

Article

Solidarity as a Challenge and a Task

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Abstract: Towards the end of the 20th century, the word “solidarity” became one of the most important and famous words, not only in the sphere of Euro–Atlantic civilization but the word was also readily used in political milieus. In the religious sphere, and especially in the Judeo–Christian tradition, the anthropological, ethical as well as biblical sense of this important concept was emphasized. This sense was recalled in the postulate: Bear one another’s burdens. Never one against the other, but always one and the other, one together with the other. In this day and age, solidarity as a source of inter-human hope poses a real challenge and task for us because we are experiencing such great migrations of people who—for a variety of reasons, frequently very painful ones, and among them the devastating ravages of war—leave behind their places of residence and go into exile. In my study, I will try to show how, in the contemporary world of philosophy and socio-political changes, a modern sense of the concept of “solidarity” has been generated. In order to achieve this goal, I will refer to the anthropological and ethical thoughts of two Polish philosophers—Karol Wojtyła and Józef Tischner. It was these two thinkers who introduced us to the contemporary school of solidarity, reminding us that the fulfillment of solidarity still lies ahead of us.

Keywords: Józef Tischner; Karol Wojtyła/John Paul II; good; common good; hope; person; solidarity; society; participation; evil



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1. Introduction

It is quite legitimate to say that the great human migrations that we have experienced in the recent years of the 21st century, especially in Africa, Asia, and Europe, are a vitally important sign of the times, worthy of philosophical reflection. It might be right to ask a question about what message this sign of the times may be conveying for the people living in this day and age and about the challenges that require fitting definitions. People migrate for political reasons and, recently, more and more often for economic ones. There is no doubt that military conflicts and warfare, which cause destruction and death, are particularly painful reasons.

The war that Russia has been waging against Ukraine for more than a year now has undoubtedly become a synonym for great pain and suffering. Millions of Ukrainians have been displaced and forced to flee their dwellings. In a situation such as this, solidarity is about one man opening up to another, a fellow being reaching out to a fellow being, where a special form of help provided for those who suffer is a source of true hope for millions of people. However, since not everyone wants to be solidaristic today, solidarity appears to be both a challenge and a task to be tackled in the future. What do we learn about solidarity from scholars, philosophers, and theologians who laid the groundwork for its understanding in the 20th century? To answer this question, I need to refer to the anthropological and ethical thoughts of two Polish thinkers. One is Karol Wojtyła, the originator of adequate anthropology (cf. [Mruszczyk 2010](#); [Pala 2018](#)), the main theses of which were anchored in Thomism and phenomenology (cf. [Burgos Velasco 2009](#), pp. 107–29; [2007](#)). The other thinker is Józef Tischner. In his agathologically-grounded philosophy of man, known all over the world as the philosophy of human drama, he begins with the assumptions underlying the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl and Roman Ingarden

(cf. Jagiełło 2020). It was these two Polish philosophers who, in the second half of the 20th century, introduced us to this important school of thinking about the phenomenon of solidarity, as well as thinking in terms of the *principia* of solidarity. It was they who reminded us that solidarity as both a challenge and a task still lies ahead of us.

2. Discussion

2.1. Solidarity in Times of the Degradation of Man

As early as the Age of Enlightenment, solidarity was understood as a power binding people into society. Solidarity was also said to be a sign of common obligation undertaken chiefly in the sphere of social and economic relations. Solidarity, thus construed, was supposed to safeguard people against utilitarianism, which caused economic exploitation by a single person or a group of people (cf. von Nell-Breuning and Hermann 1951, kol. 359). Since the times of Pope Leo XIII and his 1891 encyclical *Rerum novarum*, the social teaching of the Roman Catholic Church has been gradually shifting its focus onto the idea of solidarity. Respecting the principle of solidarity and subsidiarity was seen as a way to guarantee the ethical order¹. Following Max Scheler's philosophical interpretation of this principle (cf. Brejda 2021), the voice about solidarity could be heard only in the latter half of the 20th century, above all in Poland, in Cracow (cf. Brejda 2022, pp. 25–28, 38–41). The context of the discovery of solidarity in Poland is determined by the painful experience of totalitarianism and, in particular, the economic and moral exploitation, especially in the sphere of human work. The concept of solidarity was thoroughly analyzed, first by Karol Wojtyła—later by John Paul II, one of the leading contemporary personalists (cf. Burgos Velasco 2000), and by Józef Tischner, a student of Roman Ingarden (cf. Brejda 2015, pp. 69–88; 2022, pp. 43–72). It must be noted that, in my opinion, their philosophical interpretation of the word “solidarity” is the most insightful interpretation of this concept to date.

In 1969, Cardinal Karol Wojtyła called solidarity a true and authentic human act, i.e., an act in which the self-creation of the human person, his fundamental mode of expression, and his dynamic development are affected to a very high degree. It was a special time; living memory was still full of images of millions of suffering people, the destruction of the international community of states, and the inconceivable degradation of man, which occurred during the Second World War. “People doomed people to this fate”—wrote Polish poet Zofia Nałkowska (Nałkowska 1970) about the atrocious German crimes against the Polish people. Also, it was a time of the murderous Soviet totalitarian, political, moral, and economic oppression of humanity. Through it, human consciences were notoriously broken. In consequence, in the name of the highest communist values, many people sacrificed the values nearest and dearest to themselves: they betrayed their neighbors and then fell into despair: “Recognition of the highest values, of which the Communist Party was supposed to be the embodiment, meant a willingness to sacrifice the values dearest to oneself. [. . .] Here, totalitarianism does not only mean that power encompasses the entirety of social life, but above all that it encroaches on human intimacy, which serves as a natural basis for bonds with the loved ones. A husband drifts away from his wife, a child from his parents, parents from their children. Thus, we are faced with a Manichean revolution of values: bonds with the loved ones are good insofar as they serve political power” (Tischner 1998, p. 53). The latter half of the 20th century was also the time of the great anthropological revolution, especially in North America and Western Europe, the effects of which, in the cultural and religious dimension, are still being experienced today (Taylor 2009, pp. 703–895). However, the 1960s were also the time when the Second Vatican Council instilled in the Church and the world hope for the future (Sobór Watykański II 2002, p. 537).

It was in such a religious, political, social, and cultural climate that Karol Wojtyła published his major philosophical work *Person and Act*. This Polish personalist, ethicist, metaphysician, and, at the same time, phenomenologist opened wide the eyes of his reason and will to better see men in the splendor of truth (cf. Płotka 2019, pp. 174–82; Tischner 1973–1974, pp. 85–89). His book is a spectacular expression of the dynamics of

thinking, and the main focus of this dynamic is the hopeful idea that every human being has within himself a special and unique value called “dignity of the person”: i.e., that the person is never something, but always someone, and therefore never an object, but a subject, that he is never a means to an end, but the true goal of all action, and that he is always the primary point of reference in building and experiencing the human community (cf. [Wojtyła 2021](#), p. 176).

It is in this anthropological-personalist context that the word “solidarity” appears in the last section of the book *Person and Act*. Remarkably, it is precisely the thought of solidarity and, by extension, the thought of love that constitutes the true culmination of the entire metaphysical–phenomenological philosophy of the person that Wojtyła presents in his main work. For Wojtyła, and later on, for Pope John Paul II, one thing is certain: there is no solidarity without freedom, no solidarity without love, and no freedom and love without solidarity (cf. [Jan Paweł II 1999](#)). It is this correlation that serves as the real key to his social philosophy.

It is in this threefold relationship, which is the expression of man’s act, that he fully actualizes himself as a person. A man of solidarity does not live solely for himself, nor does he live solely to attain his own excellence. He lives first and foremost for other people and participates dynamically in the creation of the excellence of his fellow beings. The core of solidarity can be seen in recognizing the good of other people as one’s own good and, ultimately, also in recognizing the common good as one’s own good. Acting in solidarity for the sake of the common good even motivates a person to sacrifice himself for others, to sacrifice his own gain, his self-interest, and his own good. It is exactly through these acts of solidarity which manifest to become man’s true creativity, the origin of which is not only himself but equally his neighbor. Following Scheler’s axiology of the attitude of solidarity, Wojtyła stresses that whenever there is “the sway of the principle of solidarity, everyone knows and feels that [. . .] his values are part of the values which permeate the community” (cf. [Scheler 1997](#), p. 203). Thus, solidarity is the basic principle of social life, the life of the community, and since the attitude of solidarity can only be a product of human freedom as a means of the existence of good, therefore the attitude of solidarity is at the same time an expression of man’s power (I can, but I don’t have to show solidarity), an expression of his authority (I want to be solidaristic), an expression of his definitive decision (I can and I want to), conditional upon recognition of the objective truth (in the classical sense) about a man who is in some kind of need ([Buttiglione 2000](#), p. 17). With all this in mind, let us turn our attention to some important aspects of Wojtyła’s concept of solidarity.

2.2. Solidarity in the Context of Participation and the Common Good

The true horizon of Wojtyła’s analysis of the attitude of solidarity is demarcated by the problematics of the connection between the personalistic value of the human act, participation in the community, and the endeavor to attain the common good. Thus, it bears recalling: the personalistic value of the act lies in the fact that through the act, as the originary experience of the unity of the spiritual and material aspect of life, the person actualizes and fulfills himself as not some static but thoroughly dynamic substance (cf. [Wojtyła 1969](#), pp. 290–93; [2021](#), pp. 382–84). In his analysis of the personalistic value of the human act, Wojtyła refers to a thesis from Aristotle’s *Politics* about the social nature of man, his vocation for concern about the art of governing the state, the goal of which is the common good. In the context of analysis of such images of man’s daily life as communal life, social life, life together with others, for others, in the direction away from oneself and towards others, and away from others and towards oneself, Wojtyła uses the Latin term “participatio,” i.e., “participation.” “Participatio” as an exposition of personal participation ([Wojtyła 1969](#), p. 295; [2021](#), p. 386) consists in the fact that in conscious action, the person is not lost in the crowd, that he constitutes himself, keeps intact his personal transcendence, his existential sovereignty and fullness of ontic integration (cf. [Wojtyła 2021](#), s. 386 n.; [Burgos Velasco 2016](#), p. 25 nn). This action always presupposes a person’s relation to

others (Wojtyła 2021, p. 387). Karol Wojtyła was able to regard the world critically, and therefore he could easily see actions that were not conducive to human development, which were formed on the basis of both individualism and anti-individualism, i.e., the so-called “objective totalism.” This is because individualism limits participation in the community “by isolating the person understood merely as an individual concentrated on himself and his own good, which is also understood in isolation from the good of others and from the common good” (Wojtyła 2021, p. 390). In objectivist totalism, “what dominates [. . .] is the need for protection against the individual, who is basically considered an enemy of the community and of the common good” (Wojtyła 2021, p. 391). Thus, in the phenomenon of “participatio” Wojtyła sees the possibility of thinking and acting beyond individualism and anti-individualism (cf. Wojtyła 2021, pp. 393–95).

“Participatio” serves as a foundation for the “subjective bond” (Wojtyła 2021, p. 396), the mutual belonging of the person and the community—both the community of purpose and the community of action, the ideal of which is cooperation. It is only cooperation that can act as a strong guarantor of overcoming possible difficulties in maintaining the community of action. It is only “participatio” that precludes the transformation of a community into a well-oiled team of individuals, for whom the goal of action would only be the self-interest of the individual or the collective interest of a number of individuals, for whom the welfare of each member of the community would be irrelevant. Wojtyła sees barriers to such a degradation of the community in the correct understanding of the term “common good” (cf. Wojtyła 2021, pp. 396–88, 400).

It is highly characteristic of Cardinal Wojtyła’s anthropology that, precisely in this context, he ponders authentic and non-authentic attitudes. Among authentic attitudes, it is the attitude of solidarity that deserves special attention. Wojtyła wants to unveil, above all, the pre-ethical sense of solidarity. Therefore, he focuses first not on whether solidarity is good or bad but chiefly on its prosopopoeial function, on what personalistic value inheres in solidarity (cf. Wojtyła 2021, p. 400). Therefore, solidarity is an authentic attitude because through it, the transcendence of the person in the act—i.e., his self-determination and fulfillment—is realized (cf. Wojtyła 2021, p. 401). In contrast, practical conformism and avoidance of responsibility for the common good illustrate non-authentic attitudes (cf. Wojtyła 2021, pp. 404–7).

Below is a key passage from Wojtyła, elucidating his concept of solidarity: “The attitude of solidarity is a «natural» consequence of the fact that man exists and acts together with others. It is also the basis of the community in which the common good correctly conditions and evokes participation, and in which participation correctly serves the common good, supporting and realizing it. Solidarity denotes a constant readiness to accept and realize the share that falls to each due to the fact that he is a member of a given community. A man who lives in solidarity performs what belongs to him not only on account of his membership in a community but also «for the good of the whole», that is, for the common good. Consciousness of the common good commands him to surpass the part that falls to him as a share, though in this intentional relation he fundamentally realizes his part. In a sense, solidarity even prevents him from trespassing on someone else’s obligation and appropriating as his own a part that belongs to another. [. . .] Appropriating the part of the obligation that does not belong to oneself is fundamentally contradictory to community and participation” (Wojtyła 2021, p. 401).

In this passage, included in the concluding sections of *Person and Act*, Wojtyła argues that the attitude of solidarity is rooted in the fact that man does not exist except as primarily a social being. The space necessary for human development is created by life, the dynamic pulsation of which manifests itself nowhere else but chiefly and precisely in the community. The meaning of such life is determined by both the idea of the common good and the idea of participation. This pulsation of life is expressed in the word ‘solidarity.’ Solidarity is conscious, dynamic action taken by a person as a member of a community for the common good. However, with a view to understanding the relationship between a specific human act and the common good, it is significant that we consider this relationship from the

perspective of Aristotle's golden mean. This is evidenced by the following content-rich sentences, which I consciously invoke for the second time: "A man who lives in solidarity performs what belongs to him not only on account of his membership in a community but also «for the good of the whole», that is, for the common good. Consciousness of the common good commands him to surpass the part that falls to him as a share, though in this intentional relation he fundamentally realizes his part. In a sense, solidarity even prevents him from trespassing on someone else's obligation and appropriating as his own a part that belongs to another" (Wojtyła 2021, p. 401). Noteworthy, in his thinking, Wojtyła tilts neither towards subjectivism/individualism nor towards collectivism. He places the person in the middle, in between, as the goal, giving him primacy, whereby he cannot be controlled by the two extreme positions. In turn, his primacy serves as the foundation for securing both the goals of the individual and those of the community as a whole. Man in solidarity is a guarantor of the peaceful coexistence of individualism and collectivism, as well as of their mutual reference. It is in the spirit of this reciprocity that a life of solidarity constitutes true "participation" in the lives of others for the common good. However, this participation is not only a guarantee of the common good. This is because the guarantee of the common good is, at the same time, a guarantee of the good of the individual. In this context, thanks to Wojtyła, we can better understand what participation in the common good consists of. Wojtyła refers us to the source of this participation. It is the dynamic *suppositum*, i.e., man as a person in the dynamics of his existence. It is through the discovery in man, and in consequence in the attitude of solidarity, of that dynamics, which Wojtyła calls a living reference to the common good (Wojtyła 2021, p. 401), and the description of which is an interesting illustration of the anthropological value of the act, that the analogy of being, used by Wojtyła in the conception of the person, takes on a very special philosophical meaning. Indeed, "[t]he person is a *suppositum*, but one very different from all those that surround man in the visible world" (Wojtyła 2021, p. 176). While a person is a substance, there is nothing in it that we might call a static character of existence. In Wojtyła's conception, the person is a dynamic substance, just like dynamic and free from all that is static is—emphasizes Wojtyła—all common good, to which the person refers, and which he aims to actualize in the life of the community (cf. Wojtyła 2021, p. 403).

In this context, let us turn our attention to one more issue—one related to man's dynamic attitude, i.e., the attitude of solidarity in any community, be it a national, state, labor, evangelizing, or any other true and not apparent community. Solidarity is a particular overcoming of particularism for the sake of putting into effect the idea of complementariness. As Karol Wojtyła states, the thing is about "a readiness to «complement» by the act that I perform what others perform in the community" (Wojtyła 2021, p. 401–2). In this context, one might say that solidarity is the greatest manifestation of participation understood not only objectively but, first and foremost, subjectively. Subjective participation does not obviate objective participation based on the division of tasks resulting from the structure of the community's acting and being.

In addition, let us follow Karol Wojtyła in noting the need to defend being solidaristic at all times, opposing all instances of limiting effective participation in the life of the community, the goal of which is always supposed to be the attainment of the common good:

"Fundamentally, opposition does not clash with solidarity. He who expresses opposition does not cease to contribute to the community; he does not withdraw his readiness to act for the common good. Of course, a different understanding of opposition can be presumed. Here, however, we understand opposition as an attitude that is fundamentally in accord with solidarity—and thus not as a negation of the common good and of the need for participation, but precisely as a confirmation of both" (Wojtyła 2021, p. 402).

Last but not least, it is noteworthy that Wojtyła's description of the attitude of solidarity, as well as his description of the defense of this attitude, squarely fits into the concept of man as a dialogic being. This is because solidarity, as being yourself in being-for yourself as well as in being-for the other, points to the essential feature of living and thinking

according to the dialogic principle, which concerns some tension. This tension is between being-for yourself and being-for the other, which does not necessarily destroy a person. For in this tension, which exists on the basis of solidarity, man does not need to lapse into subjectivism and selfishness, nor does he need to let himself be absorbed by a group or even an anonymous mass. It is the kind of tension the fruit of which may be a revelation of what is true and right, and that which—as Wojtyła writes—“always deepens the person and enriches the community” (Wojtyła 2021, p. 403).

2.3. *Virtue, Idea, Closeness—Solidarity of Consciences*

When I read Józef Tischner’s famous book *The Ethics of Solidarity* and other works on the subject, I was pleased to find that Tischner creatively interprets the anthropological grounding of solidarity, which Karol Wojtyła effected in *Person and Act*, and which John Paul II later on expounded in the context of the theology of person. Józef Tischner, a Polish philosopher of solidarity, a priest, and soul-shepherd, wrote about solidarity first in his philosophy of work, the first outline of which was written in 1972: “At the level of the community of production, a moral solidarity of working people is born, whose common and primary goal is the truth of the product: that what we do together is what we do” (Tischner 1994, p. 84). It was three years after the publication of *Person and Act*.

Karol Wojtyła constructs his philosophy of solidarity first within the paradigm of the first person and finishes this construction already in the paradigm of the second person. Meanwhile, what we find in Józef Tischner’s philosophy of solidarity is, in a way, the opposite path. First, I must see you, hear your cry, know who you are, and only then can I know who I myself am.

“When the second round of the “Solidarity” Convention began in the fall of 1981,”² Tischner wrote, “the delegates were provided with the booklet *The Ethics of Solidarity*” (Tischner 1992, p. 5). Eleven years after that event, that is, in 1992, when Poland had already been liberated, Tischner noted: “People sometimes ask me: is *The Ethics of Solidarity* still relevant? These are new times [. . .] I think the answer is obvious. “The «definition» of the principle of solidarity can be found in St. Paul: «Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ». The moment we forget this would be the moment of our suicide” (Tischner 1992, p. 6).

These words of Tischner are very significant: To be in solidarity in the deepest sense of the word means, above all, to “bear another man’s burden” (Tischner 1992, p. 10). This carrying of another’s burdens, which is so community-forming and therefore of fundamental importance in the creation of social relations, is viewed by Tischner from a threefold perspective, which incidentally coincides with Wojtyła’s perspective on the matter. This perspective is created by the three concepts expounded by Tischner: solidarity is a virtue, an idea, and closeness (cf. Jagiełło 2022, pp. 210–16).

Solidarity, through which people’s various hopes are fulfilled, is, according to Tischner, an important virtue in a man who participates in social life, as well as family, national, state, and international life. In accordance with the Greek–Christian tradition, solidarity is a moral excellence that, as Tischner argues, does not come to man from outside, nor is it imposed on him against his will. Solidarity is a result of good will in man, and Tischner understands good will just as Kant does (Kant 1953, p. 11). “As a virtue,” Tischner writes, “solidarity is engendered on its own, spontaneously, from the heart. Did anyone force the Good Samaritan to bend over the wounded man lying by the roadside? [. . .] The virtue of solidarity is an expression of man’s goodwill. Solidarity is born of good will and awakens good will in people” (Tischner 1992, p. 11). The Polish philosopher compares this virtue to a ray of sunshine, to unique warmth. A man of solidarity emanates to other people in the hope that no one will put nonsensical obstacles to this emanation. This emanation is the emanation of goodness. A man of solidarity never thinks or acts against someone but always for the good of his fellow man, for the good of others (cf. Tischner 1992, p. 11). This is why thinking in terms of solidarity is an expression of a break with all Marxist thinking and liberal-left thinking in general. This is why the life of solidarity that Tischner speaks

of is an expression of man's complete departure from various forms of totalitarianism, whether it be overt or covert. Solidarity enables real realization, man's true fulfillment in community life at every level of his existence.

"For the solidarity we want to talk about," Tischner goes on to explain, "is neither a concept nor a ready-made ethical theory, but it is an idea" (Tischner 1992, p. 14). As regards the conception of the idea, the one who comes closest to Tischner is Plato (cf. Podsiad and Zbigniew 1983, p. 142). Tischner views the idea as a pattern of something that cannot be clearly, once and for all, defined or substantiated. Accordingly, Tischner argues that the idea involves a task that man can undertake and define again and again. In such a task, man experiences himself both as he is and as he should be. Thus, when Tischner wants to gain a deep understanding of the idea of solidarity as a model of solidarity, he argues that solidarity is "something to be modelled, which is defined as it is realized and which we have to keep redefining" (Tischner 1992, p. 14). In this context, solidarity is not only a task but also a challenge for each of us.

A deep understanding of the idea of solidarity is accompanied by an important question: why should I be in solidarity? Tischner's answer to this question is twofold.

First, Tischner answers laconically, "because it's the right thing to do." Solidarity paradoxically does not need justification because it justifies itself with the very fact of its existence. In this context, we draw attention to the metaphor of light used by Tischner. The idea of solidarity exists similar to light, which allows one to see the darkness of life: the idea of solidarity is "like some light. The light itself shines; it «justifies» itself. Walking through shadows, we come to the light" (Tischner 1992, p. 14).

In the second ethical aspect of the response, Tischner points to the dialogical nature of solidarity. One cannot be in solidarity alone. It is an interpersonal experience. Solidarity is always with someone and for someone. Regarding the light that is the idea of solidarity, Tischner describes the values illuminated by this idea, according to which a man in solidarity lives, and on their foundation, he builds a world of norms and provides an evaluation of reality, including an evaluation of himself. Tischner's attention is drawn to two values in particular, which are especially important for modeling a man's life in solidarity. First is conscience, and the other is the sensitivity of conscience to human suffering. These two values demarcate two perspectives for understanding conscience: ontological and axiological.

Let us take note of Tischner's words: "The ethics of solidarity wants to be the ethics of conscience. [. . .] Conscience is a man's natural "ethical sense" [. . .] Conscience constitutes in man an independent reality, in a way somewhat reminiscent of reason and will. [. . .] Conscience is a voice that calls inside man. What does conscience call for today? First and foremost, it calls upon man to want to have conscience. [. . .] One cannot be in solidarity with people devoid of conscience" (Tischner 1992, p. 15). Thinking about conscience, Tischner exposes his very optimistic approach to man: "A man might err, but if has a conscience of some kind, one day he will certainly recognize his mistake and thus will be capable of change. A man without a conscience has no capacity like this" (Tischner 1992, p. 15n). With this in mind, Tischner states that "solidarity is the solidarity of consciences" (Tischner 1992, pp. 12, 16). Carrying other people's burdens is an expression of a special inter-human bond (cf. Tischner 1992, p. 17), which is revealed in a life of solidarity. This bond is more than just active help for the one who needs it (cf. Stawrowski 2020, pp. 292–312). At the same time, solidarity awakens in man the unshakeable hope that his fellow being will not let him down, that he will not leave him to his own devices at a time when he should not be alone, and that he can count on his fellow man through thick and thin. The guarantor of this hope is an unshakable, fixed, and strong point of reference in man. This strong point is precisely conscience. That is why Tischner writes: "to count on a man is to believe that there is something constant in him that does not fail. Conscience is in man that constant thing that does not let down. For this, however, one thing is necessary: one must want to have a conscience" (Tischner 1992, p. 16).

The experience of the solidarity of consciences is an experience of special inter-human closeness. Tischner illustrates this closeness with the parable of the Good Samaritan: “The Samaritan’s good deed is a response to the specific cry uttered by a man” (Tischner 1992, p. 16). It is a cry that is not a result of some misfortune, such as illness. It is a cry, even if a silent one, which results from the pain that one human being inflicts on another human being. Moreover, both the beaten man’s cry and the Samaritan’s action are reactions to evil, which in Tischner’s philosophy is always dialogical: “Man has brought such a fate upon man” (Tischner 1992, p. 17). Misfortune evokes compassion and pity. Dialogical evil, or any harm done to one human being by another human being, arouses not only pity but, at the same time, a legitimate objection anchored in a sensitive conscience. Such a conscience calls for action in solidarity with a person affected by evil. “For whom, then, is our solidarity?”—asks Tischner. It is first of all for those who have been wounded by other people and who suffer avoidable suffering [. . .] This does not exclude solidarity for others, for all those who suffer. But solidarity for those suffering because of other people is particularly alive, strong, spontaneous” (Tischner 1992, p. 17). This is solidarity born out of the bond of human consciences sensitive to evil to another man’s suffering, which provides a stimulus for solidarity to arise. Such solidarity is a closeness that Tischner describes as “fraternity for the paralyzed” (Tischner 1992, p. 17). From Tischner’s viewpoint, the primary point of reference for the emergence of closeness to those in need is neither I nor You nor We together. That point of reference is precisely the Other, that is, the one that is different but still somehow similar to us, for whom we are and whose suffering awakens our consciences to action. “It is only on the foundation of this action that a community of solidarity grows” (Tischner 1992, p. 18). It is the way to secure human rights. It is the essential factor of social harmony and inter-human concord (cf. Tischner 1997, p. 94).

3. Conclusions

The fundamental thought about solidarity, presented by Karol Wojtyła in *Person and Act* was to make itself known in a unique way in the life of the Pope from Poland. John Paul II presented solidarity as one of the fundamental principles of the Christian view of social and political organization, understood as prudent concern for the common good (cf. Jan Paweł II 2006, no 10. 49). He founded this prudent concern on two strong pillars, the one being freedom, and the other—love. The culmination of his thinking about solidarity was the famous papal call that ‘there is no solidarity without God, and no solidarity without love for God and the other (cf. Jan Paweł II 1999). Józef Tischner’s thought is intrinsic to the climate of thinking about solidarity that was also shared by Karol Wojtyła/John Paul II. On the basis of his description of the phenomenon of human work, which in totalitarian relations turned into sick, economically, and above all morally exploited work (cf. Jagiełło 2022, pp. 201–10), Tischner paints a picture of a solidaristic community as one of consciences sensitive to the suffering of others, to suffering that can be seen in very many dimensions of human life. Viewed from this perspective, both the Polish philosophers understand solidarity as a task and a challenge that still lies before us. After all, our future, the future of various communities—be they national, state, political, or religious communities—is conditional upon taking up this task and challenge.

On the other hand, one can critically note that even though the word “solidarity” is nowadays bandied around, many eagerly refer to it and, in its context, to the commandment to love God and the neighbor, today there is something wrong with inter-human solidarity in many areas of human life if some people can even hate others. Is it some kind of lack of goodwill? Is it because we have forgotten what solidarity is in its essence? Is it because we have put the papal teachings away on the shelf with books that few reach for? Many more questions similar to these might be asked. Or is it perhaps true what the one whom John Paul II called the philosopher of solidarity once wrote:

“Demonic evil is hard at work. But it does not work blindly, like a snow avalanche, a stone falling from a roof or a malignant disease. Demonism knows at whom, where and when to strike. When it strikes, it strikes at selected people and in selected places. Above all, it strikes wherever it senses a budding good. The *raison d’être* of demonism is retaliation against good for daring to be good. [. . .] We are not demons, [. . .] but the phenomenon of demonicity can manifest itself in our actions” (Tischner 1998, p. 38).

If this is indeed the case, then—to paraphrase Martin Heidegger (Heidegger 1976, p. 193)—only God, who is the highest good, who is all love, can save us. And only He, as a Person—the true source of solidarity, can give us the power to overcome evil with good in solidarity.

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Notes

- ¹ It should be noted, however, that in the social teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, the very word “solidarity” only began to play a central role during the pontificate of John Paul II.
- ² This is, of course, about the Convention of the Independent Self-Governing Labour Union “SOLIDARITY,” the first free trade union in the declining days of communism in Poland.

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