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A 'KNIGHT OF FAITH' LOOKING INTO THE FACE OF THE OTHER: EXISTENTIAL TRANSFORMATION OF DEAN JOCELIN FROM WILLIAM GOLDING'S *THE SPIRE*

Abstract

William Golding in his novel *The Spire* presents to the reader a surprisingly true to life story of a man who undergoes an existential transformation from Kierkegaard's 'knight' through Sartre's 'being' arriving at Levinas's 'self' by means of intricate relationships with other people and a process of painful himself-discovery. Jocelin, the main character of the novel, is a man who follows the path of an existentialist, undergoing the process of a profound alteration of personality. He begins as a Kierkegaard's 'knight of faith,' perceiving himself as a God's Tool, and ends up as a Sartre's 'existence' aware of his abandonment and consequent responsibility. In different moments of his makeover Jocelin embodies the contrasting concepts within existential philosophy, the theistic and atheistic ones, which are woven around the themes of self-examination, free will versus determinism, humility and pride, as well as the enigmatic struggle of good and evil within a human being.

Key words: existentialism, the Other, transformation

William Golding is the author whose gloomy account of human nature, permeating spirit of doom and what seems to be a programmed lack of happy endings in his novels gained him the name of a downright pessimist, and it seems that the writer, who in his private journal calls himself 'a monster,' would not deny that. John Carey, the author of his most recent biography edited in 2009, entitled *William Golding. The Man Who Wrote Lord of the Flies*, claims that such a self-assessment might be a result of the war atrocities he took part in or his destructive behavior towards his son David, but it might also be a result of the fact that Golding was a profoundly introspective and 'self-blaming' man who, as he kept repeating, "saw the seeds of all evil in his own heart, and who found monstrous things, or things he accounted monstrous, in his imagination."¹

The confidence with which William Golding struggled for literary success obscures the uneasiness which accompanied him while waiting for critics' reviews after publishing his novels. Whether it was the trauma he experienced

¹ J. Carey, *William Golding. The Man Who Wrote Lord of the Flies* (London, 2009), Chapter 19.

with *Lord of the Flies* being rejected by numerous publishers before finally Charles Monteith, a former lawyer who had been employed in Faber and Faber as an editor for just a month, noticed the potential of a provincial schoolmaster, is extremely difficult to know for sure. His fifth novel, *The Spire*, was written at the time when Golding, having gained readers' recognition as a writer and becoming financially independent, could abandon his position of a teacher and focus on writing. That amount of free time made him even more self-examining and apprehensive about the critical reception of his works, and although the first draft of *The Spire* was written in just a fortnight, the following fine-tuning of the novel was lengthy and laborious so that it had a much more "tormented birth than any of his previous novels."² Mark Kinkead-Weekes and Ian Gregor, the critics whose study of Golding's novels is still regarded as the most comprehensive introduction to the author's fiction, claim that *The Spire* was a novel which revealed Golding's unparalleled artistry.³ Golding did not provide any help for his interpreters, as his comments on his work are rather reticent and superficial. What the author used to say in the interviews is referred to by Carey as 'a gramophone record put on for an interviewer' the aim of which was to 'keep the world at bay.' This does not, however, discourage critics from facing Golding's monsters as his novels 'constitute a major achievement in contemporary English literature and deserve to be better known than they yet are.'⁴ Hopefully, a closer look at one of his novels presented in the following paper will bring the reader closer to the writer who craved human contact, but at the same time feared it more than anything else.

A haggard beggar is wandering along the streets of a quaint medieval town trying to discover the whereabouts of a man named Roger Mason. Hardly anyone can recognize him to be the former dean of a local Cathedral Church of Our Lady, which recently has been in the centre of the whole community's attention due to a massive spire being built on the top. And if anybody was able to identify Dean Jocelin, the clergyman could not expect kindness and respect on the part of his congregation for it was the Dean who initiated the building of the immense edifice despite the lack of proper foundations. Now the shaky construction poses a threat to the whole cathedral. What is more, there are rumors of some pagan rituals being performed by the workers hired to build the spire; the cathedral's sacristan, who had been constantly persecuted by the workers for his impotence, finally vanished into the blue and his wife died at childbirth while giving birth to the master builder's child. Although the Dean has not left the premises of the cathedral for months, his madness has been reported to the church authorities who have decided to remove him from his function. The old man, whose tuberculosis-affected spine makes him bent double, is now literally thrown into the gutter by the angry mob. Begging other people's mercy, Jocelin is in stark contrast to the proud clergyman who used to perceive others from the height of his elevated position.

² *Ibid.*

³ P. Redpath, *William Golding. A Structural Reading of His Fiction* (London, 1986), p. 205.

⁴ H. Babb, *The Novels of William Golding* (Columbus, 1970), p. 2.

The main hero of William Golding's novel, *The Spire*, is a cathedral dean who believes that God has assigned him a mission to build a spire at the top of the cathedral's roof. The spire would supplement the temple so that it would represent 'the pattern of worship' recognizable to all believers: "The building is a diagram of prayer; and our spire will be a diagram of the highest prayer of all. God revealed it to me in a vision, his unprofitable servant."⁵ The risky venture, however, not only changes the appearance of the cathedral as such, but even more importantly, it profoundly transforms the Dean in three aspects: his self-perception, his relationship with people and his notion of God.

These three spheres of man's life are subjects of multiple, often contrasting, philosophical theories, but existential philosophy deals with the issue in a particularly personal way by putting an individual in the centre of their discourse. During the process of his makeover, Jocelin embodies two extreme concepts within the existential philosophy, namely the theistic model of Søren Kierkegaard and the atheistic theory of Jean Paul Sartre. The clergyman the reader is introduced to on the initial pages of the novel appears to be a perfect exemplification of Kierkegaard's "knight of faith,"⁶ a relentless servant of God, determined to fulfill his master's will. As the plot progresses, however, the main character alters so dramatically that towards the end of the book Jocelin resembles more Jean Paul Sartre's 'existence,' aware of his weakness and ontological abandonment, as well as responsibility he cannot disavow. For Kierkegaard each human being is ontologically dependent on and directed towards God, thus he must be perceived only in the context of God's existence. Similarly, every individual has a natural inclination to recognize the existence of a higher power: "[...] anyone who stands alone for any length of time soon discovers that there is a God."⁷ Sartre presents the opposite view; since there is no God, a human being is alone in the universe and must be thus regarded as an unconditioned existence. The two concepts, extreme as they are, focus on certain common themes concerning human life, such as self-discovery of man and the struggle between free will and psychological determinism. These concepts at the same time constitute major themes of *The Spire*.

A Kierkegaardian Man of Faith

The existential approach of Søren Kierkegaard emerged as a reaction to the holistic philosophy of Georg Hegel's. The Danish thinker wanted to underline the meaning of an individual man, who in the universal system of Hegel's occupied a minor position of a mere element of the pervasive *Zeitgeist*, 'The Spirit of the Times.' What Kierkegaard wants to stress is that an abstract system encompassing the totality of reality is not applicable to dealing with the dilemma that individuals encounter throughout their existence and leaves them with no moral guidance. Kierkegaard wanted to: "find a truth which is true *for me* – the idea for which I can

⁵ W. Golding, *The Spire* (London, 1980), p. 121.

⁶ S. Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 63–70.

⁷ Ch. Moore, *Provocations. Spiritual Writings of Kierkegaard* (Farmington, 2007), p. 5.

live and die [...] What I really lack is to be clear in my mind *what I am to do*, not what I am to know, except in so far as a certain understanding must precede every action. The thing is to understand myself, to see what God really wishes *me* to do.”⁸ Kierkegaard’s philosophy would, therefore, focus on specific actions undertaken by a human being, which aim at discovering his own meaning. The word ‘discover’ is not accidental here because the philosopher’s Christian theism entails the presumption that man, as God’s creature, has a pre-established sense and purpose.

Kierkegaard defines an individual, first of all, by his freedom of choice. Man’s choices determine one’s life, and since every action is an act of choosing something and rejecting something else, performing evaluative acts of choosing is, in fact, what man’s life consists of. Kierkegaard accentuates the fact that every single decision is the outcome of a battle between God and the world which takes place within man’s soul; since the result of choosing can be either salvation or condemnation, the ability to choose is the most profound risk that man is in a position to take.⁹ Since “God is the one who demands absolute love,”¹⁰ the fundamental choice that a human being has to make is that of choosing God or rejecting Him, and it has the form of “either – or”; no compromise is possible here:

But genuine religion has an inverse relationship to the finite. Its aim is to raise human beings up so as to transcend what is earthly. It is a matter of either/or. Either prime quality, or no quality at all; either with all your heart, all your mind, and all your strength, or not at all. Either all of God and all of you, or nothing at all!¹¹

The philosopher’s approach stresses the individuality of man, therefore, the central problem of his theory is the process in which man becomes a genuine self. Kierkegaard enumerates three possible stages on life’s ways, or what he calls “spheres of existence:”¹² the aesthetic, the ethical and the religious; to become truly human one has to move towards the final stage, transcending the two previous ones. The aesthetic lifestyle describes individuals who aim at satisfying their desires and impulses, which refers not only to their physicality, but feelings and intellect as well; they are spectators and tasters, but not true participants. In *The Spire* that stage is represented by the workers and particularly by the master builder, Roger Mason, who, although initially profoundly rational, in the end surrenders to feelings, desires, and momentary pleasures. In the ethical stage man recognizes the importance of restraining their desires and fulfilling their moral obligations.¹³ The ethical mode of living is the one represented by the members of the Chapter who define Christian conduct as strictly observing the Ten Commandments. Finally, what Kierkegaard calls the ‘religious sphere of existence,’ is personified by Jocelin. The religious stage requires man to transcend institutional religion;

⁸ Moore, *op. cit.*, pp. 9–10.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 10–11.

¹⁰ Kierkegaard, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 45–47.

¹³ Moore, *op cit.*, p. XXI.

one is independent of any pre-established laws of moral behaviour and stays in a direct relationship with God, who himself provides him with moral guidance. Not always is ethics able to deal with exceptional situations and complex dilemma which man encounters and thus, according to Kierkegaard, a true Christian is not the one who zealously adheres to ethical principles, but the one who is determined to risk transgression in order to fulfill God's will: "[...] what a prodigious paradox faith is – a paradox that is capable of making a murder into a holy act well pleasing to God, a paradox that gives Isaac back again to Abraham, which no thought can lay hold of because faith begins precisely where thinking leaves off."¹⁴ God's request to sacrifice Isaac as a bloody offering, demanded from Abraham that he break the fifth commandment, "You shall not murder."¹⁵ Contradictory as God's dictates appear, they point to the fact that God as a creator of moral imperatives exists above them, and is thus in power to repeal them. Abraham's individualism and exceptionality of his faith surfaced as he proved to be courageous enough to abandon the safety of ethics. Faith, according to Kierkegaard, is a paradox, in the sense that the individual as the particular is more important than the universal, is justified over against it, is superior and not subordinate precisely because the ethical may be suspended for him.¹⁶

Faith is therefore a kind of leap which necessitates losing the grounds of the doctrine and rationality and surrendering one's will to the will of the higher power: "Faith, therefore, requires a leap. It is not a matter of galvanizing the will to believe something there is no evidence for, but a leap of commitment. 'The leap is the category of decision' – the decision to commit one's being to a God whose existence is rationally uncertain."¹⁷ Jocelin is the one who decides to make a "leap of faith" in response to what he perceives as God's call. The Dean jeopardizes his reputation, respect and position and follows the vision, which others regard as 'Jocelin's folly.' Since God is approachable by way of avid, undivided commitment, the Dean evades fulfilling his priestly duties such as prayer and confession, understanding that these are unimportant activities which distract him from what should be the object of his undivided attention. Nowhere in his reflections is there a shred of doubt whether any of his undertakings is in accordance with the dogma of the Church. No longer does Jocelin treat himself separately from his task; he and his mission become "a necessary marriage,"¹⁸ and since God has assigned to him a new task, and thus has privileged him with a new status, the Dean feels that he is no longer bound by the previous obligations. Hence lack of support from the cathedral Chapter does not undermine Jocelin's conviction; on the contrary, he gains certainty that he must follow God's instructions despite all the adversities.

During the process of building the spire it turns out that not only is there no stone to constitute proper foundations, but also that the earth under the spire is

¹⁴ Kierkegaard, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

¹⁵ Exodus, 20:13.

¹⁶ Kierkegaard, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

¹⁷ Moore, *op. cit.*, p. XXV.

¹⁸ Golding, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

moving “like porridge coming to the boil in a pot.”¹⁹ For Roger Mason, the master builder, this occurrence is unambiguous and self-explanatory: “It stands to reason. Now we must stop building [...] Do more and the earth’ll creep again.”²⁰ Jocelin, however, does not let himself be distracted by rational arguments. The lack of solid foundations is perceived by him as a proof of the greatness of God who will manifest His power by a miracle of holding an enormous building up as if in the air: “You see, my son! The pillars don’t sink! [...] I told you, Roger. They float!”²¹ Lack of rationality is yet another element of the ‘leap of faith’ that the Dean takes. What can be observed here is the absurdity of faith that according to Kierkegaard is an indispensable element of a truly Christian attitude. The absurd is not a rare occurrence that certain human beings happen to experience, but the exact object of faith: “What, then, is the absurd? The absurd is that the eternal truth has come into existence in time, that God has come into existence, has been born, has grown up, has come into existence exactly as an individual human being, indistinguishable from any other human being.”²² Christianity, therefore, relies upon the absurd and as such requires a believer to trust the absurd. Jocelin’s deafness to any reasonable argument and relying on the absurdity of his belief in the impossible makes him an uncompromising fanatic. To him Roger’s rationality limits his spiritual sensitivity and understanding of the extraordinary events that take place around him: “[...] the master builder often looked at things without seeing them; and then again, he would look at a thing as if he could see nothing else, or hear or feel nothing else.”²³ Whereas Roger Mason represents reason and cool calculation, Jocelin reflects passion and engagement, which are the only ways of coming to terms with the absurd of faith.

As it has already been mentioned, for a Christian who has stepped into the religious sphere of existence the conventional ethics does not pose a point of reference as far as solving moral problems is concerned. Since God is above ethics, He is also the one who establishes the moral value of deeds. It is therefore possible that an ethically wrong deed will be regarded as a right one simply because God has demanded it. That is why Abraham, from the ethical point of view, is a would-be murderer, although the Bible presents him as “the father of all those who believe.”²⁴ Similarly, Jocelin is ready to bear the cost of his conviction which includes making an offering of human lives. He lets the workers persecute Pangall, the sacristan, knowing that the brutes need a scapegoat to ‘keep off bad luck.’ At one point in the novel he admits that the marriage of the beautiful Goody and the sexually impotent Pangall was in fact arranged by him and from the very beginning was likely to finish in misery for both. When Pangall’s wife and Roger Mason become increasingly attracted to each other, Jocelin refrains from intervention, although

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

²² Moore, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

²³ Golding, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

²⁴ Romans, 4:16.

he senses that the hazardous relationship would result in their ultimate fall since they were caught up “in some sort of tent that shut them off from all other people, and he saw how they feared the tent, both of them, but were helpless.”²⁵ Deep down Jocelin loves Goody passionately²⁶ and watching idly as she gives herself to another man causes him unbelievable pain, which he considers to be his own bloodless sacrifice; he knows, however, that the presence of Goody will keep Mason on the job. The Dean cherishes a deep conviction that all the suffering resulting from his actions is indispensable to accomplish the goal; he regards it as “the cost of building material.”²⁷ The ethical as well as the rational are suspended, and Jocelin has a feeling that he stands alone in front of God, answering to no one but Him:

He made no sense of these things, but endured them with moanings and shudderings. Yet like a birth itself, the words came, that seemed to fit the totality of his life, his sins, and his forced cruelty, and above all the dreadful glow of his dedicated will. *This have I done for my true love.*²⁸

For his ‘true love,’ which is God, Jocelin undergoes the torture of constant accusations of insanity and disrespect on the part of his own congregation. He lacks sleep and proper feeding; he joins the workers and works arduously day after day being aware of the fact that he is the only one who believes that building the spire is not a downright madness. He experiences acute solitude as, having looked for men of faith to be with him, he could find none. What he believes, however, is that having resigned everything infinitely, he will seize “everything again by virtue of the absurd.”²⁹

Although initially deeply convinced about the rightness of his undertakings, as appalling events take place and ghastly spirits haunt him, Jocelin becomes increasingly doubtful and fearful. He begins to feel the rift between what he claims and what he actually desires deep down and as he no longer feels certain about his own interpretation of reality, the clergyman begins looking for a different one. Jocelin initially interprets the spiritual presence he feels as a guardian angel that was sent to him by God in order to support him. Gradually, however, the presence of the angel becomes more and more unpleasant, more and more painful: “Often his angel stood at his back; and this exhausted him, for the angel was a great weight of glory to bear, and bent his spine. Moreover, after a visit by the angel – as if to keep him in humility – Satan was given leave to torment him, seizing him by the loins.”³⁰ The presence of the angel is intermingled with what Jocelin experiences as the presence of a devil, and from that moment on these two characters appear always together. It is only in the tenth chapter of the novel that it becomes clear who the

²⁵ Golding, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

²⁶ Y. Sugimura, *God and Escalation of Guilt in the Novels of William Golding* (Otaru, 1990), p. 13.

²⁷ Golding, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

²⁸ Golding, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

²⁹ Kierkegaard, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

angel really is: "Then his angel put away the two wings from the cloven hoof and struck him from arse to the head with a whitehot flail."³¹ It becomes apparent to Jocelin that he has been deluded by "Satan who transformed himself into an angel of light."³² The moment of the angel's metamorphosis seems to be the climax of the novel and the climax of Jocelin's transformation. When Jocelin recognizes the demonic nature of the whole venture, suddenly the floor in the crossways of the cathedral where he received the vision becomes "hot to his feet with all the fires of hell."³³ As the angel turns into a devil, Jocelin undergoes spiritual and existential metamorphosis as well.³⁴

Although both Søren Kierkegaard and Jean-Paul Sartre are referred to as existentialists, they constitute two extremes as far as the ontological premises of their theories are concerned. Kierkegaard's theory is grounded on the concept of a fearsome God permeating man's existence, whereas the fundamental principle of Sartre's philosophy is that the universe is devoid of any kind of divine presence. Sartre's differentiation between two kinds of being, 'being-in-itself' and 'being-for-itself' introduced an irreconcilable division in the world of things. The first type of being is unaware of its existence and unable to alter itself; all the inanimate and animated objects that are deprived of consciousness exist in this mode. 'Being-for-itself' is a type of being which is aware of its existence, and establishes itself by means of existing and choosing freely; this is the way of existing of a man. In the light of Sartre's theory, God is, therefore, a contradictory concept. If he existed, God would have to be both kinds of beings at the same time. Being an established existence, he would at the same time have awareness and the property of creating himself by means of exercising his awareness. It is, according to Sartre, logically contradictory that such a being could exist.

William Golding and Jean-Paul Sartre were both in their twenties when they faced the outbreak of the Second World War and it is highly probable that the distrust towards human nature results from a similar experience of war atrocities which had not taken place to such a high extent ever before. Jocelin's actions, previously interpreted as exemplifying the attitude of Kierkegaard's 'knight of faith,' an ideal servant of God, when analyzed on the basis of Sartre's philosophy, present him as a self-deluded individual, devoured by his egotistic desires. His selfishness makes him unable to become involved in a relationship with any other being, be it God or man; he focuses on fulfilling his own will regardless of the cost and the means. Jocelin's subconscious is dominated by an overwhelming feeling of solitude and a profound belief that his existence has no pre-established purpose or sense. All his actions, therefore, serve exclusively the aim of finding or rather constructing the meaning of his life.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 165.

³² 2 Cor, 11:14.

³³ Golding, *op. cit.*, p. 157.

³⁴ P. Ráčková, "The Angel with a Hoof: Metamorphosis in Golding's 'The Spire'", [in:] P. Drábek, J. Chovanec (eds.), *"Theory and Practice in English Studies"*, Vol. 2 (Brno, 2004), p. 162.

A Sartrean Being-for-itself

Since there is no God, no source of principles or values and no definition of a human being can be found: "Values are valid only because we have chosen them as valuable."³⁵ If there was a God, the author and creator of all existence, a human being would be an object made according to a pattern established in God's mind. Each individual, therefore, would be a realization of a certain conception, a concrete formula, a ready-made object which has a definite shape and purpose.³⁶ What Sartre emphasizes is that an attempt to find any pre-established definition of man is futile. His famous statement *existence precedes essence*³⁷ expresses the view that only by existing is man able to shape himself and create his own personal definition: "Thus, there is no human nature, because there is no God to have a conception of it [...] Man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself."³⁸ The "abandonment" of man stems from the fact that there is no higher power to appeal to, since God does not exist, man has no moral directives to follow. Not only is he, therefore, absolutely free, but he *is* freedom; he is condemned to be free, because he finds himself in a state in which he cannot but choose and his choice is absolutely free.

Jocelin's life is characterized by constant and overwhelming feeling of inadequacy. He considers himself a changeling, he never experiences any union with the human community or is able to truly communicate with others. Neither particularly gifted nor well-educated, he finds himself an important figure in the Church hierarchy. The inferiority complex that he is driven by makes him search for a reason for his undeserved elevation. Eventually, he develops a conviction that he has been given a divine revelation in which God orders him to build a spire that will supplement the cathedral of which Jocelin is a dean. The belief that he is 'the chosen one' seems to enable him to come to terms with the fact that he cannot assimilate into a human community.

Although a clergyman, the Dean struggles with the idea that there is no God and consequently no objective principles to follow, which is why he clings to the delusion of God's providence that takes care of his life. Sartre would say that Jocelin finds it unbearable to exist in the full consciousness that the human condition involves existential solitude, and thus tries to underpin his unstable faith with an illusion that he has been entrusted with an extraordinary task. The idea that one is left alone with no principles to guide him in the world, that one has to create himself by means of continuous choosing and, what is more, bears the full responsibility for his deeds is indeed appalling. Jocelin believes in God's protection to the point of imagining that an angel was sent to comfort him in difficult moments. The illusion lets him avoid realizing and taking responsibility for his freedom of choice; the Dean hides in the cathedral, hides in the Church, hides

³⁵ N. Greene, *Jean-Paul Sartre. The Existentialist Ethics* (Ann Arbor, 1960), p. 46.

³⁶ J-P. Sartre, *Existentialism Is a Humanism* (Meridian, 1989), pp. 2-3.

³⁷ J-P. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (New York, 1992), p. 60.

³⁸ Greene, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

in Christianity, claiming that all his deeds aim at fulfilling God's will. The cathedral serves him as a 'coat' that he puts on himself;³⁹ his position of a dean, however, is just a cover for what he does, and what he does is trying to make sense of his own life. He tries to make his life meaningful by performing an extraordinary feat, and in order to accomplish that aim he needs to have some powerful defender, the one that everyone is subordinate to – God.

'It's senseless, you think. It frightens us, and it's unreasonable. But then – since when did God ask the chosen ones to be reasonable? [...] The net isn't mine, Roger, and the folly isn't mine. It's God's folly.'⁴⁰ Jocelin is deeply convinced that by choosing him, God has also given him the right to go beyond the conventional values in order to accomplish the task. In that way Jocelin avoids what is crucial in Sartre's philosophy and inextricably joined with the freedom of choice – responsibility. It is significant in Sartre's philosophy that man, free as he is, is at the same time responsible for all the choices he makes. Since man possesses himself, the accountability for his deeds, for his existence as such, is placed solely upon his own shoulders: "If, however, it is true that existence is prior to essence, man is responsible for what he is."⁴¹ Not only, like God, does Jocelin want to exceed ethics, but also like God he wants to be free from the need to explain the reasons for his choices. Jocelin involves masses of people in the process of fulfilling 'his mission,' bringing their lives to a ruin, and then refuses to take responsibility for the outcome of his actions, claiming that the whole venture was in fact 'God's work.' Jocelin lends to building the spire a divine authority that cannot be questioned and excuses himself by maintaining that his own role is that of a mere tool fulfilling the will of the Divine.⁴² According to Sartre, man tends to justify his decisions by claiming that they are indispensable consequences of his social role or that exceptional circumstances left him no other choice. This 'false consciousness,' however, cannot free man from the burden with which his whole existence is marked, the burden of finding his own values, making the world meaningful and bearing full responsibility for the results of his actions.

Physicality and the experience of spirituality are inseparable faculties of an individual, free and conscious self. Downgrading any of these two aspects of human condition results in the state of a distorted existence. Jocelin's peculiar attitude towards his own body is the aspect of his personality that strongly influences his manner of perceiving the external world.

The earth is a huddle of noseless men grinning upward, there are gallows everywhere, the blood of childbirth never ceases to flow, nor sweat in the furrow, the brothels are down there and drunk men lie in the gutter. There is no good thing in all this circle but

³⁹ Golding, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Sartre (1989), *op. cit.*, p. 3.

⁴² J. Costin, "The Spire: A Construction of Desire", [online:] http://openpdf.com/viewer?url=http://www.william-golding.co.uk/F_costin.pdf.

the great house, the ark, the refuge, a ship to contain all these people and now fitted with a mast.⁴³

The Dean seems afraid of humanness, his own in particular, and regards everything related to human condition as defiled and sinful, low and contemptible. Since physicality is despicable, the Dean struggles desperately to elevate himself to what he perceives as a more spiritual realm. Jocelin compares himself to Noah, considering himself to be the only one who is free from the earthly defilement, and as such the only one able to contact with the Absolute. Hardly ever does he leave the premises of the cathedral, and he observes the life of ordinary people only from the height of the spire, which makes him separated from the experience of everyday life of his congregation. The statement saying that the cathedral is 'like a coat' to Jocelin, seems then to have yet another meaning. A coat covers the body and conceals the physical appearance of man; Jocelin wants to be physically invisible to the external world and his newly assumed personality of a 'holy man' lets him treat himself as no longer a physical being.

Although the Dean finds himself unable to accept what is human and secular, his life is influenced by the secular to a large extent. His position is only due to a sinful relationship since Jocelin becomes a cathedral Dean thanks to his aunt, Alison, who as the king's mistress, managed to persuade the monarch to do her nephew a favor. What is more, it is Jocelin's promiscuous aunt who finances building the spire, hoping that in return she will be buried in the cathedral among the saints and nobility. The Dean abhors the idea of being associated with his aunt's misdeeds so he evades her, dismisses her letters and treats her in a condescending manner. And yet he accepts the money.⁴⁴ Jocelin lives in a delusional world that he has himself created. Never is he open to any rational argument and seems to reject the rational world in a similar way in which the rational world rejects him as 'God's chosen one.'

One of the pivotal moments in Jocelin's transformation comes when working in the spire he actually sees his mirror image in a metal sheet; that very moment the Dean is confronted with the reflection of his physical self:

Yet before the sun had gone, he found he was not alone with his angel. Someone else was facing him. This creature was framed by the metal sheet that stood against the sky opposite him. For a moment he thought of exorcism, but when he lifted his hand, the figure raised one too. So he crawled across the boards on hands and knees and the figure crawled towards him. He knelt and peered in at the wild halo of hair, the skinny arms and legs that stuck out of a girt and dirty robe. He peered in closer and closer until his breath dimmed his own image [...] He examined his eyes, deep in sockets over which the skin was dragged [...] the nose like a beak and now nearly as sharp, the deep grooves in the face, the gleam of teeth [...] Well Jocelin, he said soundlessly to the kneeling image; Well Jocelin, this is where we have come.⁴⁵

⁴³ Golding, *op. cit.*, pp. 106–107.

⁴⁴ Babb, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

⁴⁵ Golding, *op. cit.*, pp. 154–155.

Jocelin's transformation into a responsible self-aware existence begins when he faces his own physicality. His inability to recognize himself in a mirror reflection suggests the extent to which he has drifted away from what is human. On seeing his physical appearance, Jocelin realizes that although he has always avoided the secular, he has always participated in it by the sheer fact that he is a physical creature. It is not until several people lose their lives and Jocelin himself balances on the verge of lunacy that the Dean is finally able to exceed his previous narrow perspective, and limited understanding. He has striven for illumination from the very beginning of his work in the cathedral, but the knowledge he hopes to possess is different from the one he comes to finally. It is not spiritualization that the Dean attains, but the truth about the weakness of his human condition. Jocelin learns that: "it is not by turning back upon himself, but always by seeking, beyond himself, an aim which is one of liberation or of some particular realization, that man can realize himself as truly human."⁴⁶

As Jocelin's awareness of his physicality grows, his affinity with other human beings becomes apparent to him as well. Jocelin soon realizes that other people are indispensable to him so that he could reconcile himself to the truth about himself. According to Sartre's philosophy, apart from being a *being-for-himself*, man is at the same time a *being-for-others*: "[...] finally, in my essential being, I depend on the essential being of the Other [...] I find that being-for-others appears as a necessary condition for my being-for-myself."⁴⁷ Not only is therefore man responsible for himself, but since he is a constituent of humanity and his actions are causally linked with the actions of other human beings, he is also responsible for the existences of others: "And, when we say that man is responsible for himself, we do not mean that he is responsible only for his own individuality, but that he is responsible for all men."⁴⁸ Initially, Jocelin fails to recognize the fact that 'no man is an island' and behaves as if he was spiritually and mentally separated from his community. He also seems convinced that his elevated position of a God's servant has granted him a mandate to coerce people into performing certain acts without taking into consideration their own individual rights, plans and desires. Jocelin exploits people by treating them as his tools; he perceives them as elements of himself in the way that his pride preys on other people's fragility and imperfection. Only after having experienced the state of an absolute solitude does the Dean gradually realize other people's worth and importance. Not until the end of the novel does Jocelin appear to adopt the attitude of an existentialist proper: he realizes that no divine power can ever excuse him for his decisions; not only is he then himself responsible for his own deeds, but also for the other people whose lives are affected by his actions.

⁴⁶ Sartre (1989), *op. cit.*, p. 15.

⁴⁷ Sartre (1992), *op. cit.*, p. 322.

⁴⁸ Sartre (1989), *op. cit.*, p. 3.

Levinasian Self

A prominent representative of philosophy of dialogue, Emmanuel Levinas, studied relationships between individuals in great detail, regarding them as the central issue of philosophy. For him the *Me-You* relationship is of ontological and metaphysical nature and since the encounter with another man always refers to the ethical sphere of our existence, ethics, which regulates human relations, is the heart of philosophical thinking. It is the encounter with the Other that teaches us how to live ethically, how to exist in the manner appropriate for a human being. What influences one's existence in particular is an encounter with the *face* of the Other. The word 'face,' however, in the sense Levinas uses it, means more than just one's physical appearance; in French, which Levinas spoke, the word *visage* refers to "seeing and being seen."⁴⁹ One's face is their self-presence, which is performed by the gaze or appeal directed towards us. The philosopher claims that one's subjectivity is formed through his subjected-ness to the Other, who perceives him in a specific way. The Other's face questions him and demands that he answers the questions which are crucial to his existence; answering these questions shapes his existence: "The face I welcome makes me pass from phenomenon to being in another sense: in discourse I expose myself to the questioning of the Other, and this urgency of the response – acuteness of the present – engenders me for responsibility; as responsible I am brought to my final reality."⁵⁰ It is the presence of the Other that makes one's life meaningful, that reveals to man the truth about himself. What Levinas stresses in his writings is that one's responsibility for the Other is not a matter of a subjective decision nor does it depend on their commitment or lack of it, but is deeply rooted within one's human constitution: "The unlimited responsibility in which I find myself comes from the hither side of my freedom, from a 'prior to every memory' an 'ulterior to every accomplishment' from the non-present par excellence [...] prior to or beyond essence."⁵¹

The face of the Other calls one to responsibility which lets him understand the meaning of his existence and the existence of other entities; at the same time man is not free to reject this responsibility itself: "[...] it is not free to ignore this meaningful world into which the face of the Other has introduced it. *In the welcoming of the face the will opens to reason.*"⁵² The phenomenon is particularly well presented towards the end of *The Spire* in the scene in which Jocelin, who is lying on his deathbed, suddenly recognizes Father Adam, whom he previously depersonalized calling him 'Father Anonymous,' to be a distinctive person:

Father Adam raised his head. He smiled. Jocelin saw at once how mistaken they were who thought of him as faceless. It was just that what was written there, had been written small in a delicate calligraphy that might easily be overlooked unless one

⁴⁹ B. Waldenfels, "Levinas and the face of the other", [in:] *The Cambridge Companion to Levinas* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 64.

⁵⁰ E. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity* (Dordrecht, 1991a), p. 178.

⁵¹ E. Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence* (Dordrecht, 1991b), p. 10.

⁵² Levinas (1991a), *op. cit.*, p. 219.

engaged oneself to it deliberately, or looked perforce, as a sick man must look from his bed.⁵³

The Other escapes the understanding of one's self, speaks to it 'from above,' he demands that one go beyond his limited perspective and open oneself to the dialogue with the Other, because only in that way can one gain knowledge about oneself; only in that way does he exercise his human nature. On seeing the face of the Other, Jocelin suddenly feels the existential bond connecting him with other humans, which is not something established by man, but it is an element of his human condition. As his folly gives way to reason so that he is able to see his own life in the right light, the Dean realizes the ontological responsibility that he has been oblivious to through nearly all his life.

Levinas suggests that it is through the encounter with the other that man has access to transcendence; it is therefore impossible to enter into a relationship with God if one is alienated from human community: "The other is not the incarnation of God, but precisely by his face, in which he is disincarnate, is the manifestation of the height in which God is revealed."⁵⁴ Jocelin's awareness of the fact that only through other men can he get to know God, arises not only from recognizing Father Adam's face, but also from the painful realization that it is impossible to separate the sacred from the secular, which he was zealously trying to achieve, because these two spheres merge together in the form of man. It is not to God's messenger, but to the human face of the Other that he cries out for help as the 'dark angel' approaches to torment him. The Dean recognizes that it is the secular that he must come back to since the spiritual world is no longer safe, no longer predictable and no longer available to him.

Although a perfect parallel between philosophy and literature is impossible because of different written forms and language styles that they adopt, it is often the case that certain figures and events not only symbolize, but in fact personify ideas to the point that "image becomes concept and concept image."⁵⁵ Such an embodiment of a philosophical idea can be found in *The Spire*. Having recognized his physical self, Jocelin becomes aware of his existential union with other people and the responsibility for others, which is a part of his human condition. He realizes that as the cathedral lacks proper connection with the earth, he lacks connection with the physical world. His image of other people had been occluded by his mono-perspective 'vision' and 'enlightenment' which turned out to be blindness and ignorance. Saying that: "I was a protected man. I never came up against beldame" Jocelin admits that his post of a dean prevented him from meeting the face of the Other and thus facing the truth about himself; his 'protection' made him ignorant of the complexity of human nature.⁵⁶

⁵³ Golding, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

⁵⁴ Levinas (1991a), *op. cit.*, p. 79.

⁵⁵ R. Wellek and A. Warren, "Literature and Ideas", [in:] *Theory of Literature* (London, 1966), p. 123.

⁵⁶ Costin, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

Having collapsed after being persecuted by the crowd, Dean Jocelin regains consciousness back in his room in the cathedral. He no longer feels presence of either angel or devil, it is Father Adam who takes care of him now and who offers to “help him into heaven.” Jocelin, however, understands that he will have no entry to paradise unless he enters it together with the people he has ruined. Balancing between sanity and madness, the Dean has visions in which pictures from his past and supernatural images mingle into an irrational amalgamate; sacred and secular are no longer distinguishable to him as God seems to permeate the physical world on the one hand and humanity reveals its spiritual dimension on the other. Jocelin’s last words are “God! God! God!” and although it is unclear whether he addresses God or Father Adam, it seems that when the young priest lays the Host on the dead Jocelin’s tongue, the Dean is for the first time worthy of accepting it.

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„Rycerz wiary” patrzący w oblicze Innego: egzystencjalna metamorfoza Jocelina w powieści Williama Goldinga *Wieża*

Streszczenie

Celem niniejszego artykułu jest interpretacja historii głównego bohatera *Wieży* Williama Goldinga jako procesu egzystencjalnej przemiany z „rycerza wiary” Kierkegaarda w „bytdla-siebie” Sartre’a. Jocelin przeobraża się ostatecznie w „Ja” Levinasa, istotę świadomą faktu, że człowiek odnajduje siebie w twarzy Innego. Ów proces przemiany głównego bohatera przebiega w drodze zawiłych relacji międzyludzkich, zmagania się z własną wiarą i pragnieniami oraz bolesnej autorefleksji. W rezultacie dogłębnej przemiany osobowości i postawy światopoglądowej, Jocelin przestaje postrzegać siebie jako narzędzie Bożej woli i uzmysławia sobie swoją egzystencjalną samotność. Uświadamia sobie także fakt, że stanowi część społeczności ludzkiej, za którą z racji samego tylko bycia człowiekiem jest odpowiedzialny. Na różnych etapach swojej przemiany Jocelin ucieleśnia dwie skrajne koncepcje istniejące w ramach egzystencjalizmu: teistyczną i ateistyczną, które dotyczą takich zagadnień istnienia ludzkiego, jak samowiedza, wolna wola i determinizm, pokora i pycha, a także problem walki dobra i zła w człowieku.

Słowa kluczowe: egzystencjalizm, Inny, bycie, przemiana, wiara