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## The rise of philosophy of Solidarity in Poland

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In this article, I attempt to describe the crucial moments that propelled the emergence of a new cultural phenomenon, namely the Solidarity movement, in the Polish socio-political space. I discuss both the evolution that the Polish workers underwent in their successive revolts against the Communist authorities and the influence of the Polish intelligentsia, largely represented by Catholic thinkers, on this evolution. I point to the sources of evangelical inspirations that, thanks to the activities of Karol Wojtyła and Józef Tischner, appeared in the shaping of the Solidarity movement. Against this background, I outline the development of the moral philosophy of solidarity in the period of spontaneous collaboration between the workers' elites and Catholic philosophers (primarily Tischner) and the subsequent gradual departure from the ethos of solidarity during martial law and in the period of the political transformation after 1989.

### **Between practice and religion: existence precedes essence**

The phenomenon of solidarity which appeared in 1980 seemingly out of nowhere was not the result of a social contract. The agreement between the Communist government of Poland and the Strike Committee of "Solidarity," signed in August 1980, was the culmination of the activities of various social groups over many years. Thanks to numerous uprisings and the involvement of a growing number of members of different social circles, the efforts of

Polish society were united and a new quality was created in the national space previously dominated by a totalitarian state. Thus, it seems worthwhile – at least briefly – to trace the decades-long evolution of the Polish revolution as it put forward increasingly universal demands to the Communist government ruling Poland.

This evolution was initiated in 1956 by workers from Poznań, who demanded economic changes for Polish society. They protested mainly against the rapidly rising food prices. Then came the 1968 student protests. Students demanded the implementation of those democratic values enshrined in the Polish Constitution: freedom of speech and respect for the dignity of those who held differing opinions. They were aware of the façade of the Soviet-controlled “people’s democracy,” which they opposed. One of their demands, which returned years later in a modified form, was “be realistic, demand the impossible.” This revolt was suppressed with the help of, among other entities, workers who – being manipulated by the authorities – brutally pacified the student “rebellion.” Soon after, in December 1970, again as a result of the dramatic increase in food prices, a workers’ revolt began in Gdańsk. Students and intellectuals – who remembered the workers’ brutal intervention two years before – did not support this bloodily suppressed revolt. The breakthrough in this wedge of distrust came several years later, in 1976, when Radom and Ursus became the sites of another workers’ revolt against the authorities. Workers who had been persecuted after these proceedings were supported by the participants of the 1968 events. These individuals had set up independent organisations – such as KOR (Komitet Obrony Robotników/Workers’ Defence Committee) or ROPCio (Ruch Obrony Praw Człowieka i Obywatela/Movement for the Defence of Human and Civil Rights) – which provided legal and financial support to workers wronged by the authorities. Thanks to such organisations, the opposition was able to establish increasingly close cooperation with workers.

The Poles waited until 1980 to organize another revolt. This moment was preceded by two significant events: the election of Karol Wojtyła to the Papal Throne and his first pilgrimage to Poland in 1979. Pope John Paul II’s words “do not be afraid,” addressed to a crowd of thousands gathered at Krakow’s Błonia Park, marked the beginning of a spiritual change in Polish society, which touched a large number of its people and undoubtedly inspired the spontaneous birth of the Solidarity movement a year later. This upsurge of solidarity

unexpectedly turned into a social revolution, which came as a surprise to its inspirer and to the entire Catholic Church. It seemed that the new movement had the power to transform even the entire world; it certainly offered hope for the *transformation* of this world.

It is worth understanding how – between 1956 and 1980 – the workers' claims and demands changed as a result of the aforementioned interactions with intellectuals and members of the Church who belonged to the opposition. Until 1976, all of the workers' revolts were economically motivated. In 1956, the workers demanded that the authorities withdraw their imposed labour standards, lower prices, and increase wages. The same events happened again in December 1970 and June 1976. The intellectual elites and the Church had a negligible presence in organising these revolts and in formulating the workers' demands. However, in 1976 in Radom, the workers had "their own" church "guardian," Father Roman Kotlarz, who was later murdered by the Security Service. In the following years, the aforementioned opposition organisations organised educational activities for the workers and held discussions and lectures as part of the "Workers' University." An important role here was played by members of the Catholic intelligentsia, who supported these initiatives and allowed their organisers to use the premises of the Catholic Intelligentsia Clubs. Their rooms and the lecture rooms that belonged to the Church were among the few public spaces in which a free and unhindered exchange of ideas could take place. This exchange was essential for the survival of the movement, for bringing together people with different visions, and for developing common projects for the future.

These initiatives led to a significant expansion of the demands made during the Solidarity revolution in 1980. The demands went far beyond purely economic requests and included the authorities' consent to the creation of independent trade unions, freedom of speech, access to the media for representatives of all religions, the release of political prisoners, and the abolition of political repression for one's convictions. Other demands called for the improvement of working conditions in the healthcare sector, to provide an adequate number of nurseries, and to introduce paid maternity leave. Thus, the economic demands were accompanied by social and political requests. Furthermore, it was not the demands themselves that were important, but rather everything that accompanied both the beginnings of the movement and the protests. It is worth recalling that one of the main reasons for the workers'

strike was the dismissal of a gantry crane operator, Anna Walentynowicz. Her reinstatement was part of the initial demands of the striking shipyard workers, and, to some extent, it became a symbol of the new movement. The thousands of workers who stood up for the wronged woman undoubtedly stirred the imagination of all those who decided to join the movement.

Another important feature of the new rebellion was its peaceful nature, as well as the emphasis on religious elements, references to the message of Pope John Paul II, and requests for the church authorities to send priests to the strikers to provide them with spiritual support. The Eucharist played an important role in building community among the workers. The desire to participate in the Eucharist motivated crowds of the striking workers to go to confession before Mass was said. Many priests – led by Father Jerzy Popiełuszko – became spiritual leaders of the “Solidarity” movement, proclaiming the truth of human dignity and ensuring that all actions conducted were based on moral law as a guarantee of promoting both social order and economic development.

It should be mentioned here that, despite several decades of communism in Poland, the Poles’ religiousness and attachment to the Church at that time remained very high. A community of values and the work of overcoming fear through joint action became the stable foundations for the emergence (in August 1980) of a new socio-cultural phenomenon, which gave rise to the ethos and philosophy of solidarity. The long-lasting process of labourious maturation and the adequate manifestation of this movement, which would go on to influence the future shape of free Poland, was completed. The workers who took part in suppressing the student protests in March 1968 needed such maturation. Similarly, the students also needed it during the 1970 events in Gdańsk and those of 1976 in Radom. The students’ slogan “Be realistic, demand the impossible” was implemented by the workers, who were now supported by former student rebels.

The emergence and success of the new movement were a surprise not only to the communist authorities but also to one of its main inspirers. Father Józef Tischner, who stayed at Castel Gandolfo in August 1980, wrote: “We were having dinner with the Pope when Italian television showed pictures from Gdańsk. The gate of a striking shipyard. A crowd of people. Bouquets of flowers stuck on the rails of the shipyard fence. The camera zooms in on the gate and among the flowers a portrait of John Paul II is seen. And the Pope is

sitting next to me. He hunched up. He did not say a word. We also fell silent. It was not yet clear how it would all end. It was generally believed that it was him who initiated all this. On the other hand, there was also hope that because His portrait was there, a portrait of the Pope, people would not kill one another.”<sup>1</sup> Hope is probably the most important word to describe the source of solidarity that emerged “out of nowhere.”

It suddenly turned out that everyone was dreaming of a world better than the one around them. The whole nation was united in this dream. Unexpectedly for everyone, a common bond emerged and showed each isolated member of the community that other members of society were holders of the same values and dreams, all of which had been previously hidden from others out of fear. Solidarity, through a sense of identity, created a bond that transformed the previous collection of individuals into a unity that was more than the sum of its parts. A social group that equated itself with the idea of solidarity was a separate entity guided by ethical norms and values. Duty, obligation, and a sense of shared responsibility for common goals bound this unity, gave its members a sense of strength, and allowed them to believe that what had seemed impossible a while ago was now within their reach.

In 1980, solidarity offered to each person what they wanted, what reflected their longings, and that meaning which was dear to them. This is not difficult in that kind of situation in which no goal seems possible to realise – in such situations, any hope is a hope. In comparison with the harsh reality of Edward Gierek’s socialist rule, any idea other than the officially decreed one must have seemed attractive, let alone an idea that was brought into social consciousness by workers who were supported by genuine, authentic intelligentsia. In this atmosphere, everyone had to find some element of their own longing, and thus to give the idea that had appeared “out of nothingness” his or her own meaning. Solidarity was, above all, a polyphony. Yet, it was also – at the same time – ambiguity. Each of us understood it the way we wanted to understand it. It was an ambiguity similar to the one which appears when two people declare their love for each other, but each understands the concept of love in a different way. Solidarity in 1980 was as unreal as a dream. At the same time – as a dream come true – it was anticipated to accommodate the expectations of ten million Poles. It was John Paul II’s friend, phenomenologist Reverend Professor J. Tischner, who, as if by accident, attempted to grasp

1 W. Bonowicz, *Tischner*, Kraków 2002, pp. 323-324.

this ongoing phenomenon and transform it in such a way that it would fit into a philosophical framework. He understood solidarity as a challenge for an ethicist and – in his first sermon delivered at Wawel Cathedral in Kraków to the leaders of the new movement – formulated the first principles of the ethos of solidarity, emphasising that the most important ones are the “solidarity of conscience” and the evangelical imperative: “Bear one another’s burdens.”

Tischner developed this interpretation of solidarity in his book on the ethos of solidarity (*The Ethics of Solidarity*), and many of his ideas found their way into the teachings of John Paul II. However, the crucial thing was that the foundations of the philosophy of solidarity were formed on the basis of the actual meetings held with the creators of the movement. As Tischner himself emphasised, “first a real event, and then my philosophical commentary.”<sup>2</sup> In this way, his phenomenological method followed the dynamically forming reality (of which philosophers had not dreamt before) and defined the possible directions of its development.

## The person and participation

Before we move on to a philosophical reconstruction of the solidarity that was happening and developing in Poland, it is worth moving back several years to Karol Wojtyła’s views on solidarity that were expressed in his most famous philosophical work, *Person and Act*. It is an important book because it was known and widely commented upon by the intellectuals who inspired the actions of the workers, and it also greatly influenced J. Tischner’s views.

Karol Wojtyła, as a personalist, emphasised that the human person possesses natural dignity and unique individuality. At the same time, he observed that the person is not a “being-for-himself,”<sup>3</sup> because man’s vocation is action and self-realisation. These can only take place “together with others,” through co-existence and cooperation.<sup>4</sup> He emphasised that freedom is the source of human dignity; freedom is not, however, absolute freedom, as it is limited by a consideration for other people as individuals who are also endowed with the same dignity. He complemented his personalistic concept with the thesis

2 J. Tischner, *Solidarność sumień*, in: J. Tischner, *Etyka solidarności oraz Homo sovieticus*, Kraków 2005, p. 6.

3 K. Wojtyła, *Osoba – podmiot i wspólnota*, “Roczniki Filozoficzne” 24 (1976) no. 2, p. 13 (5-39.)

4 K. Wojtyła, “*Osoba i czyn*” oraz *inne studia antropologiczne*, Lublin 1994, pp. 294-251.

that man fulfils himself through others and realises himself thanks to them. In order to become himself, man must participate in the life of the community by acting for the common good. The common good is “above all that which conditions and, as it were, liberates participation in persons acting together and thus forms in them a subjective community of action.”<sup>5</sup> The common good is the axiological foundation of community building. Participation is only realised “when a person enters into a specific relationship with other persons and the common good.”<sup>6</sup>

Karol Wojtyła stressed that “participation as a feature of the person constitutes the fact that, by acting ‘together with others’, the person fulfils an act and fulfils himself in it.” On the same page, he added that “Action – synonymous with an act – under certain conditions can turn into *passio*, into happening, which in some people occurs under the influence of others.”<sup>7</sup> Twenty years later, Pope John Paul II’s “action” changed through his “influence” into “happening,” which resulted in the creation of the “Solidarity” movement.

The future Pope stated that participation can manifest itself through solidarity and opposition. By adopting an attitude of solidarity, the subject identifies himself with the common good of the community to which he belongs. He treats this good as his own and tries to invest all his potential in its implementation. However, if he considers the way in which the common good is realised to be inadequate, then the subject adopts an attitude of opposition.

As Wojtyła explained: “Solidarity means constant readiness to accept and realize the part which belongs to each person by virtue of being a member of a particular community. The man of solidarity not only does what is due to him as a member of the community, but does it for the good of the whole, that is, for the common good. [...] An attitude of solidarity does not, however, exclude the possibility of opposition. Opposition is not essentially at odds with solidarity [...] we understand opposition essentially as an attitude of solidarity.”<sup>8</sup> Ostensibly, as Wojtyła detailed, “people who oppose do not wish by this to leave the community. On the contrary, they are looking for their own place in this community – they are looking for participation and such an understanding of the common good that they can participate in the community

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5 K. Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn*, p. 317.

6 J. Galarowicz, *Człowiek jest osobą. Podstawy antropologii filozoficznej Karola Wojtyły*, Kęty 2000, p. 275.

7 K. Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn*, p. 310.

8 K. Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn*, pp. 323-324.

better, more fully, and more effectively.”<sup>9</sup> At this point, it is also worth noting that the concepts of opposition and solidarity as forms of participation were implemented in 1980.

Let us emphasise that what was meant here was *authentic* participation, in which the other person(s) is(are) the goal of an action. The other person is a being endowed with an interior, a personal subject, a *neighbour*. The concept of *neighbour* is linked to the value of the person as such and is independent of social references. It appears to us as the real good. With such a reference, authentic attitudes are formed, such as solidarity and opposition. However, if the goal of an action is one’s own interest, the other person becomes more of a competitor than a neighbour. Then, instead of working together for the common good, the members of a community begin to compete with one another. By separating his own good from the common good, such a citizen “somehow accepts that the community is taking him away from himself. At the same time, he takes himself away from the community.”<sup>10</sup> In consequence, he alienates himself from the community and, at the same time, alienates himself from the sources of his own humanity. He deprives himself of the possibility of experiencing his own humanity in its fullness and of establishing the relationship of solidarity and community with other people – a task for which he was created by God.

The inauthentic participation which manifests itself this way has two forms: conformism and avoidance. A conformist may support an authority if he sees in it his own advantage, or he may adopt an attitude of avoidance when he considers that it is disadvantageous for him to support the authority in question. There was no shortage of such attitudes in Communist Poland, as was aptly diagnosed by Wojtyła. At the price of a “small stabilisation,” substitutes for prosperity and privileges were distributed according to the principle of “divide and rule.” The vast majority of society was pacified, and at the same time, it was prevented from experiencing genuine participation in community life.

It seems that the ideal of authentic participation which had the power to terminate alienation, was first implemented in 1980 by the Solidarity movement. With this, J. Tischner, Wojtyła’s friend and a personalist himself, became its main philosophical proponent.

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9 K. Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn*, p. 325

10 K. Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn*, p. 317.

## An ethicist's dream come true

The basis of Tischner's reflections, which were conducted in the spirit of personalism as early as the 1970s, is the axiological Self. With this, "is" (because it is "given") and "is not" (because it is yet to become) exist at the same time.<sup>11</sup> It bears universal value and validity, which are expressions of its dignity. The claim to the validity of the Self manifests itself through a commitment to being recognised by others.

The *social* Self is a field of external influences for the *axiological* Self and determines the scope and direction of its free moral choices. However, freedom is not a fundamental feature of the human individual, as positivists claim, but rather the foundation of all human relations: it can be said that it is the good that should be shared with others. Such freedom does not exist in one person or another, it exists between people. Tischner explained: "my freedom as my secret is freedom *among* other freedoms, freedom with people, next to people, for people."<sup>12</sup> The axiological Self does not exist independently and could not develop independently. Its freedom cannot be imagined without the co-participation of others. It is not even conceivable that man would be able to find his way to freedom without the help of others.<sup>13</sup> To make this journey, he needs Others. The other person, however, does not determine his choices, but rather inspires, supports, or disagrees with them. That is why the Self strives to meet another will with which it can take joint action. Here, in the encounter with the other, a dialogue takes place wherein the participants "come out towards each other"<sup>14</sup> from their hiding places and meet, shed their fears, and shake hands.<sup>15</sup> The other person brings his own spiritual initiative to the joint venture; it is something different but "in solidarity" with the aspirations of the Self. The other person is also indispensable for confirming the rightness of one's chosen path and for confirming one's own value, at which point both participants of the dialogue become an inspiration to each other.

11 J. Tischner, *Zarys filozofii człowieka*, Kraków 1991, pp. 161–162.

12 J. Tischner, *Ksiądz na manowcach*, Kraków 1999, p. 274.

13 See: J. Tischner, *Polski młyn*, Kraków 1991, pp. 254–255. See also: J. Tischner, A. Michnik, J. Żakowski, *Między Panem a Plebanem*, Kraków 1995, p. 290.

14 See: J. Tischner, *Filozofia dramatu*, Kraków 1991, p. 112.

15 See: J. Tischner, *Etyka solidarności*, pp. 6–7.

Encounter and dialogue give rise to understanding and empathy. This, in turn, allows for understanding the needs and expectations of the other person, but also noticing one's own possibilities. From this, solidarity is born. "What does it mean to be in solidarity? It means carrying the other person's burden. No man is an island entire of itself. We are united even when we do not know it. We are united by landscape, united by flesh and blood – united by work and speech. We are not always aware of these connections. When solidarity is born, consciousness is awakened, and then speech and words appear – and then what was hidden comes to light."<sup>16</sup> It is in these relationships that the common moral good is created. The community creates us and makes us what we would like to be – better people.

St. John Paul II later added: "Bear one another's burdens', this succinct sentence of the Apostle (Saint Paul) is an inspiration for inter-personal and social solidarity. Solidarity means one and another, and if burden, the burden borne together, in community. It is never one against another; ones against others. And never a 'burden' borne by man alone, without the help of others."<sup>17</sup> Both Tischner and the Pope emphasised that man is always in solidarity with someone and for someone. Thus, the idea of solidarity illuminates the spaces of social, political, economic, and individual life.

Despite these ideas, it is important to realise that a community alone was not enough to create (or explain) the solidarity of the kind that happened in 1980. Spontaneous solidarity, the kind which is open to all and does not turn against anyone, must have a deeper foundation. Neither human dignity nor "the other" is enough here, as Tischner emphasised. Such solidarity is not an abstract idea. The stimulus for its emergence is the cry for help of a person who has been wronged by another person. Solidarity thus establishes a special interpersonal bond: a person binds himself to another person in order to care for the one who needs care. The community of solidarity does not appear out of nowhere and for its own sake, but always emerges to help the other person. In referring to the Gospel, Tischner explained it this way: first, there is the injured person and his cry. Then, there is a conscience, which can hear and understand that cry. Only then does a community of solidarity appear.

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<sup>16</sup> J. Tischner, *Etyka solidarności*, pp. 8–9.

<sup>17</sup> Excerpts from John Paul II's sermon delivered during the Mass for workers in Gdańsk on 12 June 1987.

In this view, solidarity is a fundamental form of human cooperation, and the good Samaritan is its symbol.<sup>18</sup>

Tischner, who observed Solidarity's changes from a close view while spending time with the people who created the Solidarity movement, defined the ethics of the emerging Solidarity as the ethics of conscience. Conscience is, in his view, man's natural "ethical sense". It is largely independent of various ethical systems and is even prior to these systems. Authentic solidarity, therefore, manifests itself through the solidarity of conscience. To "be in solidarity" means to always be able to count on man, and to count on man is to believe that there is something constant in him that will not let us down. Conscience, then, is that which is constant, insofar as one listens to its voice. It can happen that someone renounces it. Nonetheless, it also happens that a person who has renounced his conscience can rebuild it, or rather awaken it within himself. A collective awakening of conscience, as Tischner stressed, was the beginning of the moral and social revolution of solidarity.

The protest of people who had been wronged by "the system" initiated a movement which, by awakening consciences, demanded that fundamental human rights and the principles of justice be respected. However, and this is vital, Solidarity did so peacefully, without any desire for retaliation or revenge. It called not for the removal of those who inflicted wounds, but for an encounter with them, for dialogue, and for a common discovery of the truth that sets us free. Here, another evangelical theme in the philosophy of solidarity appears, one which Tischner developed and introduced into the ethos of solidarity: conquer evil with good. There can be no retaliation for the evil done because the vicious circle of evil must be broken. Man is free and can choose to respond to evil with good, to see in others a neighbour who, like him, is prone to error, but who also like him, needs understanding and a helping hand. A cold calculation of reason is not enough here because we enter an emotional sphere, which establishes its own relationship between people.

"Solidarity is closeness – it is brotherhood..."<sup>19</sup> Tischner observed. Love, friendship, compassion – all of these are feelings that most fully reveal the closeness between people and introduce a new meaning to the term "brotherhood" – in which "A man is a neighbour to man." Therefore, he interpreted the universal power of solidarity as a new name for social love, which is

<sup>18</sup> See: J. Tischner, *Etyka solidarności*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>19</sup> J. Tischner, *Etyka solidarności*, p. 16.

a thoroughly evangelical value. Love, as Tischner emphasised, speaks the language of goodness; it is also an ultimate union between happiness and misfortune. Of course, solidarity can do without conscience and love. If someone in the crowd throws a stone, an avalanche follows – this, too, is a reflex of solidarity, but in this very human reflex, there is no reflex of conscience, nor is there love. Therefore, Tischner observed that, in order to prevent solidarity of conscience from turning into solidarity without conscience, it is necessary to “conquer evil with good.” Here we go beyond the economic order, beyond the rationality derived from the Code of Hammurabi, and finally – beyond wisdom in the narrow sense. Wisdom is associated with establishing facts, with making diagnoses, with assessing the burden, and with the capability to bear it. Nonetheless, these are values that are impossible to assess, especially when rational discourse involves love, which “ignites from another good, like a dry wick too close to the flame.”<sup>20</sup>

In the name of such solidarity, and filled with love for one’s neighbour, the individual should be ready to make sacrifices, all the while being aware of his responsibility for the other and for his “burdens.” As Tischner wrote “Work, study, and leisure make sense when they are linked to the service of the neighbour. ‘I have come to serve and to give my life’ – says Christ. This is how Christianity inspires our love for neighbours.”<sup>21</sup> J. Tischner developed such an evangelical understanding of the idea of solidarity that John Paul II spoke of such solidarity, and – decades ago – the social movement “Solidarity” was permeated with the spirit of solidarity. It is, however, an attitude that is in stark contrast with the contemporary lifestyle, which fuels our egoism and which, as not only Christians can see, empties the soul.

## From ethics to economics

The Solidarity movement’s hopes for the creation of a better, ethical society lasted for several months, from August 1980 to December 1981. This time was interrupted by the declaration of martial law, the presence of the army in the streets, the internment of the movement’s leaders, and the pacification of social protests. Although in the following years, a large part of society and

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<sup>20</sup> *Maleńkość i jej mocarz*, [in:] J. Tischner, *Miłość nas rozumie*, Kraków 2002, p. 169.

<sup>21</sup> *Trzy zasady naszego stosunku do bliźniego*, [in:] J. Tischner, *Jak żyć*, Wrocław 2000, p. 81.

many activists who had gone underground cultivated the ideas of Solidarity's ethos, new forms of activity and enforced restrictions led to changes in the understanding of solidarity.

As Tischner emphasised after the fall of Communism in Poland, "the ethos of solidarity, apart from anything else, was an expression of the deepest human and also Polish hope. However, in order to understand the meaning of the «ethos of solidarity» more fully, it is good to look at it through the process of its decomposition. [...] And the decomposition has indeed taken place."<sup>22</sup> The declaration of martial law made distrust reappear and, with it, people in the now- underground Solidarity returned to their hiding places. These were the people who began to transfer their fears, illusions, ambitions, and increasingly particularistic interests to the movement that had arisen in the name of the moral renewal of society as a whole. In the underground community, universal thinking was replaced by a war rhetoric that had been imposed by the communists. The perception of society as a community was replaced by a division of "Us-the good and Them-the bad" fault lines. Such a perception persisted long after the collapse of communism.

Another change in the understanding of Solidarity could be observed after the Poles regained their freedom and underwent the political transformation from Communism to capitalism. Tischner often described "Solidarity" as a community of workers striving to liberate work from the burdens and sufferings caused by another human being. Understood in this way, "Solidarity" was to take action to ensure that work served life, human development, the good and well-being of the whole, gave it a deeper meaning, offered dignity to people, and ensured mutual cooperation and understanding. In this view, work is a value in itself; it is not reduced to merely the production of material goods that satisfy various needs. The lack of such work gives rise to an inauthentic life – a life of fear, suffering, exploitation, harm, and withdrawal into oneself.<sup>23</sup> Tischner stressed the role played by the moral dimension of human relationships and work. He saw *dialogue* as the model for properly understood work: "Work is a special form of conversation between man and man. The product of human labour grows out of understanding and serves understanding."<sup>24</sup> At work, we communicate. In order to produce the fruits of

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<sup>22</sup> J. Tischner, *Etyka solidarności po latach*, [in:] J. Tischner, *Etyka solidarności*, p. 263.

<sup>23</sup> See: J. Tischner, *Etyka solidarności oraz Homo sovieticus*, Kraków 1992, p. 23.

<sup>24</sup> See: J. Tischner, *Etyka solidarności*, p. 24.

our work together, we exchange our experiences, we develop one another, we care for the other and for good relations, and we strive to build and maintain a good atmosphere in the workplace. Work, from this perspective, is a special form of conversation between two persons that is conducive to the development of human life and the development of society.

In this concept of labour, which was also developed by Saint John Paul II, the idea that is still valid and valuable is that work should be dialogical, should restore human dignity, and must not lead to the debasement of man, as was often the case in factories run by capitalists at the end of the nineteenth century or in modern corporations whose target is maximum profit at the cost of man's exploitation. However, after 1989, a liberal understanding of work prevailed. Within this idea, work was defined in purely economic terms. The new working conditions of modern times are highly diverse and, although they offer a number of opportunities for development, they also pose the threat of new forms of alienation – which ultimately lead to new forms of enslavement of man. In the liberal model, work is detached from the value of the person. As Tischner noted with resignation: “The rejection of slavery and the choice of freedom were guided primarily by economic considerations. Economic success, rather than the ideal of authentic humanity, became the measure of freedom.”<sup>25</sup>

A new project of solidarity, one adapted to the changing times, was missing in the new reality. The liberal market economy promoted individualism and encouraged people to strive to become richer. Anyone who was poor was considered to be a failure, to be someone who could not adapt to life in a free country. The cry of the needy was equated with a “claimant” attitude. Solidarity was transformed into a community of interest groups. There was no call for selflessness. People who were guided by the virtue of solidarity were regarded as weak and as obstacles in successful competition – the aim of which is, after all, to eliminate weaker rivals and to win, not to help others. Solidarity of conscience and its call to “bear one another's burdens” became ideas ill-suited to the new reality. The unity of a community freed from communism was replaced by a never-ending “war at the top,” in which the activists quarrelled with one another and divided society.

Yet, at the same time, those who were unable to cope with the new challenges created new forms of solidarity or were manipulated by populist politicians into a quasi-solidarity. The solidarity of conscience and the solidarity

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25 J. Tischner, *W krainie schorowanej wyobraźni*, Kraków 1998, p. 86.

of reason were replaced by the solidarity of a crowd looking for a scapegoat. What remains of the old ideals is a negative bond, linked to the division into “Us versus Them.” A common enemy unites, but this is a tactical solidarity, something like a military alliance. The problem with alliances is that they are always adapted to current needs and defined by leaders. In the case of negative solidarity, when the external threat disappears, an enemy is still needed. Subsequently, it is sought even from within our own ranks. There is always an enemy “on duty”: traditionally, the Jews, Freemasons, all the “Others” (most recently migrants) – in essence, all those who differ from the stereotype of “true” representatives of the community.

## A grain of optimism for the future

The Church, which substantially contributed to the formation of the Solidarity movement and the formulation of its ethos, unfortunately also played a significant role in the process of destroying this very ethos. Its support offered to one political side triumphalism and hubris, which then led to the desolidarisation of society and a departure from the evangelical ideals on which John Paul II and Józef Tischner tried to base the Solidarity movement.

However, the Church can still play a great role in the restoration of Solidarity’s ideals. Not by stigmatising non-Christians or atheists. Not by calling for unity from the pulpit. Instead, it can look to initiating joint action in local communities. Solidarity can be recaptured again by rallying people around specific common initiatives that will realise the common good.

In small communities, such as parishes, it is possible to pursue common goals while taking into account different tastes or views. Every action here has a tangible outcome, every mistake translates into real suffering, and every goal achieved together is a shared reason to be proud and say *we* did it. By acting together, mutual trust and solidarity can be rekindled, thereby enabling each citizen to feel empowered and responsible for our common fate. This is the place for rebuilding the solidarity of reason which Anton Rauscher wrote about: “Solidarity rather means that everyone, strong and weak, must pull together, because everyone depends on one another.”<sup>26</sup> We become increasingly

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26 A. Rauscher, *Źródła idei solidarności*, [in:] *Idea Solidarności dzisiaj*, ed. W. Zuziak, Kraków 2011, pp. 26–27.

aware that we are “condemned” to solidarity, that neither the strong alone nor the weak alone are able to stop the progressive degradation of the societies and natural environment entrusted to us. We are not independent and self-sufficient islands that can isolate themselves from the rest of the world, neither individually nor socially. The short-sightedness of the selfish concept of neoliberalism is already apparent. The poor are getting poorer and nature is degenerating. So, what good is it for the rich to become increasingly richer when soon they will have nowhere to hide from those they have wronged and will have no air to breathe to sustain their lifestyles?

Perhaps the community of conscience will soon become an economic challenge and a duty for the richer part of the world. Perhaps, without this community the wealthier fraction will not be able to survive and certainly will not be able to comfortably consume the wealth it has accumulated. Perhaps this historical necessity will lead to a synthesis of ethical and economic values. The rich will realise that, for their own good, it is worth listening to the cry of those who suffer and responding wisely to that cry. They will realise that the accumulation of wealth alone does not bring happiness, peace, or security, and that it is therefore necessary to reach out to the weak and help them bear their burdens. Perhaps the rich will also notice that the poor possess a number of values (long – forgotten by the rich) which can make their own existence fuller and better.

Let us repeat: the continued existence of solidarity requires the shared responsibility of all those institutions that make up the community, as well as of all citizens, and the inclusion of all members of society in the pursuit of the good of the whole. Solidarity also calls for courageous, imaginative, and charismatic leaders who will break down divisions and unite communities, both in the dimension of small communities and nations, as well as in the global, transnational, and intercultural dimensions.

## Abstract

### *The rise of philosophy of Solidarity in Poland*

The article presents the historical events that were crucial to the emergence of the “Solidarity” movement. Against the background of the evolution of demands made by Polish workers, the article discusses the impact of the Polish Catholic intelligentsia on these events. It also points to the sources of Biblical inspirations which, thanks to the influence of Karol Wojtyła and Józef Tischner, appeared in the formation of the ethos of solidarity. Next, it outlines the development of the moral philosophy of solidarity in the initial period of the movement’s formation and discusses the reasons for the subsequent departure from the ethos of solidarity from this perspective. The conclusion shows both the shortcomings of contemporary models of solidarity and the prospects for the development of the project of solidarity in a universal dimension.

**Keywords:** authenticity, common good, ethos, conscience, solidarity, participation, community

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