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**MEETINGS IN “DIARIES”  
BY JAN JÓZEF SZCZEPAŃSKI**

**Giemza L.**

The article discusses meetings described in “Diaries” by Jan Józef Szczepański. The main thesis is that Szczepański regards meetings as something much more important than a causal form of contact. What can be inferred from individual descriptions is a methodology of a meeting. They lead not only to the creation of a better, more humane world, but also to a more profound self-knowledge. Szczepański believes that being with the Second Person and for the Second Person is a fundamental form of existence in the world. Szczepański’s views, stated explicitly or implicitly, are close to the philosophy of a meeting and to the thought of Karol Wojtyła.

**Keywords:** Polish literature, essay, Jan Józef Szczepański, meeting, ethics, dialogical.

**ВСТРЕЧИ В «ДНЕВНИКАХ»  
ЯНА ЮЗЕФА ЩЕПАНЬСКОГО**

**Гемза Л.**

В статье рассматривается категория встречи, представленная в «Дневниках» Яна Юзефа Щепаньского. Основным тезисом данной работы является утверждение о том, что Щепаньский видит в категории встречи нечто большее, чем каузальную форму контакта. Из отдельных описаний в произведении Щепаньского можно сделать вывод о некоторой методологии встречи. Таким образом, встречи приводят не только к созданию лучшего, более гуманного мира, но и к углубленному самопознанию. Щепаньский уверен, что существование с Другим Человеком и для Другого Человека представляет собой базовую форму жизни в мире. Взгляды Щепаньского, выраженные эксплицитно или имплицитно, близки философии встречи и мыслям Кароля Войтылы.

**Ключевые слова:** польская литература, эссе, Ян Юзеф Щепаньский, встреча, этика, диалогический.

*Jan Józef Szczepański (1919-2003) is one of the most distinguished Polish prose writers of the post-war period in Poland, mainly known as the author of war prose (“Polish Autumn”, “Boots”) and essays (“Before an Unknown Tribunal”). After the recent publication of his “Diaries”, he was recognized as an eminent diarist, which was reflected in numerous articles on the topic. The issue of a Meeting in the writings by Jan Józef Szczepański was also addressed by Beata Gontarz, her article has not been published yet, which is why I do not include it in the present essay. All emphasis in the article is mine – L. Giemza.*

Literature has always talked about a meeting – at least in the colloquial sense; about what happens with two, at least two people, who devote their time and attention to each other. But, in the 20th century, the appearance of a meeting in literature is somewhat different. It clearly begins to make writers ‘uneasy.’ It starts to be a problem, a challenge, and it raises questions, thereby beginning to resemble the philosophy of dialogue, which was a reaction to the deep crisis of classical philosophy and traditional humanities (as well as a reaction to the demons of World War II). Avoiding the summary of universally known truths, I will only remind that this philosophy replaces a classical question: ‘what does it mean *to be*?’ instead of Cartesian ‘*think*’ with the phrase ‘be for somebody’. I fully exist only when I am a gift for somebody and when the other person is my task. I cannot find fulfilment in my humanity if I remain isolated. As Piotr Urbański writes:

“[A meeting] is [...] made possible by mutual availability, hope, and trust Me and You. As a result, values that did not exist previously are born, which are the reflection of whether I want it or not, the Absolute, engaged in each meeting. It is this reflection of transcendence that endows me and the Second Person with the ability to feel the unity of myself, faith in humanity and the sense of existence. In other words, a meeting justifies my existence as well as it helps me to understand the Second Person” [10, s.123].

More traces of fascination with this idea than we would expect can be found in our native poetry: “Love means looking at each other, / The way one looks at things strange to us” (Czesław Miłosz) [4, s. 202], “Because you see there are people here who love each other/ and they have to meet in order to avoid themselves” (Jan Twardowski) [9, s. 456], “You come nearer, half / I pass by you, half / I am very sorry / for this one side which is always invisible” (Miron Białoszewski) [2, s. 65], “the whole world is waiting / for you with this waiting room, with the face of this man” (Stanisław Barańczak) [1, s. 196] – these and other similar phrases evoke the whole non-obviousness and paradox of the situation where one man offers oneself to the other.

From the philosophical perspective, one can pose a question as to the border between a usual, everyday meeting and a Meeting which becomes an Event. The simplest answer is that a Meeting in a deeper, not colloquial sense is a situation which changes a person internally and spiritually. Both sides enrich themselves mutually. They touch the mysterious side of the other person. In other words: a Meeting is a relation which consists in mutual influence and penetration, ‘radiation of values.’ Discussing the oeuvre of Karol Wojtyła, Anna Karoń-Ostrowska presents it, among others, from the perspective of the experience of reciprocity.

“Reciprocity is the desire to be “in” the second person, complete him/her with myself and complete myself with him/her. Reciprocity is simultaneously giving and receiving. This experience is possible exclusively for entities who can penetrate each other. [...] Such experience is possible solely in the human world and concerns a meeting of one man with the other as well as a meeting of man with God.

Two people can be united in reciprocity provided that it is preceded by the choice of will and freedom of man. The issue of including will and freedom of a person in love lays a sound foundation for building the choice and the answer of reciprocity” [3, s. 64].

Citing Wojtyła as an authority is by no means accidental: Szczepański was considerably influenced by the thought of the bishop who, later, became the archbishop of Cracow, declaring his unfaithfulness and, simultaneously, showing vast

reserves of spirituality. He will meet with Wojtyła as a collaborator of *Tygodnik Powszechny*; he will be invited by the Pope as a co-author of the script to a biographical film entitled *From a Far Country* (dir. Krzysztof Zanussi). In the excerpt quoted above, Karoń-Ostrowska seems to touch upon a few important points: a meeting involves participation of the will; it is a conscious, active engagement in a relation; it goes hand in hand with the responsibility for the second person; it allows two personalities to interpenetrate.

It may be noticed that contemporary literature reveals both deflation of such situations, our relations are becoming more and more poor, superficial, and devoid of an effort to get to know another person and craving for a real meeting with the Second Person. Life writing – and here I am moving to the discussion of “Diary” by Jan Józef Szczepański – is located necessarily in the centre of issues related to a meeting, dialogue, and relation. However, Szczepański’s writing features one more element which I do not notice in numerous other similar texts. The author of “Polish Autumn” clearly focuses on the quality and dynamics of his meetings. He observes them carefully and assesses them. Surely not as a rule, but evaluative comments appear in his writing with great regularity. Here are a handful of examples: “[...] **interactions with Barbara are so easy that it seems as if we met every day**” [8, s. 13], “Tadeusz Różewicz at dinner. [...] The kind of trust and generational solidarity which presupposes **profound understanding**” [8, s. 26], “Yesterday morning, I felt that Gordon is weary of my presence. **The state of some hidden tension**” [8, s. 41], “In the evening of this day, Baba came by. A very bothersome visit. [...] The childishness of this nationalism additionally twisted by satellite psychosis **hinders any understanding on a truly human level**” [8, s. 65], “With Witek, as usual cordially, without **the possibility of genuine understanding**” [8, s. 87]. Apart from individual comments, which exist in certain isolation, the readers are presented with a metatextual level, pertaining to the core of the idea of a Meeting. On this level, meetings exist genuinely next to apparent meetings, or perhaps even feigned.

Szczepański’s diaries, and this is the thought I would like to focus on, are not only a detailed account of innumerable various forms of interactions with close or

more distant acquaintances as well as complete strangers. They also constitute a literary interpretation of philosophy of a meeting put to practical use. It is possible to identify there and describe in detail the aforementioned elements of the definition. What is more, contrary to a discursive language of philosophy, this type of writing is alive, dynamic, and presents an infinite richness of situations in the face of which the analytical language remains helpless. Whether it is an accidental meeting with a prostitute, whom Szczepański chases away harshly, but he, later, regrets being ruthless towards her; or a hopeful meeting with his future wife Danusia; or situations where Szczepański is condemned to the company of bothersome and tiring people, the author will always ask himself a question concerning the ethicality of his own behaviours. He will remain a fierce and sincere critic of his conduct and the diary will become a reliable tool, or even a form of spiritual exercise.

All excerpts quoted above reveal exceptional sensitivity to the authenticity of understanding. The first two quotes Barbara and Różewicz emphasize directness and cordiality; to describe his relationship with Różewicz, the author uses the phrase “profound understanding.” The next three excerpts concentrate on the impossibility of understanding, which is plainly visible in the last quotation “cordially, without **the possibility of genuine understanding**”. It shows how Szczepański draws a clear boundary between an apparent meeting – a meeting in a social sense and in a more profound sense. What he emphasizes on numerous occasions is a doubtful quality of interpersonal relations, which has become a distinctive feature of our time: “The impossibility to come to an agreement with another person is awful. Obviously, it comes to light in touchy situations, but everyday communion with your neighbour is streaked with insinuation, suspicion, looking for weak points” [6, s. 468].

Szczepański’s meetings happen on different levels and concern not only his family and friends. His writings also feature anonymous strangers who he met accidentally. Among them, there are people the writer talks to during numerous soirées. Apart from such individual meetings, his texts also mention meetings with groups; these also include meetings related to his responsibilities as a writer. Most frequently, those were groups of secondary school students, religious communities,

occupational groups (e.g. a meeting for librarians). Finally, there were meetings with the authorities – officials, militia officers, and officers of the secret police in communist Poland. A separate group included meetings with his fellow writers, which were devoted to literary attempts, their mutual assessment. Here, the uncompromising nature of assessment of his own writings turns out to be some measure of authenticity. This is a feature which Szczepański appreciated in his friend, Stanisław Lem, who was incapable of implicit criticism and was ruthless in judgements which he expressed.

Szczepański's writings strike with a complete lack of inhibitions. Apart from social and political determinants, Szczepański does not perceive the second person from the angle of external pressure (social, historical, cultural). Some of these judgements are unexpectedly harsh: “dopey garrulousness of Świrszczyńska” [8, s. 24], “three homunculi came by [...] little, jerkish figures you talk to as if you had to translate your thoughts into some foreign, awkward language” [6, s. 428]; as can be seen, some of them are sometimes vulgar and merciless. However, some of them are surprisingly positive, especially when Szczepański manages to discover hidden good: “It is difficult to imagine more classical specimens of provincial pea-brains who are vulgar, noisy, but – and this is what compensates for everything – essentially very good-natured” [5, s. 619]. Under the layer of something repellent, there is human beauty. It is even more visible in the description of an accidental meeting with a distant acquaintance: “During the interval, I met Wacúś Warecki and discovered that in fact he is a mystic. An unhappy clown, pseud, cynic, burning with the desire to experience such emotional depth” [6, s. 25]. It requires unusual sensitivity to fight one's way through the wall of one's own prejudice and inhibitions.

Szczepański's ability to go beyond cultural conditioning was observed by Andrzej Werner, who commented on his travel reportage as follows: “One distinctive feature of Szczepański's relations in comparison with books by other distinguished literary figures [...] is a complete lack of considerations that might be summarised under a heading ‘an elephant and the case of Poland’. There are no references, comparisons, remarks made by a person staying in a remote country on matters

concerning either contemporary Polish reality, or history and tradition, or, finally, customs, attitudes, and inclinations of the tribe living along the Vistula River, generalized to the extent that they seem to be of a national character, which was fairly common and visible, for instance, in publications by Kazimierz Brandys [...]” [11, s. 68]. I am inclined to believe that this principle is also present in descriptions of individual relations. These two issues often become inseparable, when Szczepański describes his meetings with representatives of different nations and cultures. These also include a ‘romance’ with Devaki, met by the author during his voyage to America, based exactly on the feeling of profound, spiritual kinship. I put the word ‘romance’ in inverted commas since; in this case, it is only about a great but passing fascination.

For all the astonishing variety of situations which are encapsulated by the phrase ‘Szczepański’s meetings,’ it is relatively easy distinguished between genuine and apparent meetings. Regardless of great care the author takes to reach an agreement, what we can call ‘contact,’ ‘closeness,’ ‘a thread of understanding’ is established (or not) at some point spontaneously and does not depend on either person. In this way, one can touch something invisible but real; something that exists between two sides of a dialogue and is a symbolical ‘bridge’ or ‘wall’ between them. One example of such a ‘wall’ is a meeting of writers during ‘the Literary Evening’:

“I spoke as the last one with unexpected emotion and much more openly than I had planned. A typical thing is something I always come to realize when I am accompanied by such people: my feeling of alienation among them. There is not a single thread that could tie me with these people or them with me. However, I have a special liking for Nowak, which I think, is reciprocated. But I always feel as if I appeared among them, coming from a different city or country, or even time and only for a moment, without wishing to settle permanently” [8, s.29].

It seems that every condition to stop this alienation is fulfilled, i.e. the author’s openness, sympathy, even the feeling of reciprocity, and the most obvious one – the professional level. But still alienation lingers. The idiomatic expression “not a single thread”, which is used above, proves a complete failure. Please note the power of

expression of the last sentence or actually the phrase in the excerpt above: “without wishing to settle permanently”, To settle means to start living somewhere, to take a decision to remain among others. Each Meeting has something in common with this kind of “settling down”,

The description of a meeting with a Lithuanian specialist in Romance studies, Augustyn Januajtis, is filled with genuine joy:

“Focused and reserved, he has a serious and straightforward manner which endeared him to others. Contact was so easy as if there was not, I wanted to say the whole Bolshevik Asia, but it is not between us; it is above us. Simply speaking, all those centuries of shared traditions have not been erased and we still understand each other; perhaps even better now than before, seeing what we are threatened by” [8, s.72].

A positive surprise takes place again – the interaction turns out to be easy, contrary to all expectations. What is perhaps more visible here than in other quotations is the dialectics of a ‘wall’ and ‘bridge’. Something that seems to be a dividing element (‘Bolshevik Asia’) is somewhere above, not between. What turns out to be more important are “the centuries of tradition”, which ultimately create a bridge of understanding. One detail which is at the same time striking and helps me complete my line of argumentation is that a meeting with Januajtis acquires another dimension in the face of historical pressure (“seeing what we are threatened by”). The emphasis on building interpersonal relations which appears in Szczepański’s texts, the emphasis which is perhaps not articulated but so visibly present, derives from the experience of the inauthenticity of the world where the author came to live a historical world based on the dictatorship of a lie.

*To organize and complete the above considerations, it might be stated that:*

1. For Szczepański, to ‘meet’ is to go beyond what is expressible and what is crystallized in language. That is why some ‘micro-narrations’ pertaining to meetings are so subtly poetical.

2. A meeting triggers an internal change in the author, which he manages to perceive, capture, and describe.



3. Szczepański often explores himself in a meeting. He is frequently surprised by his reactions or notices a new feature of his personality.

4. Descriptions of meetings regularly have a clear narrative structure, e.g. include an introduction and clear conclusion.

5. Meetings are accompanied by a kind of methodology and, at the same time, it is visible that there is an internal logic behind the most important and exceptional ones.

*Re 1:*

One distinctive feature of Szczepański's writing is how precisely he presents what happens between two people and what goes beyond the 'frame' of ordinariness. Thanks to his literary craftsmanship, the author manages to capture details which are not part and parcel of experiences available directly. A meeting ceases to be a mechanical interaction which can be reduced to a plain ritual and cannot be trivialized. Provided that it is profound and authentic, a meeting features an element of Mystery, of something intransgressible for common, colloquial language. It can be argued that Szczepański treats his diaries as a laboratory where concrete human interactions are falsified. Some of them strike with emptiness, insincerity, sometimes easily captured grotesqueness which instantly translates into the theatricality of the behaviour of both sides (as it happens in the conversation with a former secret police agent, who both sympathizes with his victims and attributes the purity of his intentions to himself); others leave their mark on the deepest levels of personality, they become the foundation and enlightenment at the same time. Szczepański's oeuvre goes back to the original function of literature and the author openly declares this return, i.e. the description of something that really exists, even though it escapes vulgarly understood visibility. Here is, for example, an account of a discrete observation of his wife Danusia in church:

“Danusia's clean, girlish voice when she prays in church. The greatest fear from back in the day: how is it going to be with our old age? – mercifully distracted. We can still recognize ourselves after thirty two years. And even this touching freshness has not wilted” [8, s. 562].

The word “recognize” overlaps on a double temporal perspective: past time 32 years ago and present time. This enigmatic “recognition” consists in noticing the former Danusia in the present one, with all emotions experienced in the past. To recognize, here, means as much as to go beyond the boundaries of alienation; to discover again what was learnt on the first occasion.

A similar recognition and going beyond happen in a radically different situation, which the writer slightly aside witnesses. What is meant here is the first pilgrimage of John Paul II to Poland, watched on television. The information concerning the pilgrimage and current stay of the Pope in Gniezno were preceded with extensive coverage of the opening of the Children’s Health Institute with “endless, boring speeches”. An openly manipulative move on the part of the authorities creates an unexpected contrast which was used by Szczepański to capture the phenomenon of the Polish pope:

“Not a single word was mentioned and photos were taken in a way that it was impossible to see the crowds. [...] Still, this man’s gestures and his mimics reflected the presence of crowds who were listening and established an intimate relationship with him when the words of apparatchiks were flowing over the heads of crowds in complete emptiness” [8, s. 533].

The final part of this excerpt refers to the above-mentioned coverage of political propaganda. “The intimate relationship” which the pope managed to establish is a fantastic answer to the “emptiness” accompanying the speeches of political indoctrinators. As can be seen, the literary quality of descriptions in Szczepański’s diaries is discrete: from time to time, one extra word or simple comparison triggers multiple associations which help a person free oneself from literalness. We can read about the pilgrimage itself a few pages later: “And again he spoke tired, moved, and magnificent on a brilliantly identified boundary between straightforwardness of a fellow countryman and the majesty of his office” [8, s. 538].

*Re 2:*

An internal, spiritual transition is something fundamental for the idea of a meeting. The Second Person becomes an unusually sensitive gauge of our humanity.

When I face somebody's misery or somebody's genius, I have to clearly define my place and discover a hidden truth about myself. These are not always highly emotional epiphanies, sometimes these are seemingly minute splinters of everyday situations:

“Świdorski invited all of us to his place where we talked till the break of dawn. I don't remember the last time when I took part in such an interesting conversation. I had the impression that **my brain was purified**. Again, I could argue and think logically, something I have doubted in recently. It resulted from the atmosphere of this conversation. Unexpectedly, it was dominated by complete sincerity” [5, s. 364].

Szczepański literally gets a new lease of life in “the atmosphere of this conversation”; he is in his own element. The conversation changes him.

A relatively frequent motif is looking at familiar things through “someone else's eyes,” when already known places take a new shape: “Yesterday with Baba in the Cellar under the Rams [Piwnica pod Baranami]. I look at it a little bit through his eyes and assessed immense charms of the party” [6, s. 695], “I was sitting with him till late at night and being in his shoes fit me perfectly well. [...] Overpowering boredom stirring up hatred to paper, to a pen, to the world” [7, s. 97] on doing his son's maths homework together.

The author tends to adopt the perspective of the Second Person even to look at his Kasinka, a town near Cracow, where he bought a house:

“On my way back, I picked up a pair of Slovakian students outside Nowy Targ [...] and, because they didn't have anywhere to stay, I brought them here. As usually in such circumstances, I can feel the intensification of Kasiénka's charm when it is watched through somebody else's eyes. And the weirdness of my own life” [8, s. 55].

An act of disinterested kindness is awarded with happiness derived from an amplified experience of beauty through observing familiar places through somebody else's eyes. The above excerpt explains in more detail what I have already indicated at a certain point, agreement becomes the condition of ‘understanding.’ Importantly, it is not so much about intellectual speculations as about more insightful perception of what I was given. Beauty becomes again a trace of truth. This, in turn, refers one

from the external truth (“the intensification of Kasiieńka’s charm”) to the internal truth (“the weirdness of my own life”).

*Re 3:*

Such excerpts where the writer reaches the truth about himself and frees himself from false notions about himself are distinctly rare and, hence, incredibly precious. This happens particularly when he discovers truths which are difficult to accept, or truths which he did not expect. They also take the character of little epiphanies:

“What amazes me more is a complete lack of inhibitions with relationships with people. I feel entirely comfortable and, what I would not expect, rich. In the country, people do not appreciate the wealth of experience, which among those used to a regulated and safe life, suddenly becomes an asset giving you self-confidence and, perhaps exaggeratedly, a feeling of maturity. [...] But their exceptionally appealing feature is a general, preconceived kindness and mutual respect” [6, s. 135].

This part was written down during the author’s voyage to the United States on SS Flandre. This time his confrontation with mixed, international crowd, open and friendly, becomes the source of self-knowledge. As can be seen, Szczepański did not expect himself to be so open. He is surprised how easy it is for him to find his place among new people. Suddenly, “the wealth of experience” stops being a burden and turns into an unexpected asset.

In a different place, also during his visits to foreign countries (this time in France), he discovers how much he was mistaken in his self-assessment:

“I have always told myself I could cope with solitariness well. It’s not true. It seemed to me that this city swallows people up. I was wrong. I visit museums, today Guimet, and I feel as if I were on a desert. [...] I long for female sensitivity, a human being remains a child forever, yearning for caress” [6, s. 73-74].

Even though no meeting *sensu stricto* happens here, there is a longing for another man as well as a craving for caress. Szczepański admits to himself, not for the first time, that he is a gregarious animal. He desperately needs interactions; meetings with art in a complete isolation from people lose their original charm. The

mentioning of a child does not mean childishness, internal infantilization. What is meant is a typically childlike way of perceiving oneself and the world.

Finally, the description of his mother's death which shocks with its succinctness: "It is awful to feel this coldness in the face of the suffering of the closest person. Some hollow reactions, some thoughts about myself" [6, s. 333]. It is difficult to imagine how brutally sincere the author is about himself. This "coldness of feelings" he accuses himself of is incommensurable with the descriptions of his mother's agony, full of tense attention and compassion.

*Re 4:*

Perhaps, micro-narrations in Szczepański's diaries do not deserve to be treated separately, but it seems to be important that individual meetings of the writer turn out to be autonomous, coherent stories. It is as if each of these accounts created its own, closed world which should be narrated separately. This world freezes in the narration and becomes subject to description. In Tischner's words: "A dramatic space emerges". One of such dramas is an unrivalled experience for the author as it has a tinge of romance, which is not welcome either by Szczepański or 'the Second Person':

"I found Devaki in the dining room; there was an empty seat next to her. [...] We talked for a while about various things. Later, when the closest neighbours left, Devaki said she wanted to clarify the situation between us. Next, without beating around the bush, she presented my problems to me as if I confessed to her, even though I hadn't said a word. She was both harsh and delicate in her words so that I could listen to her with a smile on my face without lowering my eyes. At the end, she admitted to feeling distraught and extremely lonely. We stood up. She went her way and I went my way without looking back. **This is how life writes in me one of its trite, painful novellas, whose beauty is beyond the power of man**" [6, s. 144].

Devaki, met during the journey to the USA, turns out to be spiritually close to the writer. She attracts him with her innate charm, naturalness of behaviours, internal authenticity. She shows an unusual ability to communicate above social conventions, going beyond social roles, as it happens in the scene above. Both direct and delicate,

she calls a spade a spade. It is worth noting that here Szczepański reveals his double nature: a person of the drama and an outside observer who is capable of admitting that “beauty is beyond the power of man,” the beauty of this concrete situation. It is admiration for and beauty of life being shown in countless situations which make Szczepański create such narrative miniatures.

*Re 5:*

The above-mentioned ‘methodology’ of being with others and for others is by no means codified. It shows in minute remarks, on the margins of colloquial notes and observations. Only rarely is it imperative. It should be understood more in terms of a chance and possibility, as it happens in the conversation with Jędrzej Jędraszewski, an acquaintance: “On Monday, on the 15th, Jędrzej came by. First time for a very long time, we found it easy to talk to each other. The temptation to influence his views left me completely and that helped a lot” [5, s. 439]. Indirectly, the writer declares openness and quits confrontation, deploying arguments. It helps to break the barrier of mutual aversion. The method which allows for reaching the second person and avoiding punches or clinch derives from internal ‘purification’ and reluctance to be on the winning side in a clash. The ideal is to reach the truth together. One important feature of Szczepański’s oeuvre is how brutally and ruthlessly sincere the author is about himself and, simultaneously, how merciful he is in the treatment of others (on numerous occasions). When he cannot be respectful, he is merciful, acknowledging moral misery. However, he refrains from harsh, clear-cut judgement:

“Coming back to the conversation I had with the bloke from the secret police the day before. The bloke is the only word which comes to my mind. Something anonymous, inauthentic. A person you can’t establish any normal, human relationship with. He aroused compassion, though. I had talked to him in a brusque tone on the phone before” [7, s. 365].

Oftentimes, like in this case, the barrier cannot be broken through. Even then, however, the writer manages to show empathy.

Once again, there is vocabulary which emphasizes planning: ‘I intended,’ ‘I expected,’ ‘I strived for,’ and, at the same time, terminology which points to progress,

as long as it is possible. Szczepański also draws the readers' attention to conditions under which a full, deep relationship is possible and tries to fulfil them. This network of concepts includes, for instance, a description of his relation with Claude:

“I like talking to Claude. She's so quick. Her thinking is so precise. [...] I feel that I arouse her interest not in an embarrassing way, though. There is some sort of attitude, some sort of sensitivity which she expects from me. And I accept those conditions with spontaneous ease, and I feel good about it” [7, s. 420].

Szczepański gives a similar description of conversations which he only witnesses, paying close attention to their course and to what influences their quality: “This is a conversation between equal, intelligent, and animated by good will people” [7, s. 449].

Here is an astounding description of a planned meeting which eventually does not take place:

“In the morning, I came back from Opole where I was going to have my soiree. But I didn't have it because nobody came. I thought to myself: such an empty day doesn't make sense. Something should happen, something that was unplanned but which would explain this pointless trip. Perhaps, I should meet somebody I forgot about or see something which would give me an incentive to write or find a pretext for some revealing thought” [6, s. 26].

In this magnificent excerpt, seemingly on the margins of his notes, the author includes his integral philosophy of a meeting, waiting for a meeting, is a basic answer to the sense of futility. The lack of the reading audience seems to herald an event which eventually does not happen. What is more, Szczepański waits for something ‘important’ that should be ‘unplanned.’ Important meetings are accidental. They cannot be scheduled or predicted. Szczepański concludes this situation as follows: “If there is some greater plan, it may be a code which cannot be read by everybody”. With this sentence, the author opens himself for transcendence.

To conclude, being with the Second Person and for the Second Person is for Szczepański a basic form of being-in-the-world, a measure of one's own humanity. As he writes: “Between those two glances, I appreciate a fragile blessing of life” [6,

s. 400]. The diary becomes a soliloquy and the recording of a continuous struggle for one's own authenticity. Remaining in the school of Conrad, in the first place, the writer desires to be faithful to himself. At the same time, he does not want to give up on his presence in the human dimension, which makes him so much different from e.g. Gombrowicz. This attitude is best illustrated by his own words, the summary of Szczepański's philosophy of life: "This game has been going on for too long. I want to be myself. It means to be between people whose company is my choice" [7, s. 8]. As Urbański states: a meeting justifies existence.

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