarian utopia. It is true that many of the assumptions of this project have been implemented, but the result was not a more perfect social system in which people would live better. Instead, a nightmarish world of terror and enslavement was created. Such adventures with utopia could discourage for good from looking for new forms of it, and even more so from getting involved in their practical implementation. Meanwhile, as the analysis of the history of ideas shows, utopian thinking had and still has its supporters. Józef Tischner turned out to be one of them. His approach to the idea of utopian thinking, however, was neither naively idealistic nor pragmatic-cynical. He approached the problem with his inherent philosophical inquisitiveness: first, he recognized the issue of utopian thinking in the context of ethics and social axiology. Then he developed thought tools allowing to organize hierarchical utopian projects currently in the social circulation. Among them he distinguished one—the most promising and evoking a vivid response in many diverse in social circles—a project of solidarity among all Poles, and, finally, decided to bring this project to light, analyse its individual elements in depth and describe it in a simple, communicative language, but, at the same time, subjected to strict intellectual discipline, taking care of the greatest possible fidelity to the description. This is how two important texts in Tischner’s philosophical oeuvre were created:

⁶⁷ Tischner, *Etyka solidarności*, 6.

Thinking about the Social Ethos, then *The Ethics of Solidarity*. The latter, in particular, played a role that could not be overestimated in Polish public life at the beginning of the 1980s.

We will never know, of course, and it would be in vain to speculate how the fate of the Polish nation would have turned out in the last decades of the previous century, had it not been for such an excellent model of the social imaginary built on the idea of “solidarity with everyone and not against anyone,”⁶⁸ It is highly probable, however, that the great power of suggestion contained in each of the chapters of Tischner’s small but powerful work shaped the style of political action and the system of axiological preferences of people who were really close to the evangelical version of the idea of solidarity. Today, forty years after those events, there is only a pale shadow left of this idea, and the society is absorbed with completely different problems and has different values. However, it is hard not to admit that the fact that the Polish nation gained—after many decades of intellectual, moral, and political dependence on foreign forces and ideas—its own, sovereign spiritual face and the right to independently define and resolve its own problems, at least to some extent, we owe to the power of the ideas unveiled and revealed in the masterpiece of Józef Tischner.

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⁶⁸ See Tischner, *Etyka solidarności*, 7.

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Krzysztof T. Wieczorek

Pour la défense de l'Utopie. « Réflexion sur l'éthos social » de Józef Tischner

Résumé

L'observation de phénomènes se produisant dans la vie sociale des Polonais a représenté un courant important dans l'oeuvre philosophique de Tischner fut une observation de phénomènes se produisant dans la vie sociale des Polonais. Cette tendance est devenue particulièrement significative au tournant des années 1970 et 1980, lorsque les processus, qui allaient finalement conduire à la transformation politique, ont commencé à se produire. Au cours de cette période,

Tischner a tenté avec succès de reconstruire l'éthos social polonais. Il s'est avéré que l'élément central de cet échos est la présence de projets utopiques pour reconstruire l'ordre social dans le pays. Dans ses analyses, Tischner a déclaré que les utopies jouent un rôle constructif dans la vie sociale, car elles motivent les individus à s'engager dans la lutte politique pour des réformes systémiques profondes. Cet article présente le contenu de la reconstruction des utopies polonaises des années 1970 et 1980 proposé par Tischner, ainsi que la corrélation entre l'éthique sociale, les discussions idéologiques et la pratique politique de la période de déclin de la République populaire de Pologne (PRL)

Mots-clés : Józef Tischner, utopie, éthos social, système politique polonais, critique du système socialiste, solidarité

Krzysztof T. Wiczorek

Per la difesa dell'utopia. «Riflettendo sull'ethos sociale» di Józef Tischner

Sommario

Una tendenza importante nel lavoro filosofico di Tischner era l'osservazione dei fenomeni che si verificano nella vita sociale dei polacchi. Questa tendenza divenne particolarmente rilevante a cavallo tra gli anni '70 e '80 del secolo scorso, quando iniziarono a verificarsi i processi che alla fine portarono alla trasformazione politica. Durante quel periodo, Tischner ha tentato con successo di ricostruire l'etica sociale polacca. Si è scoperto che l'elemento integrante dell'ethos è la presenza di progetti utopici per ricostruire l'ordine sociale nel paese. Nelle sue analisi, Tischner ha affermato che le utopie svolgono un ruolo costruttivo nella vita sociale, perché motivano le persone a impegnarsi in una lotta politica per l'attuazione di profonde riforme sistemiche. Questo articolo presenta i contenuti della ricostruzione delle utopie polacche degli anni '70 e '80 proposta da Tischner, nonché la correlazione tra etica sociale, discussioni ideologiche e pratica politica del periodo di declino della Repubblica popolare polacca (PRL)

Parole chiave: Józef Tischner, utopia, etica sociale, sistema politico polacco, critica del sistema socialista, solidarietà