

Józef Tischner

Selected by Dobrosław Kot from *Etyka solidarności*
[The Ethics of Solidarity], Kraków 2005.
Translated by Anna Fraś.

SOLIDARITY OF CONSCIENCES

Let us look at the burden we are carrying. This old and yet new word “solidarity,” what does it mean? To what does it call us? What memories does it recall? If I were to define the word “solidarity” more closely, then perhaps I should turn to the Gospels and look for its origin there. The meaning of this word is defined by Christ, “Bear ye one another’s burdens: and so you shall fulfill the law of God” (paraphrase of Gal. 6:2).¹ What does it mean to be in solidarity? It means to carry another’s burden. No man is an island. We are united even when we do not know it. The landscape binds us, flesh and blood bind us, work and speech bind us. However, we are not always aware of these bonds. When solidarity

¹ All biblical citations taken from the Douay-Rheims edition [trans.].

38 is born, this awareness is awakened, then speech and word appear – and at that time what was hidden also comes out into the open. Our bonds become visible. Then man shoulders the burden of the other. Solidarity speaks, calls, cries, makes sacrifices. Then the burden of one’s neighbor often becomes heavier than one’s own burden. In this way Christ’s disciple fulfills His law.

Solidarity has yet another side: solidarity does not need to be imposed on a person from the outside, by means of violence. This virtue is born all by itself, spontaneously, from the heart. Did anyone force the Good Samaritan to bend over the wounded man who was lying by the road? The Good Samaritan helped his neighbor, for such was his goodwill. The virtue of solidarity is an expression of a person’s goodwill. Essentially, we are all in solidarity, because deep down we are all people of goodwill. Solidarity is born of goodwill and awakens goodwill in people. It is like the sun’s warm ray: wherever it falls it leaves a warmth that radiates on without violence. Solidarity is concerned with this only: that no one put up obstacles against it – ridiculous, senseless obstacles.

And one more thing: a solidarity born of the pages and the spirit of the Gospels does not need an enemy or an opponent to consolidate and develop. It is directed toward everyone and not against anyone. The foundation and source of solidarity is what everyone is truly concerned with in life. When spring approaches, it is to sow and plow at the right time. When autumn comes, it is to harvest on time. When a house is on fire, it is to extinguish the fire. The teacher is concerned with the school being really a school, the university – a university, the book – a book. We are all concerned with the truth always meaning the truth, and justice – justice. It is necessary to tidy the home. It is what needs to be done that unifies us and encourages to act. It binds us more deeply and more permanently than the fear of enemies. We want to be a unified nation, but not unified by fear. We want to be united by our simplest human obligations.

We are living in an extraordinary moment right now. People are casting aside their masks, they are coming out of their undergrounds, they are showing their true faces. Out from under the dust and out of the oblivion their consciences are coming to light. Today we are such as we really are. Believers are believers, the doubtful are doubtful and non-believers are non-believers. It makes no sense to play someone else’s role. Everyone wants to be called by his own name. What we are experiencing is not only a social or economic event, but, above all, an ethical one. The matter impinges on human dignity. The dignity of man is founded on his conscience. The deepest solidarity is the solidarity of consciences. . .

Community

We stand before the task of plumbing the idea of solidarity. Let us draw attention to the little word “idea.” The solidarity about which we want to speak is neither a concept nor a complete ethical theory, it is an idea. It

is characteristic of concepts that they lend themselves to a relatively easy definition, whereas ideas always remain somewhat indeterminate. They are instead models for things rather than expressions of their actual state. Solidarity is for us something to imitate, which defines itself in the course of realization and which we must continuously redefine. It is not connected with any complete theory. A theory is a system of justifications, in which things hold water and one thing justifies another. An idea is something that essentially does not need justifications, it justifies itself. Somebody might ask, “why solidarity?” There is no justifying answer. One could only say, “solidarity, because it is right.” An idea is a kind of light: light shines by itself, it “justifies” itself. Walking along the shadows, we reach light. Every shadow refers us beyond itself, whereas light does not refer us any further.

Nevertheless, solidarity requires understanding. It is necessary to ask, “what does solidarity say?” Man is always in solidarity with somebody and for somebody. So with whom should our solidarity be, and for whom? Pursuing this line of questioning, it could also be asked, “through what deeds and works could solidarity express itself?”

My task here is not to give advice, formulate prohibitions or directives. We are concerned with something deeper: an examination of the space of life illuminated by the idea of solidarity. The following reflections are of an ethical character and the main goal of ethics is to accompany man on his life’s way and to show him, in a possibly unambiguous way, among which values his destiny winds. Once a person sees what kind of a world of values surrounds him, he will be able to formulate a prohibition and a directive on his own, he himself will be able to get along, and when the need arises, he will be able to evaluate himself. Today I would like to draw attention to two key values: the human conscience and the natural bond of man with those who suffer.

The ethics of solidarity wants to be an ethics of conscience. It assumes that man is a being endowed with a conscience. A conscience is a natural “ethical sense” of man, which is, to a significant degree, independent of various ethical systems. We have many ethical systems but there is only one conscience. It is prior to those systems. Conscience constitutes a reality of its own in the person, very much like with the reason and the will. One can exercise his will and reason, or one can neglect to exercise them, similarly one can listen to his conscience or stifle it, one can deny it. Conscience is a voice that calls out within man. To what does it call us today? First of all, it calls us to want to have a conscience.

We realize what risk we take in saying that the ethics of solidarity wants to be an ethics of conscience. What if it turns out that a person has a faulty conscience? Would it not be safer to overlook the conscience and take to writing road signs and fixing them along man’s path. Certainly, it would be safer. In this way, however, you do not build human morality. It is not about drilling, but about a behavior that comes from the human interior. In order to be capable of building a morality, a rule must be ac-

40° cepted by the conscience. Conscience is the internal sense of how to read road signs. Only the conscience knows to which road sign one should pay attention here and now. Christian thinkers said that the conscience is God's voice. It meant that a God who does not speak through the human conscience is not a true God, but an idol. The true God first touches consciences.

A man who is even going astray, but after all, has some sort of conscience, will surely recognize his mistake some day and will be able to change. A man without a conscience is incapable of this; even if he does change, it is only because of the changed circumstances to which he has to adapt.

One cannot be in solidarity with people who have no conscience.

With people who have no conscience one can ride a train, sit at a table during supper, read books, however, this is not yet solidarity. Not every "Us," not every "together" is yet solidarity. Authentic solidarity, let us repeat once again, is a solidarity of consciences. This is obvious, for to be in solidarity with a person means to be always able to rely on him, and to rely on a person means to believe that there is something steady in him which does not fail. The conscience is what is steady in man and what does not cause disappointment. But this requires one thing: it is necessary to want to have a conscience. Those have consciences who, first of all, want to have them. It is a sad fact that man has the power to destroy what constitutes his humanity within himself. But it is also a cause for rejoicing, because it turns out that the conscience can be rebuilt if only one wants to.

Solidarity is not only the work of those who have always had a conscience, but also the work of those who have rebuilt it within themselves.

The ethics of solidarity develops and becomes manifest in a particular social system, in a particular time and place. Solidarity is a solidarity with people and for people, thus it is a social phenomenon. This implies certain consequences. Among others, it generates a question, "what bonds connect the phenomenon of solidarity with politics?" Let us consider this concrete example.

Here is the parable of the Good Samaritan. He too lives within a particular society, within the world of a particular religion and politics. Even so, his deed is somewhat beyond this world, beyond the structures which this world has imposed on people. The Good Samaritan's deed is an answer to a concrete cry of a concrete man. This is simple – someone cries for help. The wounded man lies in the roadside ditch. His pain is of a particular character for it is not the effect of an illness, unlucky coincidence, advanced age, but a pain inflicted by another man. It was a man who prepared this fate for another man.² This fact is important because this is exactly what moves the conscience and calls for solidarity. Nothing brings forth outrage as much as a superfluous wound, a wound inflicted on a man by another man. We feel compassion for the sick who are operated on. For the maltreated, we feel compassion and at the same

² A paraphrase of the motto that the Polish writer Zofia Nałkowska gave to her *Medallions*, a book about Nazi atrocities committed in Poland [trans.].

time we are outraged. The solidarity born at the sight of such suffering is particularly deep. 41

For whom is our solidarity then? It is, first of all, for those who have been hurt by other people and whose suffering could have been avoided for it was contingent and superfluous. It does not exclude solidarity for others, for all sufferers. But solidarity for those who suffer at the hands of people is particularly vivid, strong and spontaneous.

Does it affect politics? Indeed it does, but only when politics is bad politics. When politics is good, it is of itself permeated with the spirit of solidarity. Should politics not be concerned with organizing the human life-world so that man would not inflict wounds on another man? When faithful to itself, politics means building a space where Samaritans' consciences can act. No one should fear these consciences; it is not the fire brigade that is dangerous, but fires. The Good Samaritan does not even pursue the villains to capture them. First, it is necessary to treat the wounds of the hurt man. Those who stand close to politics will take care of the villains. Solidarity is proximity, it is brotherhood for the downtrodden.

Let's recapitulate the main themes here. Solidarity is founded on the conscience, and the stimulus for its growth is the cry for help from the man who has been hurt by another man. Solidarity establishes specific interpersonal bonds; a man binds himself to another man in order to protect the one who needs care. I am with you, you are with me, we are together – for him. What is first here? Are “we” first, or is “for him” first? The solidarity community differs from many other communities in that “for him” is first and “us” comes later. First is the wounded one and his cry. Then, the conscience speaks, for it can hear and understand this cry. This is where community begins to grow.

Dialogue

Dialogue means that people have come out from their undergrounds, have come closer to each other, have started exchanging words. The beginning of dialogue, emerging from a hiding place, is already a significant event. One needs to reach out, cross the threshold, offer one's hand, find a common place for conversation. This place will not be a hiding place any more, in which man remains alone with his fear, but a place of meeting, the beginning of some community, perhaps the foundation for a home. How many obstacles does one need to overcome sometimes to begin a dialogue! How much patience in order to continue! One needs not only overcome fear and dispel prejudice, but also one must find a common language. It cannot be the language of any one group, much less a language of insinuation, slander, nor even a language of accusations. “But let your speech be yea, yea, no, no, and that which is over and above these, is of evil” (Mt 5:37); the language of reliable dialogue is a “concrete language,” that is, a language that fits things. What is black is called black, what is white is called white. No one will ever make us believe that pain is a delight.

Not every conversation between people is a reliable dialogue. Reliable dialogue brings about true revolutions in the life of people and societies. It is like letting light into the darkness of a cellar. Very often truth is compared to light “which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world” (John 1:9). Dialogue, through bringing light, unveils the truth. In other words, it restores the proper appearance to things and matters.

Solidarity is always a solidarity of some dialogue. What does this mean in more detail?

1. A reliable dialogue grows out of a certain assumption that must be accepted – explicitly or implicitly – by both sides: neither you nor I can learn the truth about each other if we remain distanced from one another, closed inside the walls of our fears. We have to look at ourselves as if from the outside, I with your eyes, you with my eyes. We must compare our views in conversation and only in this manner can we find the answer to the question of how it really is with us. As long as I look at myself solely with my own eyes, I know only a part of the truth. As long as you look at yourself with your eyes, you also know only a part of the truth. Correspondingly, when I look at you and take into consideration only what I myself see and when you look at me and you take into account only what you see, both of us are under a partial illusion. The complete truth is fruit of our common experiences – yours about me and mine about you. Common views are the fruit of transformed points of view. Thus dialogue, a reliable dialogue, should be understood not just as a way in which people merely behave, but as a necessary means to reach social truth.

The first condition of dialogue is the ability to sympathize with the other’s point of view. It is not only about compassion, but about something more, a recognition that the other, from his point of view, is always to some extent right. No one voluntarily shuts oneself up in the underground, evidently one must have a reason for it. It is necessary to accept this reason. In the first word of a dialogue, there is hidden a confession, “you must be to some extent right.” This goes along with the second no less important confession, “surely I am not entirely right.” Both sides surpass themselves in these confessions, striving to the unity of one and the same point of view on things and matters. When undertaking dialogue I am thereby ready to make the personal truth of the other a part of my truth about him, and to make the truth about myself a part of his truth. Dialogue is the building of reciprocity.

2. However, a question arises, “a dialogue about what?” There are so many truths about the world, about man, about things and matters. Is it not necessary to have some hierarchy of importance? We continuously speak here about the ethics of solidarity, which has become the issue of recent months. What constitutes the main subject of the dialogue which grows out of the ethics of solidarity?

Generally speaking, it is suffering, a suffering that was inflicted on a man by another man. This sort of suffering outrages in a particular way. Man has enough suffering which his very nature allotted to him:

diseases, weaknesses, death. Another man should not bring additional pains into this burden. He should rather strive to ease the burden of the cross which one's neighbor carries. Our tragedy is that the opposite happens very often. Such a pain – a needless pain at a neighbor's hand – is particularly outraging and spontaneously causes protests on the part of people of goodwill.

But this is still too general. Our present-day ethos of solidarity is more concrete. It was born among people of work in order to liberate man's work from superfluous pains. Work is one of man's natural burdens. One must carry it, as fate decrees, "if any man will not work, neither let him eat" (2Thes 3:10). But our concern is not to allow the natural pains tied to work to be joined by the needless pains at the hands of another man. This pain was diversely named; the word used most often is "exploitation." It is a good word, but it must be applied to the concrete which is suffering, a working man's suffering at the hands of his neighbor.

The dialogue of solidarity is about this specific pain. Everything else is secondary. This pain gives the words of solidarity the greatest power of persuasion. Therefore, the cry of solidarity is able to reach particularly far. When its speech moves away from the fundamental subject, the power of persuasion fades away and the voice, too, does not resound as widely.

3. A reliable dialogue is always concerned with truth. The dialogue of solidarity, a dialogue of awakened consciences, is concerned with the truth about the superfluous suffering of working people. This truth should be concrete, as concrete as suffering. It has to bring an answer to the simplest questions people ask, "from where does this suffering come, how to avoid it?"

The suffering of the working man gives high moral standing to the speech of solidarity. It is not ordinary human speech, it is not even the speech of grievance, it is, above all, the speech of testimony. To go through the world of the working man's suffering and give testimony – here is the solidarity of consciences. To give testimony means first to call things by their own names, to use a speech which corresponds to things. To give testimony means also to evoke in others an intolerance for the superfluous pain of the working man. From the former and the latter meaning emerges the key question of dialogue, "what should be done to eliminate this pain?" The answer does not come easily. But one thing is especially precious here: hope. A hope awakens, a hope that matters, and that things are capable of being changed. People of dialogue-in-solidarity must guard this hope closely.

Work

The significance that we give today to the idea of solidarity is bound, in a particular way, to the reality of human work. Solidarity turns out to be a community of working people who strive together to free human work from burdens and sufferings which are caused by another man, that is,

44 from burdens which are not naturally connected with the processing of materials into a product. Work is the axis of solidarity. Considering the ethics of solidarity, we cannot overlook the question of the essence of work. What's more, this reflection must be counted among the key issues of this ethics.

Writers have variously treated the essence of work. This is not the right place and time to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of their writings. What I am going to say here is directly connected with ethics, so it is no wonder that I must go beyond strictly economical or sociological definitions of the concept of work. I am concerned with capturing the basic idea of work, and using it as a prism which may allow a better insight into the role that work plays in man's life, the place it takes in the hierarchy of his values.

What is work? We answer that work is a particular form of a person-to-person conversation, which serves to sustain and develop human life. In short, work is a conversation in service of life. This matter requires explanation.

1. Work is a particular form of conversation. In an ordinary conversation, people exchange words with each other, that is, various sounds permeated with meaning. Words form sentences, sentences form whole stories. As a consequence of the exchange of meaningful sounds, words, an understanding is generated between people. Working people act in a similar way. The objects of their exchange, however, are not usually words (although that happens too), but the products of work which are similar in their constitution to words. Like a word is a synthesis of a sensual material (for example, sound) and a meaning, so is a product of work a synthesis of some material (for instance, clay, iron ore, etc.) and a meaning (as an outcome we get pans, irons, plows). Thanks to work, the material gains meaning. The meanings of things associate with each other, interlock, touch and create the general world of work products. Only the one who is able to understand the meanings of these products knows how to behave in this world.

I have to make one reservation. I am not speaking about the work as it was once, when a solitary man chased a wild beast, killed it with a stick wrought by himself, and then all alone satisfied his hunger. Perhaps work was not a conversation then but has there ever been such a time at all? Let's not talk about what was, but about what is now. Today the farmer sows seeds into the land that his forefathers cleared, he reaps grain with a scythe or a machine that was made for him in some factory, he transports the harvested grain to the mill where someone will make flour, flour reaches the bakery where bread will be made – a food that serves life. In order to make something like this possible there has to be social communication. The very concept of communication presupposes the existence of some conversation.

The conversation of work has a wide reach. Let us note, the soil was prepared by forefathers, the scythe by workers, the bread was baked by a baker, a poet consumed it. By undertaking work I enter into a discourse

which had existed even before I was born. I am a link between the past and the present. I am an heir of work. I am also a link in the present between those who have mined the ore and those who will buy the bread. The fruits of my work reach toward the future. Someone will be an heir of my work and its fruits. The dialogue of work goes further than an ordinary conversation. It embraces ever greater circles of people who often do not know each other's faces.

Each conversation conceals within itself some kind of wisdom. Work has a particular, *sui generis*, inner wisdom. This wisdom imposes demands on people, it defines for them suitable standards. Each person must know what he should do so that an organic whole grows out of fragmentary work. The wisdom of work – a wisdom incarnated not only in man's mind, but also in his entire body – determines the natural wisdom of working people. Today, its beginnings must be learned at school, but eventually, one reaches this wisdom when, through concrete work, it begins to run in his blood.

2. The conversation of work serves the basic aim – it serves life. The ethical aspect of work cannot be considered in isolation from the value which life itself is for man. What is life? We do not know precisely, but we sense it quite well. We sense it particularly well, when life is threatened with death. Then, life is specifically what we are defending. We can see then, here is our basic value. It is not the highest value, because under certain circumstances people are ready to sacrifice their lives in order to save other higher values. Nevertheless, it is a basic value, for only by “having life” can we strive toward higher values about which we tend to say that they “give sense to life.” Work serves life both when it sustains life and guarantees its development (the work of a farmer, a physician, a house builder, etc.) and when it gives a deeper meaning to life (for instance, the work of an artist, a philosopher, a priest).

Thanks to the value of life which work serves, work gains value and dignity. So, human activity which, instead of serving life, brings death is not work. No one will name as work the extermination of people in a concentration camp or the crafts of war practiced by invaders who prefer to plunder than work. Judas' betrayal was not work, although Judas received remuneration. The measure of work is the human life which is served by this work.

Work that brings withering, sickness and death instead of life is sick work or simply ceases to be work. Work is sick or ceases to be work when the natural burden of work, the struggle of man with material, is multiplied by another man, a counterfeit coworker. In similar situations, it is usual to speak about the exploitation of man by another man. Exploited work divides instead of binding people, and by dividing, it threatens to kill.

3. At the beginning, I said that work is a particular form of person-to-person conversation. The product of human work grows out of communication and serves communication. The fruit of work is like the word which journeys through time and space.

If this is true, we have achieved an important point of reference with which we can assess the moral value of concrete human work. Just as speech can be true or false, so can work. Not only speech can be called “true,” but also work. The value of truth refers to work just as it does to speech. True speech is a speech true to things, a speech that really serves life and both grows out of communication and maintains it.

The immediate aim of work is some kind of fruit, a product. This fruit is like a word spoken at the right moment. By creating fruits which are like words, work opens up the horizon for human comprehensibility. In order to work and collaborate, people must “be in the truth” for each other – no one is allowed to lie through work to one’s neighbor, because then, work would be like mumbling. Work as a lie – this is exploitation. The beginning of the awareness of exploitation is like the pain felt after a lie.

Upbringing

An upbringing and an education are work with a person and upon a person – with the one who is in the process of maturing. Education creates, between teacher and pupil, bonds analogous to those of fatherhood. It is worthwhile to focus on this analogy for a while. Fatherhood can be understood in many ways – sometimes superficially, sometimes more deeply. When looking superficially, we only see that the father stands at the beginning of one’s life, but in the course of maturing one grows apart from one’s father. One cannot remain a child during one’s whole life. There is a moment when a son becomes a father. From this perspective, the process of maturing would mean distancing oneself from the father. However, when looking more deeply, we see something else. Fatherhood is not only passing on life, fatherhood means also passing on hope. Between father and child there is a bond of the passing on of hope. The father is a confidant of the child’s hope, he is the support and strength of this hope. We are children of those into whose hands we have placed our hopes. What does it mean to be a child then? It means to entrust one’s hope to somebody. What does it mean to be a father? It means to become a bearer of someone else’s hope. Hope is the source of our life. Therefore, the one who brings hope to a man is the spiritual father of this man.

By reflecting on the ethics of education, we enter the world of a maturing person’s hope. It must be said that only those who have hope can teach and nurture. It must be added that they teach by shaping the hopes of pupils. Education and upbringing are work upon the spirit – work according to hope. Only after hope does love come, faith builds itself, and an adequate sense of reality evolves. Therefore, the key principle of upbringing is the principle of faithfulness. Here none is allowed to betray, none – under no excuse. It is not permissible to tear the bonds of entrusted hope, for it means to put someone under the threat of despair. Teachers sense it, pupils know it well.

Each of us has surely had a true teacher. What does one owe to him? I think I shall not bend the truth if I say it is awakening. First, we walked through life, not knowing what life was about, as if we were half-asleep. The voice of our teacher has roused us out of this slumber. The rest had to be done by ourselves. Socrates compared the work of a teacher to the actions of a midwife who helps a mother give birth. Thanks to the work of upbringing, a truth is born in a man's soul. This truth becomes the strength of the man. A teacher does not create this truth, just as a midwife does not create the child. He only helps, adding his effort to the efforts of the disciple. Nonetheless, his help often turns out indispensable and precious, as precious as human existence.

The work of education is, first of all, work upon the hope of a man. That is why, it is close to fatherhood.

In order to understand this work better, let us look at it from the opposite side – from the side of its counterfeit. How many times have we encountered counterfeit education? How many times have we been stupefied by counterfeit mentors? Let us try to plumb these experiences to capture, in this roundabout way, the issues which are essential.

1. Working on human hope, a teacher can seek to shape in the pupil only the pupil's own most personal hope. What does this mean? We have to keep in mind that there are various hopes in every person. Some of them are shared with other people, others are exclusively one's own hopes. Someone would like to become a poet, someone else – a saint, another – a reformer of social life, a revolutionary. Man lives, first of all, through his personal hope. However, this hope presupposes more general hopes. A poet must finish school, a saint must know how to pray, a revolutionary must be capable of standing quietly in line to buy bread.

A teacher commits an error if he focuses on the disciple's personal hope treating it as a matter that is within the teacher's charge. Then, he wants not only to awake from sleep, but also to lead the awakened by the hand. He seeks to adjudicate on something which the pupil has to resolve on his own. For the truth about hope is simple: each pupil must find his personal hope and make it his own all by himself. No one can charge someone else to be a poet, a saint, or a revolutionary. One can only demand what is common for all: good spelling, prayer, waiting in line patiently. The pupil must have room for free choice in the matters which are the most important to him, because they are the most personal. An education and an upbringing presuppose freedom.

One who proceeds differently is building a house from the roof down. A teacher imagines himself standing on the roof. After some time, he realizes that only few are listening to what he is saying. And he was speaking so beautifully! He was speaking about such lofty issues. If anyone remains insensitive to what is most sublime, he deserves contempt. In the soul of the teacher there festers a contempt for pupils. The teacher humiliates his pupils, he continuously finds their mistakes, so as to point them out. Education becomes a ceaseless castigation. The boundary between teacher

48 and prosecutor blurs. The pupil does not find anything for himself in the words said by teachers-accusers. The pupil knows one thing only, the teacher is tormenting them.

From the outside, however, it seems that everything is in order. The pupils make gestures as if they were pupils seen by the teachers. They wear the proper uniforms, stand in line according to school regulations, submit to a ritual. The main effect of education through castigation is that people “dance” to the ritual and do it with a certain degree of skill. In this way an old truth confirms itself – the one who wants to achieve too much does not achieve anything.

The second danger comes along with the first one. Yet, it is much more serious. It consists in betrayal. I have said above how great a role the experience of faithfulness plays in the process of education. The destiny of a teacher and that of a pupil is common to some extent; when the children of Janusz Korczak’s orphanage went to the gas chamber, Korczak went with them.³ The levels of faithfulness vary, thus various kinds of betrayals are possible. It would be difficult to discuss here the range of possibilities, however, there are open betrayals and concealed betrayals. Where betrayal is concealed, an illusion of faithfulness forms itself. The illusion of faithfulness is sometimes harder to bear than an open betrayal. Where betrayal is open, there is no suspicion any more, whereas illusions always provoke suspicion.

Faithfulness emerges from the discovery of a simple fact: you and I, a pupil and a teacher, ride the same wagon. No one stands on the roof. Our wagon belongs to us in common. If the wagon goes into pieces, if our hope turns out to be illusory, we all will suffer. Everyone, but nonetheless, a faithful teacher knows that his tragedy must be greater. A faithful teacher is a teacher who agrees to carry this burden on his shoulders. A mother nurtures when she speaks and when she is silent. When speaking, a mother gives orders, prohibitions, and encouragement. When silent, a mother implies that she is ready to sacrifice her own life. A teacher must put himself at risk. In the land of lies, his truthfulness must be greater than that of the pupil’s. In the land of injustice, his justice must be greater than the sense of justice of his pupils. In the land of hatred and suspicion, he must be more straightforward and open. His faithfulness is based on this. The pupil who has entrusted his hope to a teacher must know he has a confidant with him, on his side, together, meaning here that the teacher is a half pace ahead where the fundamental issues are concerned.

Where this “together” is lacking, an illusion of faithfulness appears. The pupil senses that time and again he is “taken for a ride.” He is told about the need for truthfulness, but woe betide him who tells the truth to the teacher’s face. Then he is reminded that apart from truth there is

³ Janusz Korczak (Henryk Goldszmidt, 1878–1942) a Polish writer and educator. He was the director of an orphanage in the Warsaw ghetto and voluntarily followed the children into the gas chambers of the concentration camp in Treblinka [trans.].

a need for respect. The pupil is sailing in one boat and the teacher in another one. When the pupil begins to drown, the teacher throws to him. . . good advice. In this way, his “concern for the good” of pupils is expressed. Sometimes it happens that he advises just one thing: how to behave in order to drown painlessly.

3. Where does illusion come from? It comes from a lack of distinction between what is fundamental and what is secondary, what is the pupil’s own and what is shared with others. All the time, one is constructing the roof alone. All along one is making choices for the pupil. One is dictating whether someone else should believe in God or should not, never mentioning the need for fidelity to the truth. One is encouraging the fight for worldwide peace, but is not capable of teaching how to sustain peace within the family. One is commanding compassion for the misery of Africans but not teaching to see the lot of an overworked mother. Instead of sharpening man’s natural sense of reality, this education blunts it.

This phenomenon is accompanied with a substantial switch of roles. Institutions take the role of tutors from the shoulders of people. Not people teaching and nurturing, but institutions. People are at most a supplement to institutions. Everyone who enters the institutional plane must submit to its magical action everyone and therefore the teacher too. Each and every person believes that they should conform to the institution. In a green institution one wears green clothes, in a brown institution – brown clothes. It is not important whom one is, but only what one wears.

Against this background, the ethics of solidarity becomes an ethics of awakening – an awakening to fatherhood along the principles of hope. One must get through the world of illusions to what is fundamental. The foundation here is faithfulness. The one who has once accepted hope entrusted to him, let him bear it throughout his whole life.

Betrayal

Betrayal is the cardinal sin against the solidarity of consciences. I do not speak so much about the betrayal of abandoning ideals, but simply about the betrayal of man. Betrayal is the breaking of bonds established in faithfulness. That is why we must ask, what is faithfulness?

We shall not understand the essence of faithfulness if we do not take into consideration that faithfulness is an integral element of hope. Hope directs us toward a certain future – through hope the future becomes our value. Thanks to directing us to future values, hope enables us to overcome the present difficulties. Hope is born in a situation which is an ordeal and it is the force which allows us to cope actively with this situation. Nevertheless, hope has yet another important dimension, it refers us to people. There is someone to whom I entrust my hope. Consider this, here I have made an appointment with a friend. I have trusted him, which means that I know he will come. The source of my hope, its

50 power and its light is the bearer of my hope. I say, “in you I confide my hope.” From this moment, the faithfulness of the confidant will be the strength of my hope.

To betray means to break the bonds of confiding.

Man’s work is also a manifestation of some kind of hope. In work’s womb we also encounter a moment of the confiding of hope. Work is a dialogue. When working, I always work with a coworker whom I trust. A sailor throws a rope from the boat and trusts that a worker on the shore will get a hold of it. I also trust those for whom I work not to waste but to use well the fruit of my work. I trust that the knife that I am sharpening for a friend will not be plunged into someone else’s heart. Finally, I trust those who have planned my work and who govern it, I trust they will not make me work senselessly. I strain to catch a lot of fish and I trust that none of them will end up in the rubbish dump because of surplus.

Into this three-fold dimension of trust, betrayal can creep in. What are the faces of betrayal?

1. The most tragic symbol among betrayals is the betrayal of Judas. It is a betrayal by a coworker which reached the point of delivering somebody to death. It is not only that someone does not catch the rope thrown ashore, but that someone plainly aims at the one who has thrown the rope. A member of the community to which I belong is “betrayed to death.” This betrayal can be perpetrated only by a coworker. A necessary condition for such possibility is the prior “being-with-the-other,” “being-together-with-somebody.” Our thoughts were akin, our gestures parallel, we were standing side by side, bowing our heads before the same signs. It is precisely the fact that this community had existed that made the subsequent betrayal possible. If Judas had not been admitted to participate in the life of the Master of Nazareth, betrayal could not have taken place. Betraying to death came as an abuse of trust.

One who participates in a community can betray in two ways: open and concealed.

Denunciation is an open form of betrayal. This is what Judas did. Denunciation consists in giving someone’s secret away to another man who, knowing the secret, will strive to enslave this person. Denunciation does not serve the truth, it serves enslavement. Denunciations are usually generously rewarded. Denunciation, by serving enslavement, is unethical. When rewarding denunciation, one pays for immorality. Judas saw it and threw the pieces of silver at the feet of the authorities.

Refusal to work together is a concealed form of betrayal. The case of Peter would fit here to some extent; Peter said “I know not the man” (Mt 26:72). Peter did not pick up the rope thrown to him. A worker works on the construction of an engine. He receives parts from others who prepared those parts. But one of them makes his part imprecisely. In effect, the entire engine is no good. The one who has made his part of work imprecisely as if “denied” others, betrayed them, failed the hopes which were entrusted to him. In this way the work of many people was wasted.

2. Work also requires trust between those of us who work and those for whom we work. When I buy bread, I trust it is not laced with poison. When selling a knife to the other, I trust this man will not use it against me or anyone else. The possibility of betrayal which emerges from this can also take two forms.

It can be the betrayal by the one who sells bread. Bread may turn out to be a fake. I buy it for authentic money and receive bad bread. The same may be the case with a radio, a car, shoes. Betrayal takes the form of cheating.

Betrayal can also be the betrayal of the one who buys. Someone has bought a knife and killed his brother with it. Someone else buys alcohol in order to get his guests drunk. The one who made the knife did it in good faith and with good intentions. Betrayal takes the form of an “abuse” of good intentions, an abuse of someone else’s work. An evil use is made of good work and its good fruit.

3. Last but not least, there is a third dimension to the confiding of hope: a bond between those who comprehensively organize work in a given society and those who carry it out. Betrayal on this plane is manifested as a crisis of work. People experience it as work which is senseless. What is the good of fishermen exceeding the assigned quota, when there is no place to store the excess fish? What is the good of people building a steel-works if the steel produced there is more expensive and worse than the steel available on the market? Someone’s work, which is part of a larger effort, even when it is well done, a fisherman’s work or a steelworker’s, is *a priori* doomed to be wasted. No particular effort makes sense, once the whole has lost its meaning.

This third form of betrayal consists in the dooming of work to senselessness.

4. The solidarity of consciences is an ethical movement whose basic principle is faithfulness, let us be faithful to each other. Let us be faithful in spite of denunciation, in spite of the denying of each other, the waste of people’s work by other people, the abuse of work, let us depart from work which is senseless. The call to faithfulness is a form of struggle against the exploitation of a man by another man on the level of work. The point at issue is not only that man should receive just remuneration for his work, but also that his work should be honest work, that he could work meaningfully. Work is like a conversation. For a conversation to be a conversation, one must speak the truth. So it is with work, for work to be work, it must achieve its truth. Bread must be bread, a word – a word, and a question and its answer must meet on the same plane.

Faithfulness arises and grows where light reigns. In the darkness everything becomes suspicious. Man must know with whom he deals and what matters are at issue. He must be ready to reveal himself in the whole truth. The more man yearns for faithfulness, the more powerfully he must repeat, “more light!”