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Evil in the loop of time The philosophy of Cezary Wodziński

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ABSTRACT

This article attempts to capture the rich legacy of Cezary Wodziński's philosophical thought, focusing primarily on the concept of evil. I will first briefly outline Wodziński's primary philosophical interests. Secondly, despite Wodziński's views on Nietzsche, his undisputed master, I argue that Heidegger and his political engagement are the main focal points. I therefore outline Wodziński's views on evil in the context of Heidegger's thought and biography. Finally, I discuss Heidegger's encounter with Celan, which is important to Wodziński and forms the basis of his exceptionally beautiful book *Kairos*. This is a particularly important book due to the importance of language and its form in Wodziński's philosophy.

KEYWORDS

Evil, Cezary Wodziński, Martin Heidegger, language, phenomenology

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The poem entitled *Krótkie chwile* (*Brief moments*) and dedicated to Cezary Wodziński (in memoriam), was written by the distinguished Polish poet Adam Zagajewski (Szydłowska, 2015: 15). It will serve as a beginning and a kind of introduction to the present article.

Those brief moments
That happen so rarely –
Is this what life is supposed to be?
Those few days

Te krótkie chwile
Które zdarzają się tak rzadko –
To ma być życie?
Te nieliczne dni

When clarity returns –
Is this what life is supposed to be?
Those moments when music
Regains its dignity –

Kiedy wraca jasność –
To ma być życie?
Te momenty, kiedy muzyka
Odzyskuje swoją godność –

Is this what life is supposed to be?
Those rare hours
When love triumphs –
Is this what life is supposed to be?

To ma być życie?
Te rzadkie godziny
Kiedy miłość zwycięża –
To ma być życie?

It is important to point out the necessity for a question mark in the subtitle of this text. The intellectual capacity of Cezary Wodziński is duly acknowledged, with the thematic elements of his works recognized as both captivating and pioneering. The prevailing theme in these texts is, in my opinion, the philosophical thought of Martin Heidegger. Nevertheless, in my view Wodziński is primarily an insightful commentator, though this is by no means intended as a criticism. But alternative perspectives are available. In his concise but significant work *Trans*, Piotr Augustyniak endeavours to articulate Wodziński's thought and weave together its salient strands. He writes: "It is within the labyrinth, forged from the interpretation of other people's texts, that Wodziński has imprisoned the Minotaur of his philosophy. The fundamental question that arises for us is how to lure this Minotaur out of the labyrinth so that we can observe it more closely. The following question must be posed: is this feasible? The question arises as to whether the Minotaur, for whom the labyrinth is both home and womb, could even survive being lured out of it. Or would this monstrosity, lured out of the hermeneutic labyrinth, vanish instantly and turn into a silent fossil?" (Augustyniak, 2017: 12).¹

¹ The book *Trans* represents a commendable endeavour to encapsulate the essence of Wodziński's philosophical thought, as if one were attempting to comprehend the entirety of his oeuvre as a unified philosophical undertaking (Augustyniak, 2017). In this context,

Can Wodziński's philosophy be extracted from the texts he comments on? And why, as Augustyniak writes, is the word 'monstrosity' used here, referring to the Minotaur — the body of a man with the head of a bull? (*ibidem*: 12) Wodziński's project, Augustyniak explains, is of this nature insofar as it is both a projection of his own explorations, questions and obsessions ('the body of a man') and something that does not belong to him at all, created by entering the labyrinth of other people's thoughts ('the bull's head'). The latter figure does not simply represent the acquisition of other people's ideas. Nor is it unique to Wodziński because, without confronting these thoughts and entering into their twists and turns, it could not have come into being. By confronting the thoughts of others, Wodziński both comments and provokes. This is precisely why I consider him a great commentator. I would compare him for example to French thinker Gérard Granel, although he would probably have disapproved. He would prefer to remain separate and unique.

That is in any case why I would like to structure my remarks around three themes that I find particularly interesting in the context of the French publication of *Ombre et lumières du mal* (*Światłocienie zła*/ *The Light and Shade of Evil*) in 2021 (Wodziński, 2021). The objective of this study is not to provide an exhaustive discussion of the themes under discussion, but rather to raise questions about them. The purpose of this paper is to provide a comprehensive overview of the book under discussion and the broader corpus of Wodziński's work.

I will therefore divide my text into three parts. Each part could contribute to further research and more in-depth articles. However, I will not undertake that here.

I will first briefly outline Wodziński's primary philosophical interests. Secondly, regardless of his attitude to Nietzsche, who remains Wodziński's undisputed master, I will argue that Heidegger and his political engagement, and thus the problem of evil, occupy the most important place in his works. I will therefore outline Wodziński's views on evil in Heidegger's thought, invoking the context of Heidegger's biography. I will then describe what he considers to be epiphanic evil and conclude with his book on the *Black Notebooks* (Wodziński, 2016), which I consider to be most interesting when it touches on Heidegger's thought — it is both the most critical and the most poignant of his work on the German philosopher.

In this work we can see the circle of evil in all its scope: evil is present and returns, just as Wodziński revisits certain themes — repeating arguments

we should also mention the two-volume work bringing together texts devoted to or dedicated to Wodziński: *Heidegger i metafizyka. Cezary Wodziński in memoriam*, Volumes I and II (Szydłowska, 2018; 2022).

and anecdotes in an attempt to criticize Heidegger and his philosophy. There are now many loops, not just one. In the plural. It's hard to untangle the knots and loops. The evil in Heidegger's life and the evil in his philosophy seem to blend together, making Wodziński feel dizzy.

Finally, briefly touching on the above motifs, I would like to mention Heidegger's encounter with Celan, which is significant to Wodziński and is the subject of his exceptionally beautiful and literary book *Kairos* (Wodziński, 2010). Wodziński interprets this encounter through the prism of silence and the figure that silence becomes. Perhaps — here following Heidegger — only poetry is in the end capable of expressing what is most important. In poetry, the effects or results of a project do not differ from its becoming. This presumably explains the importance of language and its literary quality, the “pearls of words” that Stephan Mallarmé spoke of, also found in Wodziński's philosophical writing. Do these “pearls of words” only reflect on themselves, or do they allow the world to reveal itself? (Markowski, 1999: 123) I will leave this question open for now.

I

To commence, it would be good to inquire into the common threads present in Wodziński's legacy, and I also draw on the tropes proposed by Piotr Augustyniak. It should be noted that Wodziński, following Heidegger, repeated that it was important for him to “remain in question.” It is interesting to note that some researchers, such as Daniel Sobota (I necessarily refer to a Polish researcher, as few of Wodziński's books have been translated into other languages), enthusiastic about this post-Heideggerian perspective, create their own phenomenology of question (Sobota, 2017). It can, however, also be argued that, quite to the contrary, this is precisely why it is too difficult to follow Wodziński and why Wodziński, while remaining within questioning, goes nowhere beyond it. In other words, one may perhaps say that Wodziński is stuck in question: blocked by it, it stops him. Ultimately, repeating the same question ceases to be fertile.

As has been written and to reiterate Piotr Augustyniak's words (Augustyniak, 2017),² it is possible to list Wodziński's various stages which are also his

² As I mentioned, Augustyniak's book *Trans* is my starting point for presenting Wodziński's areas of interest, and I am merely repeating the results of his research here, as he is the author of the division of the philosophy in discussion here into four periods.

areas of interest. Chronologically, the first stage, or rather part, of Wodziński's philosophical work is Russian philosophical and religious thought, particularly Lev Shestov, Nikolai Berdyaev, Nikolai Fyodorov, and Fiodor Dostoevsky. He was fascinated with Orthodox traditions in general and, in particular, the phenomenon of yurodivism (Wodziński, 2009). Yurodivy is an important figure in Wodziński's reflections. The second area where he is well known is German philosophy, from Meister Eckhart to Heidegger, via classical German philosophy (Immanuel Kant, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel) and the philosophy of Nietzsche. Despite the breadth and intensity of Wodziński's research across this area, Heidegger's thought stands out particularly. He is a thinker to whom Wodziński returns again and again and to whom he constantly refers. The third key theme is the philosophy and culture of ancient Greece. First and foremost these are Plato and Socrates, but also Gorgias, whose treatises Wodziński translated and commented on, as well as Homer — to whom he dedicated the last book published in his lifetime — and descriptions of the Dionysus phenomenon. Wodziński chose Greece as the particular space closest to him. Ever since his studies with Shestov, the opposition between Athens and Jerusalem had been crucial for him. Following Nietzsche, who sought in Greece a perspective beyond good and evil, Wodziński seems to have aimed at what is Greek at its source, that is, Greece in an a-Christian way. The search for a Greek experience of the world was of course inspired by Heidegger who, in describing the forgetting of being, systematically deepened in the metaphysical tradition and emphasized that the only place free from this forgetting was the initial Greek thought, before Plato. The last area to mention is that of contemporary continental philosophy. In addition to Heidegger, thinkers such as Emil Cioran, Emmanuel Lévinas, Jacques Derrida, Giorgio Agamben and Zygmunt Bauman are relevant in this field. Among contemporary Polish thinkers, in addition to Bauman, we should add Józef Tischner.

As Łukasz Kołoczek aptly summarizes in the title of his book, Wodziński pushes hermeneutics "to the brink of the abyss" (Kołoczek, 2019). For, it seems, he denies that what is said has the right to derive its meaning from a reference to an extra-linguistic reality. On the contrary, he sees the source of this meaning in the ephemeral discourse of language itself. The meaning of what is said is to protect the essence of language. It seems to me that Wodziński is extremely consistent in this work which, for Józef Tischner, already lies beyond the boundaries of intelligibility and in the sphere of increased risk. From Tischner's point of view, he raises the question of whether it is possible to talk about evil by focusing entirely on what is said, without reference to

the evil that has occurred (Tischner, 1999: 109).³ So, we can admire not only Wodziński's skill in using words in such a way that they reveal what they mean, but above all his ingenuity in finding places and texts in which we can recognize the protection of what speaks through the word at the very moment when the word also reaches its own limits, where it may break and falter, disappear or fade away — while continuing to act.

II

We shall now direct our attention to the issue of evil. Wodziński returns persistently, even obsessively, to the problem of Heidegger's involvement in National Socialism. He continually asks himself how such a thing was possible in a system of thought that sought to transcend the ruts of metaphysics and touch the truth of being. The fundamental orientation of Wodziński's answer can be summarized as follows: at a certain point in his life, Heidegger confused a movement of continuous transgression of a reflective nature with a concrete solution in the form of radical political change. In short, Heidegger came to believe that a "new beginning" was within reach, and that Nazism was either this new beginning itself or its immediate precursor.

Importantly, and this deserves to be emphasized as it was the subject of frequent controversy, Wodziński opposed the campaign against Heidegger (Duda & Wodziński, 2017). He was criticized for this by many commentators, with whom, to be honest, I also agree. He called the campaign senseless, but his own opposition can be described in exactly the same way. Indeed, he rarely countered the arguments, contenting himself with accusing the commentators he read and knew of having insufficient knowledge of Heidegger's philosophy. Nevertheless, Wodziński ultimately formulated an accusation against Heidegger that is of key significance. He recognized in Heidegger's intellectual position the same lack of reflection that Heidegger had constantly criticized in others. However, Wodziński did not view Heidegger's attitude in terms of moral guilt, but saw in it a confirmation of the historical inevitability of this lack of reflection, which confuses thought with political or parapolitical intensification. The error arose at the very heart of thought. If such an occurrence transpired even with Heidegger, who demonstrated heightened sensitivity to

³ Tischner writes: "I don't know what 'hermeneutic' argument could convince the 'de-structor' and 'demystifier' that their thinking has been 'blinded' at some point by the charm of flickering meanings, so I simply advise them to reconsider what they have written" (Tischner, 1999: 109).

the distinction between the two orders, it can be deduced that we may all be susceptible in this regard. It is important to note, however, that the possibility of this outcome happening is not certain. It is conceivable, indeed highly probable, that this phenomenon occurred just in Heidegger's case.

In the last part of his book *Heidegger and the Problem of Evil* (Wodziński, 2015b: 308), Wodziński explains what evil is for Heidegger, who follows Schelling here. Evil is described as epiphanic, but it cannot be problematized within the framework of Heideggerian thought. Although Heidegger demonstrated the ineffectiveness of thought in the paradigm of axiological difference and closed the door to problematizing evil in terms of the difference between good and evil, he 'stopped halfway' in his reflections, as Wodziński points out several times.

According to Wodziński, here a faithful ally of Heidegger and especially of Nietzsche, axiological difference is a muzzle that restrains thought that wants to get to the bottom of things. It is a mask covering the truth of being, a rut in which our civilization, in the name of moral reason — and with the name of 'good' on its lips — is hurtling down the slope toward the abyss of the hell of the twentieth century. For what persists in the world of moral reason is its substrate and fuel: xenophobia (Dadlez, 2016). This is a phobia, a fear, of the other, a fear capable of shaking the certainty of our moral reason by encroaching upon it. This phobia leads to a cynical subjection of the otherness of the other to nihilistic reduction or a metaphysical extradition to the beyond. This is clearly evident in the book *Odysseus, the guest. An essay on hospitality* (*Odys gość. Esej o gościnności*; Wodziński, 2015a).

As Augustyniak writes, Wodziński's thinking is as follows: when good is reduced to a moral value, propagated as a duty, imposed as a norm, it becomes, in a deceptive but inevitable way, an instrument of hypocrisy, pressure, violence, and ultimately — in the event of insubordination — condemnation and exclusion, up to and including the threat (and not just the threat) of extermination (Augustyniak, 2017: 56). It should be noted that confusion and disorder thus creep into the seemingly clearly ordered space of the world: good begins to reveal itself as evil.

We can see that, according to Wodziński, Wodziński, whose words proved to be extremely prophetic in this case, one of the most dangerous consequences of living in a world where we exclude others based on axiological difference is the disappearance of hospitality. That is why it was so important for him to reflect on the conditions that would make a hospitable world possible. First and foremost, a world that is open to others cannot be conceived as a space where, in the name of moral righteousness, others are excluded and distanced

or have the door slammed in their face. He puts it this way: “Our world [...] has proven to be extremely — exterminationally — inhospitable. At the heart of ‘our world’ lies the experience of annihilation, the Shoah of the Other” (Wodziński, 2015a: 6).

However, as I have already mentioned, according to Wodziński, Heidegger’s effort to ontologize evil, to think it within the horizon of ontological difference, came to a halt. Thinking about evil did not transcend the silence of evil. These would be transmetaphysical attempts to think about evil from the path of the deontologization of being, although, let us repeat, Heidegger did not succeed in taking this path. That would have meant posing the question of the being of evil. As Wodziński says in *Kairos*: “The stronger the tendency to think beyond ontological difference becomes, the more radical the project of deontologizing being becomes, the more thought is derived from event, the more deeply rooted evil appears to be in the ground of being. The deontologization of being runs parallel to the ontologization of evil. They do not intersect in contradiction or overlap but diverge in linguistic diachrony. It is as if thinking about evil cannot keep up with thinking about being. As if it were always one step behind. It cannot keep up with the hiding of being” (Wodziński, 2010: 177). As he elsewhere put it: perhaps it is the revenge of language itself, defending itself against the expulsion of evil into a demonic space beyond good and evil (*ibidem*: 178).

So what is the nature of evil in Wodziński’s thinking? What is the specific characterisation of epiphanic evil? Let us quote: “Epiphanic evil manifests itself more fully and more radically the more it hides, the more it retreats into the corner of the unquestioned. Evil is all the more evil the more it ‘is not’, i.e. the more the ‘is’ is inextricably intertwined with the essence of epiphanic evil the more it remains metaphysically forgotten” (Wodziński, 2000: 310). Epiphanic evil hides and reveals itself, flickers, one might say. If we forget being, we become entangled in the metaphysics of being, and we are doomed to it. Are we therefore doomed to evil? The question mark remains. Everything indicates that, according to Wodziński’s thinking, this is indeed the case.

In his book *Heidegger and the Problem of Evil*, Wodziński writes explicitly that both differences — ontological and axiological — are mutually exclusive, and that if we focus on the ontological difference, the axiological one disappears — is unthought and not problematized — and vice versa. He is here clearly following Heidegger’s path. He believes, and I find this thesis particularly interesting, that today the epiphany of evil consists in the fact that evil is, that is, the word ‘to be’, a metaphysical proto-word, as he says, has become intertwined with the word ‘evil’. In other words, the way of being human in the

modern era is the way of being a participant and witness to evil as it happens and manifests itself. Evil appropriates our way of being human (Marcinkowski, 2017). It is evil that experiences us, not the other way around. Epiphanic evil, as Wodziński puts it, is beyond good and evil. It remains metaphysically invisible and elusive, just as being is a phenomenon that does not reveal itself, as Heidegger would say, so evil is the basis of manifest events. However, evil that is hidden lies in the realm of the unquestioned (Wodziński, 2015b: 320).

Wodziński does not want to examine manifestations of evil — what Tischner accuses him of doing. He believes that individual manifestations and epiphenomena conceal their underlying basis, and it is this basis that he wants to focus on. According to Wodziński, examining its manifestations does not offer us a way to understand the essence of evil. Rather, it is the relationship between the phenomenon in the strict sense — the basis, the source — and its epiphenomena that should be examined. Wodziński asks whether the statement that Auschwitz and Kolyma were the most monstrous events in human history can explain anything.

In his opinion, it cannot. He wants to search and continues to search for a deeper foundation. He searches for a connection between the essence of evil, epiphanic evil and its manifestations, but ultimately fails in this search. What remains, he claims, is apophatic logic and wandering through the unnamed. Does this mean that evil is identical with the unnameable? If so, it would be the unthinkable. This is precisely where *Światłocienie zła* begins, by asking how to think or express evil (Wodziński, 2019: 5–6).⁴

In any case, many different points of view can be opposed to the vision of evil in connection with Heidegger's project as it appears in Wodziński's philosophical work. I would like to mention just one which I find particularly interesting. I am referring to Salanskis' book *Heidegger, le mal et la science* (Salanskis, 2009: 26). Salanskis also presents the thesis that Heidegger should be read independently of his political involvement; he is not particularly interested in the history of Heidegger's involvement in Nazism.

It can be argued that Wodziński ultimately presupposes a link between Heidegger's entire project and his commitment to National Socialism. Salanskis, on the other hand, highlights two fundamental issues that can be seen as failures

⁴ Wodziński writes: "The question of the unthinkable of evil is by no means the inauguration of some ambiguous linguistic game. Although it does herald a game — but one whose rules we do not know in advance (what is more, the rules are only created during the game, and even contribute to the stakes for which the game is played) — and language, or rather the languages involved in it. The distance between evil given in experience as an elementary and irreducible given of human experience and evil imposed on thought. An unbearable distance" (Wodziński, 2019: 5–6).

here: being-towards-death and the overcoming of metaphysics. It should be emphasized that Wodziński also considered that the latter led Heidegger to the brink of an ideological abyss. The moment of National Socialism's triumph is precisely when a new beginning appears to Heidegger, as I have written above. The problem would therefore be the failure of overcoming metaphysics, which Salanskis explicitly mentions. Furthermore, Salanskis puts forward another original thesis, namely that Heidegger's attitude can also be linked to his attitude towards science, of which he was critical (*ibidem*: 27).

I will summarize the issues briefly. It can be argued that for Salanskis, Heidegger's conception of being-towards-death is flawed because, first of all, being-towards-death is juxtaposed with the crimes of the Holocaust and mass death in extermination camps. What does Heidegger mean? — asks Salanskis. "That, in the machinic turmoil of tragedy, the victim has neither the leisure nor the time to see his death coming as the exhaustion of his possibilities, and that in this lies a crime or scandal that must be revealed and denounced 'beyond' the banal scandal of the prose of human lives and suffering?" (*ibidem*: 27). Heidegger's description in the context of the Shoah ceases to be convincing. Salanskis therefore proposes, in his own words, a kind of 'deontology', combining work on Heidegger with intellectual obligations of suspicion (*ibidem*: 28). In turn, according to Salanskis, Heidegger's figure of metaphysics presents features similar to those of Marx's alienation, especially in post-Marxist "revolutionary" thought. In my opinion, this concept seems particularly convincing and worthy of analysis, but it is beyond the scope of this article. Wodziński would in any case probably disagree with this line of interpretation, believing as he did that Heidegger's conception was not comparable to any other and was irreducible to any other.

Ultimately, one may also ask whether it is possible to go against the grain of Tischner's aforementioned arguments and recognize that in Heidegger's work, pearls of words reveal the world, and when Wodziński discusses the most abstract categories with Nietzsche, Heidegger or Dostoevsky, the horizon of these debates always includes a question about concrete historical evil, however difficult it might be to grasp in language: evil that European humanity experienced in Auschwitz and in the gulags and evil that led this humanity to a crisis, and perhaps even to an ultimate end. These events are what Wodziński calls tectonic experiences — alluding to the classic cave metaphor. He says that the cave has collapsed: the philosopher's work will therefore be work in the dark ruins, the ruins of language and metaphor (Tomczok, 2008).

He shows, to sum up, that the differences between being and entity and between good and evil are not separable, as Nietzsche and Heidegger wanted,

but that “beyond good and evil, there is evil.” One may therefore wonder whether Wodziński is concerned with the unity of evil and being, as Levinas conceived it. For the deontologization of being leads, as we see, to the ontologization of evil, as Wodziński writes in *Kairos*, where he argues with himself and the ideas from his own book *Heidegger and the Problem of Evil*.

If I understand him correctly, for Wodziński, the modern epiphany of evil also means a violation of the subject’s identity, a questioning of all the structures that stabilized his view of the world, even his very existence. A philosopher who wants to move beyond epiphany must renounce the numerous offers of stable subjectivity provided by various ontologies and epistemologies of apodictic obviousness and direct knowledge of rational being. He should instead open himself to experiences that “touch” him, putting his entire existence at risk. Epiphanic experiences are therefore akin to stigmata, as one of commentators puts it (Tomczok, 2008).

At the very end of this section, let us return to Heidegger’s *Black Notebooks* and Wodzinski’s commentary: the last book Wodzinski completed during his lifetime was devoted to a careful reading of these notebooks. The prevailing belief among commentators is that they are the ultimate proof of their author’s Nazism. In his commentary, Wodziński challenges this belief, taking the *Black Notebooks* to be a fundamental treatise on political modernity. In this work, following Heidegger, he completes his diagnosis of modernity as a futile time, equating modern politics with the will to power (Augustyniak, 2017: 47). In the modern space, all politicization focuses exclusively on power, which in turn inevitably focuses — even if unintentionally — on the maximization of power. Power for power’s sake. “Power for the pleasure of having even more power. Power for power, and power for even more power” (*ibidem*). According to Heidegger — and this thought is taken up by Wodziński — this is the only essential characteristic of the world of modern politics, which, as I interpret it, inevitably involves us in evil.

Let us now move on to the third part of my article, which will deal precisely with silence. The impossibility of expressing evil, either by a philosopher or, perhaps, by a poet.

III

It is imperative to reiterate the assertion that evil has not transcended silence. In the book *Kairos*, Heidegger and Celan are both silent. Indeed, the conversation between the philosopher and the poet takes place in silence. Perhaps

Wodziński is trying to show us in this book that these two silences are “the path to language” in the Heideggerian sense of these words. As Wodziński himself underlines, during a meeting in the Hütte in Todtnauberg on July 25, 1967, poet Paul Celan and thinker Martin Heidegger formed a pact of silence in their *Muttersprache* (Wodziński, 2010: 208). The backdrop for this was the experience of the Holocaust, and an important expression of this was Celan’s (un)poetic and famous poem *Death Fugue* from 1944. *Death Fugue* is not, however, a metaphor for the Holocaust, but a language of its own, one saved from the Holocaust. This language does not assume a simple opposition between speech and silence. It breaks down in Auschwitz (*ibidem*: 202). A chasm is created in which speech is not non-silence, and silence is merely non-speech. Logos breaks down in the anthropo- and theolo-gical dimension. So the exit “from the abyss,” the recovery of words, is to take place in facing the test of silence, such as that created between Celan and Heidegger, in sanctifying the non-speech of the Holocaust witness which continues to give rise to thought (*ibidem*: 210).

Neither silence about a historical crime nor talking about it are, Wodziński asserts, as clear-cut as they seem to many contemporary “judges” of morality and the conscience of others. Describing the meeting between Heidegger and Celan, Wodziński notes that it is possible not only to remain silent about something (*genetivus obiectivus*), but also to remain silent where the silence is of someone or something (*genetivus subiectivus*) (*ibidem*: 209). In Todtnauberg, Heidegger and Celan both remained silent: “both — albeit from different points — are approaching a unique place that can only be named, understood or imagined in the conspiracy of silence that binds them both” as Wodziński puts it (*ibidem*: 33). I would, however, like to express my doubts, once again, about the possibility of assimilating these two attitudes to each other and about the fact that the silence of these two is not heteronomous. It becomes in a way two silences directed against each other rather than reduced to a single denominator, going in one direction — the silence of *genetivus subiectivus*.

And finally, one may ask whether, if evil is condemned to silence, does silence not mean defeat in the face of evil? I repeat the question by phrasing it differently: if there is evil beyond good and evil, then where is good? Did Wodziński, as one commentator suggests, intend to write also *Light and shadow of good*, since his book *Light and shadow of evil* (*Światłocienie zła* is not translated into English) ends with passages devoted to good? (Mizińska, 1999: 215) If we cannot talk about evil, can we talk about good? Interestingly, in his rather favourable comments on Levinas, Wodziński recreates his understanding of

good, although he does, of course, accuse him of misunderstanding Heidegger's interpretation of being.

* * *

To conclude, I will remain in question, or rather, I will leave the questions to resonate, unable to answer them, perhaps not knowing Wodziński's philosophical work well enough to attempt a definitive answer to these questions. For this reason, I will list them here: the question of his philosophy, of evil in his view — epiphanic evil; the question of Heidegger's own entanglement in evil and the question about the connection between his thinking and evil; the question of evil in a text as opposed to evil in reality; the question of Celan's and Heidegger's silence and their connection. Wodziński's texts not only remain in question, but they draw along question, and this may be their main purpose. Finally and ultimately, unable to find a conclusion, I would like to refer to the title of my text.

Evil is trapped in a temporal loop. It is trapped in this loop because Heidegger's commentators keep returning to it, questioning its entanglement and the entanglement of his philosophy. At the same time, it keeps returning, regardless of how we describe and understand it, how we define and problematize it. It returns as an epiphenomenon that Wodziński did not want to write about. I feel that it also returns obsessively as a subject of reflection in all of Wodziński's books. However, it goes round in circles, perhaps remaining in the realm of language. It goes round in circles: "On the other hand — writes Tischner in his critique — there is something disturbing about an attitude that seeks to find all the 'reality' of evil in... the word about evil. Could it be that evil is solely and exclusively a 'text' about evil?" — he asks (Tischner, 1999: 112).

Does this also mean, however, that the evil discussed in a text about evil, but which is not present in the text itself, as Tischner wanted, nevertheless enables the "destruction" and "deconstruction" of the text? Evil does not appear in the text as a theme — this interpretation seems appealing to me. It is, rather, a hole in the text, as one commentator notes (Kołoczek, 2016: 246), something foreign to the text, something that "does" something strange to the text, destroys or deconstructs it. Epiphanic evil becomes not so much a phenomenon as a basis, a non-phenomenon. It cannot be spoken of, but one can speak of the very impossibility of speaking, of the impossibility of uttering it. As Wodziński puts it in *Światłocienie zła* language stops at the description of the borderline moment, and then it is no longer there — it breaks down. It is in this book that Wodziński writes most poignantly about the impossibility of expressing evil.

As we have seen, Wodziński writes about the encounter between a poet and a thinker, perhaps wanting to link these two attitudes in his writing, perhaps wanting to become a poet and a thinker at the same time. The poet and the thinker ‘write’, each in their own way, in language. Both write and both remain silent, especially since, as Celan said, Auschwitz has no end — the era of which Auschwitz is the emblem has not ended (Wodziński, 2010: 210). In other words, poetry here is a language at the limits of language, a hole in language. It is perhaps for this reason that Wodziński’s language is poetic.

Finally, Wodziński also writes about an elementary aporia, according to which evil, as it is, does not lend itself to metaphysical thematization and problematization and falls, as he puts it, into radical quotation marks — which means that evil is taken in quotation marks. In this way, we have also made it a foreign word, as Wodziński says. It is also someone else’s word because his reflections are a commentary on the words of others, but also because it is a sign of radically untamed foreignness. There is no room here for reflections on the importance of quotation marks in Heidegger, a matter also very important to Wodziński.⁵ Let us just say once again that, ultimately, evil must be placed in quotation marks.

Shouldn’t we stop using the word? — he finally asks. Since it doesn’t appear in any dictionary available to us? Since it generates ungrammatical and illogical phrases, violating grammar and logic. Because it does not submit to the authority of the semantic rules that order the cosmos of meanings in which we find ourselves. In these circumstances, does the radical nature of the quotation marks not lie in the extreme indeterminacy of the absence of content into which we fall when we utter this empty word? (Wodziński, 2015b: 333) We do not experience evil; as I wrote above, it is evil that experiences us. Evil as nothingness, as Wodziński would say.

Beyond being and entity, beyond good and evil, there is *Abgrund*, the Abyss, the Nothingness into which we fall and which cannot be described. In other words, evil is “beyond,” beyond good and evil. We leave the realm of phenomenology, of what appears, and we also leave ontology. But it turns out that language also escapes us and we find no foothold, even an unstable one. What then remains? Nothing. It must be acknowledged that this Nothing, this *Abgrund* of which Wodziński speaks, remains a great unknown to me. This approach can be contrasted with Susan Neiman’s conception of evil, which

⁵ The question of quotation marks as a philosophical question in relation to Heidegger’s philosophy has been described in Polish texts by Wawrzyniec Rymkiewicz. The main theme is that of the quotation marks in which Heidegger, in *Sein und Zeit*, placed the word “human” (Rymkiewicz, 2002).

also assumes that evil cannot be defined. But for Neiman, we retain the task of describing the various phenomena of evil which, unlike Wodziński, cannot be reduced to a single denominator.

Neiman starts from the premise that what is most important is precisely the manifestation of evil and the attempt to make it intelligible. In her famous book, *Thinking Evil: Another History of Philosophy* (2004) (Neiman, 2004: 17), she concludes that two fundamental positions run through modern thought. One, from Rousseau to Arendt, insists that morality requires us to make evil intelligible. The other, from Voltaire to Adorno, insists that morality requires us not to do so. Neiman defends the first postulate — for her, Wodziński's attitude would be pure and simple escapism.

In the introduction to her book, she writes explicitly: "I therefore assume that we have such examples, and that they change over time, without any interest in giving justification, or even criteria, for them. Even if we lack general principles of the kind we imagine other ages to have cherished, this is enough for my purposes. Since I do not think an intrinsic property of evil can be defined, I am, rather, concerned with tracing what evil does to us. If designating something as evil is a way of marking the fact that it shatters our trust in the world, it's that effect, more than the cause, which I want to examine. It should follow that I have even less intention of solving the problem of evil than I do of defining evil itself. My interest is, rather, to explore what changes in our understanding of the problem of evil reveal about changes in our understanding of ourselves, and of our place in the world" (Neiman, 2004: 9).

Wodziński takes a different approach. He talks about evil by showing that it becomes an obstacle and emphasizing the impossibility of expressing it in any language. Wodziński's hermeneutics would be on the edge of hermeneutics, leading to silence. We can't talk about it — but we talk about it anyway...

In *Kairos*, Wodziński confronts this paradox directly, and I would like at the close of this article to take a quote from this book as a kind of summary of his philosophical journey and as a confirmation of the importance of the loop from which we cannot deviate. Wodziński accurately captures his philosophical entanglement in the words: "By setting Gadamer's hermeneutics on the path of self-abolition, I myself enter it and cannot stray from it. For there is no other path than interpretation. I am hermeneutically impaired, all the more so because I am aware of the inevitability of self-abolition. By following the scattered meaning — the singular would like to save something that can no longer be saved — I will simultaneously cover my own tracks. My interpretive work can only be a diligent testimony to the disappearance of interpretation. A pursuit of the unattainable? Nothing else — but with full awareness that

this ‘pursuit of’ has no specific and permanently defined direction. It may mean moving backwards, or even wandering along the edge of a figure unknown to geometers” (Wodziński, 2010: 45). One can see that if it can mean moving backwards, this movement can also be treated as a movement that creates a loop. The loop, then, can be regarded as the fundamental element of our philosophical or human destiny. As Celan wrote in *Death Fugue*:

Black milk of morning we drink you evenings
 we drink you at noon and mornings we drink you at night
 we drink and we drink
 (Celan, 2019: 279)⁶

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