

# ON THE EXISTENTIAL SECURITY IN VIEW OF THE GRECO-ROMAN CONCEPTIONS ON TRANSCIENCE

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**Abstract.** This article is the first of four that will be published on the subject of existential security in the National Security Studies. As it is defined by the authors, existential security is the conscious state of the limits of life (or the acceptance thereof) with physical and mental sufferings and other intellectually applicable dangers, in assessment of human transient nature (death). The end of life, considered as the source of trauma, stress, and anxiety, is born out of fear of nonexistence. Hence, the “existential security” is an offer to universalize the mental preparedness for this event, resting on the claims of proofs ranging from quantum physics to medicine and NDE (Near Death Experience). It seems through such perspective, that achieving the peace of mind on that matter is a better preparation than other, in view of death considered as material life’s end in hopeless predicament. The existential view of security is separate of theology, rejecting the one-dimensional interpretation of being, as it leans to, and still different from those propositions suggested by the quantum mechanics, neurobiology, psychiatry or noetics, and other conceptions, such as dualistic organization of being. In this view, the consciousness is in essence independent of brain (matter), as a life structure separate from the somatic covering, which does not have any individuality, since controlled by the mind (consciousness). However, the aim of the article is not to present the metaphysical proof of the existential security, since it rests on the presentation of various propositions of the philosophical mind. This is the reason why we present just general approaches towards the subject of death, in existential context of security, as seen in the ancient European philosophy. For this reason, the discussion focuses on problems of transience as explicitly described by orphic tradition, through the Pythagorean, Heraklitean, Socratic, Platonic, Aristotelian, Epicurean, Stoic and Neoplatonic philosophies.

**Keywords:** security, life, death, existential security, philosophy, ancient philosophy, ancient philosophy and security.

## INTRODUCTION

With this text, the authors are initiating the series of articles devoted to mental dimension of security.<sup>1</sup> The one which is rooted in the philosophy of existence and focuses on the peace of mind, peace of heart, and *ataraxia*, considered as a mechanism of hopelessness reduction, in line with the conscious understanding

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<sup>1</sup> The bibliography refers to the Polish editions and translations of the classical texts, as well as the books on the subject, and Polish authors, among the others (authors).

that the biological being predictably will be finalized by its impending end. The term „security”, considered in its general category, the authors are relating to the views known in ancient philosophy and those associated with the concept of *ataraxia*. Problem of security is in such a case summoned by the contemplation of death, as seen in the existential treatises aimed at equalizing the human will to live with the absurdity of its imminent end. Once we accept that security becomes a fundamental requirement of continuity, with a subjective experience including the general protection of being, although shackled by the tragedy of its imminent contraction, than we can consider it as the camouflage against the fears begotten by the consciousness of death. If this is the case – perhaps as in the perspective of Karl Jaspers – it becomes the edge for the existential fears, reduced by temporal “here and now”, dominating life. In this kind of perception security becomes a cautionary collusion for impermanence of life, as well as an offer for human memory re-enacting, on the living plain of experiencing and protecting especially the memories of the existence, once they start to fade. The existential security is, therefore, a firewall against the ills born out of impossibility to grasp the mystery of being, and at the same time, from fear of passing away into possible nothingness<sup>2</sup>. We could therefore come about with the idea – as Martin Heidegger has been saying – that for a human being, as the finite and temporal form, discontinuity of being is its essential quality because it refers to property of existence. Only by the token of its beginning (birth) it seems external, and the inevitability of end (death) makes it always a property potentially unfinished<sup>3</sup>. This in turn creates the temptation to use various mechanisms allowing the acceptance of such conscientious impermanence, as something that is imminent, yet unknown and threatening because of fundamental ignorance. Within all of mental processes, the existential relief is “born” (security), allowing for peaceful living in “now”, and projecting the future. Such planning is possible through efficiency of transformation “of a being towards death” into a mental reduction of fear because of death. This creates temporal feeling of duration, the spread between the beginning and end of time, with allocation for subjective life. Security born of such “mental temporality” allows for sensing that fear of nothingness is an empty concept, nothing more or less than a subjective death<sup>4</sup>.

In its existential form the existential security is an expression of concern about possibilities of existence and is based on the belief that our phenomenality within the world must be realized through the acts of free choice, since only those can give us any guarantee of authenticity. We are „thrown” into the world, and this implies, for the most, being in space defined by „others”, and hence our commonality

<sup>2</sup> K. Jaspers, *Sytuacje graniczne*, transl. M. Skwieciński, [in:] R. Rudziński, *Jaspers*, Wiedza Powszechna, Warszawa 1978, p. 202.

<sup>3</sup> M. Heidegger, *Bycie i czas*, transl. B. Baran, PWN, Warszawa 1994, p. 343.

<sup>4</sup> Ibidem, p. 356.

and necessity to play daily roles and doing our duties require security, peace and balance between the diverse energies, or actors of the theater of life. Feeling secure gives us illusory perception of presence in subjective spectacle of "personal" phenomenality<sup>5</sup>. For the French writer and philosopher Albert Camus this is perhaps the reason why the permanence of such predicaments forces us to invent the means of consolation that makes up for the feeling of absence, in face of its end, in such a way "as if no one knew that it exists"<sup>6</sup>. And death throws a shadow on any existence without exception, hence running away from the thoughts about finality of life does not change this process, although irrationally suggests that this fading away applies only to the other beings. This illusion is rooted in experiencing and feeling of happiness, sadness, worries, love, and so on, that is everything that assesses the qualities of no other, but our own life. Our personal life of own experiences is accordingly different from life of other persons. Their end does not apply to process of our life, as long as we exist. Therefore, our own conscious ability to live, gives us the proof about permanence of existence, and security is its requirement, since while we are alive the death does not refer to us, but to those who are already gone. Moreover, the cause of existential security is found at the level of our perception, yet this, what is not controlled by our awareness stays beyond our experience, beyond consciousness of transience<sup>7</sup>.

The human life depiction in its teleological perspective has been emerging through evolvement of discussion on the meaning of life and, as it pertains to our subject matter, those interests have had opened various considerations on relation between a being and its transience. The lack of agreement about the reasons for a temporary and accidental character of the existence has led to the emergence of conceptions advocating the quest for viable continuity of conscious life, also in the afterlife. This is accounted by the hypothesis also present in various myths recounting a dual form of a human being. There was an acceptance, on one hand, that a human being is a body (with its diminishing matter of nature), and on the other hand, is a spiritual being - perpetual and endless. The ideas born of such dimension described immortality of the soul, and within common disputes on the universal feature of life (temporal or eternal) has inspired various thinkers to search for facts proving the endless dimension of human existence. In a sense, the disagreements about the subject of immortality have become a civilizational deliberation, without a justifiable claim to victory by either side in opposition. Neither of the groups can claim compelling evidences for statements presented for or against particular view.

<sup>5</sup> M. Heidegger, *Budować, mieszkać, myśleć*, transl. K. Michalski, Czytelnik, Warszawa 1977, p. 322 & next.

<sup>6</sup> A. Camus, *Mit Syzyfa i inne eseje*, transl. J. Guze, Wydawnictwo Literackie MUZA SA, Warszawa 1999, p. 69.

<sup>7</sup> Op. cit., p. 145 & next.

This debate continues and is still current. Moreover, neither of the groups originating in the past has managed, with a proper exploration into the future, to establish a satisfactory answer to a mystery of transience, even though the clinical death experience discovered in the 1970s of last century seemed to throw a new light on the "life after death". In the descriptions of clinical death (abbreviated as the "NDE") the most obvious are the psychological effects that determine changes in life hierarchies and own priorities. In the place of typical „life values” (money, material goods, success, power, social prestige, etc.), the "higher values" take a prime (love for others, altruism and willingness to help, empathy, etc.). Next to it, the individuals that "touched the netherworld" achieved surprising level of the existential calm, one that usually exhibits lack of fear towards the unknown (especially the death) and longing for that experienced „touch”. And very often next to it, there is also coinciding feeling of happiness towards the useful life, rooted in emotion of love towards the people and the world. In addition, the clinical death does away with the dilemmas about the existence of God. According to the most of the descriptions, there appear a path (a tunnel, bright yet not blinding warm light, movement in both direction of the energetic forms) leading to the presence of Being (full of love and forgiveness), that surpasses human ability to understand its essence. It should be however also mentioned that there is a small percent of descriptions (roughly little over 10%) telling of a dreadful experience during the „NDE”. Of course we should also remember next to the "NDE" that the existence of the other world, from beyond of our sensual dimensions, is also pondered upon at the level of theoretical physics. Its conclusions, currently viable, state that there is a possibility for existence of the universe where our own world and space is only a part of it<sup>8</sup>. There is of course a long list of discussions on the subject matter from the ancient times until now; some of it will be considered in our following articles on the subject. Now let us concentrate however on the ancients.

### Roots of the ancient cognizance on finality of existence

The first mention of the immortality concept in Europe can be found – as some believe – in the Greek myth of Zagreus (son of Zeus and Persiphone), who was killed by Titans (with his body dismembered) by the order of jealous Hera. However, Athena Pallas dissenting Hera's command saved still beating heart of Zagreus and gave it to his father. The Zeus swallowed the heart and in conception of Semele (daughter of the founder of Thebes, Kadamos) gave a life to another deity: Dionysius. The father of the Greek gods in vengeance of Zagreus's death - although he was to be

<sup>8</sup> See for ex.: P. Van Lommel, *Wieczna świadomość. Naukowa wizja „życia po życiu”*, transl. M. Woźniak-Diederer, Wyd. ArtVita, Warszawa 2010. See also: M. Kaku, *Hiperprzestrzeń*, trans. E.L. Łokas, B. Bieniok, Prószyński i S-ka, Warszawa 1995.

the ruler of the world - smote the Titans with lightning, and from their ashes created the man. This story was very strongly influential in the emergence of the specific orphic philosophical-mystical interpretation of life.

In the Greek classics, we find this story centered on the legendary Orpheus (in myth of Orpheus and Eurydice). According to the adepts of Orphism, the human nature is of a dual essence. In the human nature the two components collide – mortal and sensual Dionysian element, with the immortal and titanic element (soul). What is yet more important, especially since the VIII-VI century BCE, the development of the Orphism rooted its theses in the descriptions of the struggles between the good and evil. This led to conception of the world beyond the grave (as the place of punishment for wrongs done in earthly life) and transmigration of the soul (*metempsychosis*). Humans, as sinners but not oriented towards the evil, transmigrate through different bodies, as long as their deeds are not saturated with the goodness. Only with the ascension towards the highest quality of existence, a virtuous man can cut the chain of corporeal life and allow the soul (*psyche*) the reunion with God. It is because of the special acceptance of death there was an ethics born that endorsed and taught the adepts virtue of good and mutual love.

The Orphism greatly influenced the wisdom of Pythagoreans (VI-V c. BCE), who believed that the source of the human unhappiness is the state of incarnation (body) stopping the immortal soul from connecting with the Creator. Therefore, they believed that the worst enemy of the godly nature of psyche was the abuse of sensual freedom, understood as prone to indulgence in food, drinks, and sex. It was then postulated that those schooling in mysteries accept ascetic living (but not forgetting of the body), and very important cleansing meditation techniques, especially the philosophical contemplation. There are many legends that grew based on life of Pythagoras, originator and master of this school of Greek philosophy. Some relate of his supernatural abilities. This included the ability to communicate with the animals (their souls) or the ability to separate own essence (*psyche*) from the body and presence in two different faraway places – Kroton and Metapontion<sup>9</sup>.

Aristotle who was rather skeptical of the Pythagorean tradition, as it was described by the Pythagoreans (among the others, Philoas, Eurythos and their followers: Xenophilos and Polymastos), and claimed in his *Protreptikos* that it was Pythagoras who fashioned model of life focusing on the philosophical contemplations. This was the path towards the substantial ideal of existential security, and happiness at the same time. According to the Pythagoreans - the breakdown of material being has no indication of tragedy; therefore, it cannot be an excuse for the fear of passing away, since the soul carries a reincarnation seed (*metempsychosis*). What disappears

<sup>9</sup> About the special abilities of Pythagoras wrote Diogenes Laertios in: *Żywoty i poglądy słynnych filozofów*, transl. I. Krońska, K. Leśniak, W. Olszewski, PWN, Warszawa 1984, pp. 472-473, 476, 489.

has no existential reality. The death refers only to the body; the soul is submerged within the beings escapes control by the law of nature<sup>10</sup>.

The contemporary of Pythagoras, Heraclitus of Ephesus considered the problem of death in reference to a constant change seen as the element of natural order. The philosopher explained that the symbolic representation of reality is a river, in which everything passes and nothing stays forever the same. It is impossible to enter the same river stream twice, since it carries already different waters. In this perspective, death is equivalent to imagining of harmony underlining change in every biological phenomenon. The nature is a constant death and rebirth; it is the same being but always altered. We cannot even argue that our existence is in anyway a constant, since "we are and we are not, at the same time"<sup>11</sup>. The change is the only truth. Even if the being seems to have no end, its duration is an illusion, since there is no "being", only "becoming". In such a process of constant exchange of the phenomena and oscillation of things, death is the safety mechanism, not only the regulatory order of nature but also the manifestation of reason in nature itself<sup>12</sup>.

### **The atrophy of existence in perspectives of classical Greek philosophy**

Socrates did not agree with the Pythagorean view of apparent transcendental character of existence, since, according to him, there are no obvious proofs of such possibility. Death – an important component of life – could mean nothingness similar to sleep without a dream, or „sort of transfiguration and movement of the soul to other place"<sup>13</sup>. Moreover, „whether this is an improvement no one knows for sure - maybe only God"<sup>14</sup>. For this reason, neither of the two states of being (life and death) should scare any human. The first one is experiential and does not signify anything scary, the second one as a transfiguration into "deep sleep" only suggests a moment of full rest and in this sense seems desirable and perhaps "profitable" for the man. Hence, „if death - says Socrates - is somewhat similar, it is my full gain. Its time will seem nothing longer than one night"<sup>15</sup>. Each of those existential states is healthy for the people, since suggesting a „higher good" above the life of degradation and falsehood<sup>16</sup>. Death ending this falsehood was to be a way leading into a new and higher form of existence. The recognition of such a truth was for Socrates

<sup>10</sup> See: Diogenes Laertios, *Żywoty i poglądy...*, op. cit., pp. 471-494.

<sup>11</sup> J. Legowicz (edit.), *Filozofia starożytnej Grecji i Rzymu*, PWN, Warszawa 1970, p. 77.

<sup>12</sup> Based on: Diogenes Laertios in: *Żywoty i poglądy...*, op. cit., pp. 518-523.

<sup>13</sup> See: Platon, *Obrona Sokratesa*, (in:) *Uczta. Eutyfron. Obrona Sokratesa. Kriton*, transl. W. Witwicki, PIW, Warszawa 1992, p. 129.

<sup>14</sup> Ibidem, p. 132.

<sup>15</sup> Ibidem, p. 130.

<sup>16</sup> In: ibidem, p. 131.



a boon. It allowed thinking about death with serenity and hope, especially since any evil would not touch the *psyche*. In this sense a man could have a faith, that “the gods will not leave its affairs alone.”<sup>17</sup>

The most outstanding student of Socrates – Plato, clearly accepting already the duality of human being – body and soul (energy and matter), stated in *Phaedo* and later in *Philebus* that the existence in the perceived world is the result of spiritual harmony. In this form, corporality is more than the necessary evil; rather, it is the most important good. Because we can exist in the form given by God on the day of the birth, we must do all, in this “trapped” in an imperfect body form, to let the eternal soul have its affirmation, which is confirmed in deeds of virtuous activity. The virtuous deeds secure the quantum existence of the eternal soul. This implies that the primacy of spiritual experience over the sensory cognition is coincidental with the directly available to our perception acceptance of general existence<sup>18</sup>. In this perspective death becomes a necessary tool to resolve conflicts arising from the feeling of alienation between the soul and body, and the phenomenon bringing the *psyche* real liberation. The end of mortal life is good for human being and towards the end desirable in view of the eternal soul. Therefore, the fear of leaving the mortal live can occur when a person is unaware of his own being, or when the senses give the leading significance in the diagnosis of reality.

Aristotle has adopted the Platonic interpretation of the soul as the principle of life (animal), however, he has made the ontological interpretation of its importance. He did consider the soul – similarly like his predecessor – as having the power of forming matter in accordance with its intended purpose and teleological sense of the whole of creation. In the observation of the world (nature), he saw the chance to explain the mysteries of life. The soul, which is the form (but also the substance, since both are the prerequisite for all existence), determines matter that cannot do without organic coating. Hence, through this identification, it is possible to know the variety and complexity of the environment and the human race. His concept of immortality of the psyche (similar to Platonic metaphysics) is only in fragments preserved from his work considering the existence of soul, entitled *Eudemus*, included in the so-called esoteric writings of Aristotle. In this work he divided anthropological dual nature (man is fusing the soul and body) along with the pessimistic assessment of human life itself (although that exists, however, does not recognize it all to the end)<sup>19</sup>. However, in the *Eudemos* the Platonic interpretation of soul as the harmony of the body was disproved. His new version of the proof for the immortality of the human beings was based on the separation of the two phenomena, namely,

<sup>17</sup> Ibidem, p. 132.

<sup>18</sup> In: Platon, *Fileb*, transl. W. Witwicki, Wydawnictwo „Rectio”, Warszawa 1991, pp. 62-68.

<sup>19</sup> In: Arystoteles, *O duszy*, przekł. K. Leśniak, PWN, Warszawa 1965, Ks. I, Frg. 402a; & also: K. Leśniak, *Arystoteles*, Wiedza Powszechna, Warszawa 1989, pp. 184-185, 188.

separation of harmony identified as the quality (individual being), from the soul understood as the phenomenon of substance (existing without body).

In accordance with the idea that the quality and substance belong to different categories, the soul and harmony cannot be the same. In addition, separation of both concepts had a purpose of showing that harmony just like any other phenomenon had its opposite (disharmony). Whereas the soul could not present in the physical world its antonym, both in the world of concepts and as well as of facts, since, neither with the help of senses nor mind, its form can be described, and at the same time, cannot be denied. The ground for this view was supposedly conceived based on the relations of "many witnesses", who noticed a presence of Aristotle's student - Eudemos (the astronomer and first known historian of theology) - in Stagira (today's FYR of Macedonia) after his death in the battle of Metapontion (today's Italy).

The content of *Eudemos* deviating from the consistent and logical system of the whole Aristotelian philosophy, met in ancient times with varying degrees of acceptance. For example, the skeptical Cicero of Rome (I c. BCE) considered the divagations of such description as the manifestation of the wandering mind of Aristotle, incredulous to accept that the "a man of an unusual, almost divine genius" consciously would be able to "lead others into a deception"<sup>20</sup>. It is worth mentioning that even before that, another sceptic - Pyrrho of Elis (IV/III c. BCE) was arguing for refraining from whatever the judgments we might have about our reality, patiently accepting any adversities, on the fact that death and life is a meaningless, but differently perceived acceptance of the time being. When asked, well then, why he himself does not die in such a case, he would answer that "for life it makes no difference", since his security relies on good deeds and search for the truth<sup>21</sup>.

John Philoponus of Alexandria (Vth c. CE) critically analyzing the Aristotelian thought, in his commentary to it stated that the Aristotelian interpretation of the soul was nothing like phenomenon described in philosophy, and in the harmonious world. The soul – according to Philoponus – not being „either the beauty, strength, nor health” that are necessary for the nature's harmony could not be the obvious element of nature, and this rationally thinking would exclude it from the groups counted within the earthly harmony, that is the entities recognizable by man.<sup>22</sup> His contemporary, Simplicius underlined this existential pessimism of Aristotle, stating that the state of life is not that gracious to human beings. He therefore suggested that accordingly, the "best for everyone, both men and women, would be not to be born and next best from amongst the possible to achieve: to die after the birth as fast

<sup>20</sup> In: M. T. Cicero, *Pisma filozoficzne*, przekł. W. Kornatowski, t. 1, PWN, Warszawa 1960, s. 259.

<sup>21</sup> As in: B. Andrzejewski, M. Moryń, A. Przyłębski, *Mały leksykon filozofów*, Dom Wydawniczy „Rebis”, Poznań 1994, p. 107; & also: L. Joachimowicz, *Sceptycyzm grecki*, PIW, Warszawa 1972, p. 64.

<sup>22</sup> As in: K. Leśniak, *Arystoteles*, op. cit., p. 140.



as possible”<sup>23</sup>. In a similar fashion Proclus (Vth c. CE) in the commentary to the Plato’s Republic concluded that Aristotle was surely a propagator of the theory of ideas. Hence, he was trying to prove that the Aristotelian understanding of soul’s eternity is simply a consequence of transmigration of the soul. Accordingly, the earthly life was only a stage in soul’s existence. After new experience, it would return to its proper place of domicile somewhere in the afterworld<sup>24</sup>.

For Aristotle the death does not have any privileged place in nature. He treated it as one of the many phenomena among the other facts subjected to the need of clarification (categorization). It falls into the category of one of the six types of movements, and is termed “deceasing”. This was understood, next to the “growth”, as the limit of the all states of existence. Just as the “growth” means the beginning of a being, the “deceasing” is just the end. Unlike other movements (i.e.: the increment of qualitative changes, lose, change in quality and change of place) the beginning and the end of something described closed process of life in any form<sup>25</sup>. The death however, was also the subject of other inquiries. It was after all, the borderline of the last place, beyond which there are no particularities, and in which every part becomes generality. In this sense, the end was also “the purpose of every object”, it was also both, the “substance” and “essence” of everything. The essence of end – according to the Aristotle – rested in our inability to recognize anything by anybody. Consequently, it meant disappearance of object, as the source of epistemology, and the knowing self. Although, the „end”, just like the „beginning”, has many meanings, there are more interpretations of the „end”. Hence, the “beginning” is also a certain “end”, but not every „end” can be a „beginning”<sup>26</sup>. If we remember however that the Aristotelian interpretation of the eternity of the soul, as presented in *Eudemos*, such approach towards existence does not exclude the mutual penetration of the beginning and the end of the human beings.

## The Hellenic interpretations of the end of existence

For the Epicureans the visible life was the highest of values. Unlike an earlier hedonism of Arystyp of Cyreneia, Epicureanism was the doctrine thoroughly impregnated with the intellectualism and it rejected trivial understanding of pleasure that was important as a concept to the hedonists. The pleasure was no longer associated with the amusement, but became a search for impressions and experiences of the eager for knowledge mind. Along with this view, death in the concept of Epicurus was

<sup>23</sup> As in: K. Leśniak, op. cit., p. 141.

<sup>24</sup> Op. Cit. p. 142.

<sup>25</sup> As in: Arystoteles, *Kategorie*, (in:) Op. Cit., *Dzieła wszystkie*, transl. K. Leśniak, T. 1, PWN, Warszawa 1990, p. 61.

<sup>26</sup> Op. Cit.

understood as the state of complete disappearance of any “sensations”, hence it does not describe anything that could be discussed with any anxiety about the loneliness of a man facing nothingness. After all, the existence of good or evil was associated with “feeling”, that is, material experiences of own stimulus as assigned towards the substantive existence. For those convinced that death is simply a “nothing”, was supposed to foster better appreciation for life itself and lead to the abandonment of all desires for immortality, since it promotes false expectations from non-empirical endless dimension of the time. It indicates that there could be nothing terrible in life for someone who realizes that the ‘termination’ of life is part of the drama of being. Indeed, such a philosophy emphasized that it is the prominence of concern about passing away that creates unnecessary fear of death. It is passing away, that creates the pain of existence not because of the obvious end of being, but the affliction caused by waiting for the end of being.

After all, if one is not confused with peace in presence of life, the feeling of anxiety from arrival of unknown - death, becomes unjust. Therefore, Epicurus concluded that “we are not concerned with death, the most terrible of the woes, because when we exist, death is not present, and when death appears, then we are gone. Death has no connection with either the living or dead; that does not apply, since you no longer exist”<sup>27</sup>. The acceptance of transience as the finality of any human activity was attuned to Epicure’s idea of the soul, considered material (composed of harmonious, ideal, round and smooth atoms) and its immortality was noticeable in forms of molecules existing in harmony with the human body. After death, human being was gone forever and its soul’s atoms would scatter and perish in nothingness. According to this, there could not be any after death expiation (the main source of fear before the advent of death), and the penance (if we can consider it sensible). “We were born once – states the philosopher – we will not be born twice. Life whither and never ever comes back. One puts away the joy, not being sure of tomorrow and in a meantime life is absorbed by sorrow, and each one of us is enslaved by it”<sup>28</sup>. There is only one existence, and as long as it is, we should use its abundance, but what is the most dangerous are its pleasures if they do not coincide with the intellectual recognizance of our entourage. Especially since, the intellectual experiences are safe for our health and pleasant, but also the source of real happiness in life of humans, the guarantee for *ataraxia*. It is therefore, the good attitude that is the safe haven for our existential experiences.

The middle point for security, in view of life and its end, was based on the Stoic’s (their main activity centered between the IV c. B.C.E. and III c. C.E.), constatation that the balance and strong spirit means letting go of one’s passions, in being active in accordance with the law of nature and reason. From this perspective, the end

<sup>27</sup> As in: Diogenes Laertios, *Żywoty i poglądy...*, op. cit., p. 645.

<sup>28</sup> Cyt. in: M.A. Krąpiec, *Ja – człowiek*, Redakcja Wydawnictw KUL, Lublin 1991, p. 435.

of life was considered as the universal phenomena of nature, whereas the passing of the existence was the effect of rational cosmic order. In face of harmony and rational necessity of cosmos, they postulated calmness of mind, peace, and indifference to pleasures and suffering. Only this attitude was for the human being conducive of providence and necessity of death. The death itself – similarly like in Plato's philosophy – the Stoics considered a phenomenon leading men to freedom from the evils and sufferings, that are determined by carnal existence. Hence, keeping in mind the constancy of evil and suffering in life they proclaimed the ethics of the, so-called, free choice that included favorite view of suicide<sup>29</sup>. In accordance with this view, death seen as the natural and indifferent course of nature (logos, cosmos) was rationalized in its universality, and for some was almost a blessing, for it was "bringing" back the state of *ataraxia* (serenity, impassivity) existing before the birth. For the proper distancing of oneself from fearing death, the Stoics – in a similar fashion as Aristotle – would recommend contemplation, which was supposed to be an effective method of overcoming the fear of demise of own temporal body and strengthening the mind (especially common sense) necessary for submission to judgment of fate.

### The Roman view on existential disappearance

In Rome, the problem of death had a special recognition found in the epicurean philosophy of Tullius Lucretius Carus (I c. BCE). In his view, the human transience was considered a natural phenomenon determined by materialistic atoms, with a heterogeneous soul determined by indifferent to human world gods. This passivity of transcendental beings left the humans in exposures to existential anxiety and suffering in life. Weighing the unrest attributed to existence Lucretius was trying to release human reasoning from the fear of answering the question of what awaits them after death. In the third book of his great poem *The Rerum Natura* – "On the nature of things", he came to the conclusion that an explanation of the essence of the soul (and spirit, as a reasonable and subtlest part of it) is used to understand the mystery of temporal being<sup>30</sup>. The nature of the soul is created by the specific material structure, determined by a set of extremely small, smooth, and spherical atoms, emerging and dying along with particles of the body. In this perspective, fear of man facing death is an illusion and stems out of ignorance. It becomes a reason for a wandering spirit, that is - the blemished mind, which is supposed to be the „helmsman of life”, yet plays a prank on people not understanding the atomic theory of nature expressed by its harmony, which is also visible in the exchange of generations.

<sup>29</sup> Roman Tokarczyk calls it an ethics of „open doors” in: *Prawa narodzin, życia i śmierci. Etyczne problemy współczesności*, Wydawnictwo Lubelskie, Lublin 1984, pp. 255-256.

<sup>30</sup> See: T. Lucretius Carus, *O naturze rzeczy*, Ks. III, transl. G. Żurek, PIW, Warszawa 1994.

The senselessness of human opposition towards this balance leads astray our thinking, as expressed in the belief systems about the existence of life in more than the temporal dimensions. Here is a man devoid of evidence on the possibility of posthumous existence trying to in some deluded desires to extend the duration of the existence fueling the same fears and frustrations, instead of getting rid of them.

Therefore, as is suggested, it is expendable and infertile thoughts of immortality that does not allow us to properly enjoy what is offered by tangible reality. Although understandably this tends to be a treatments that seeks to dismiss the upcoming moment of transience – as far as it is in accordance with the will of a person, especially if she leads a happy life (buoyant, creative and joyful). Therefore, the struggle with the disease and suffering makes sense, because they are the perpetrators of death<sup>31</sup>. However, clinging to life no matter the situation and the scale of the pain of existence is impossible and denies the reasonable human a natural existence, with implication for a search of meaningful deeds that are realistic and feasible. Life that is devoid of securing the needs, including the rational interpretation of one's own existence becomes by this intellectual collapse "empty and incoherent"<sup>32</sup>.

Paraphrasing Lucretius: „O mortal, what are you so dependent on, dwelling on dark despair, whining, and crying over death? If your life was so good to you, and passed, and its deeds were not in vain (...) its meaning stays. Why don't you depart like a satiated feaster and with calmness, you fool, accept blissful respite? If it's gone with the wind, everything you've lived through, and you are disgusted with life, why do you want to add something to it, something in vain, what once again would turn into waste, and hence you don't finish this life and what makes you sick?"<sup>33</sup>. Such suicidal tendency described favorably in this passage illustrates in general terms the attitude of the Romans towards death. This is why, according to Lucretius, both life and death is positive, if they are measured with appropriate criteria of the free choice. In addition, it may seem as a paradox, even killing of oneself is positive if dictated by the act of free choice, and therefore is "friendly" and acceptable. This act of free will cannot be subjected to someone else's contempt because it enriches human experience and strengthens our rights to self-determination. As it is related by Hieronim in his *Chronicles*, written in the third century after Christ, Lucretius faithful to that libertarian rule, in his forties committed suicide (apparently due to the "madness of drink of love"). This fact gave him a great recognition among some writers and poets, including for example in Poland, poet Jan Kochanowski (mentioning this in his *Elegies*)<sup>34</sup>.

<sup>31</sup> See op. cit. Frg. 460, 470, 473, p. 127.

<sup>32</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>33</sup> Ibidem, Frg. 930, 940, p. 139.

<sup>34</sup> In: G. Żurek, *Wstęp*, [in:] T. Lucretius. Carus, *O naturze rzeczy*, op. cit., s. 26.

The phenomenon of passing away was also present in the works of Roman Stoics (Seneca, Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius), for which the basic task of philosophy was such a human endeavor as to strengthen the courage against the life's opposite side or the trauma of dying<sup>35</sup>. Lucius Anneus Seneca (I century CE) saw death as an expression of equality of all people<sup>36</sup> and the effect of the obvious Justice of nature to be placed on the social environment<sup>37</sup>. As far as the fate distributes all goods unjustly and some become the subjects, some others the rulers, the death will do away evenly with all those differences. Consequently, on one hand, it is a boundary beyond which no one has to take the orders of others, on the other, it becomes a moment taking away any feelings of indigence. From this perspective death seems to be the contrast allowing for proper experiencing the feeling of love towards life. After all, the boundary of life allows the concentration on existence itself<sup>38</sup>.

The limits of existence allows for the proper examinations of one's own deeds, that is the main measure of suitability and quality of a human being, evaluated from the perspective of contribution to life within temporal existence. Its short term requires serenity saturated with calmness (*ataraxia*), and adjoining human relations should be based on virtue. „Very shortly our breath will wither away - says Seneca. However, as long as we are breathing, and in presence of people, let's behave with civility. Let us not terrorize anyone and endanger no one, let us laugh at losses, sorrows, wrongs, insults, mockery, and let us honorably live through any opposites. Since we will not even notice when death arrives”<sup>39</sup>. After all, the worse than death and what happens after it, is when „eyes look at the corpse with repulsion and hate”<sup>40</sup>.

For Epictetus (I/II c. CE) lack of knowledge about the essence of being within the meaningless existence was a proof of importance for the exchange of generations and consequences of deeds. As far as the nature is concerned the individual existence is only important in general scheme of things, it is not autonomic but the universal project of life of the outmost importance to which human existence cannot be a prism but part of longer chains, moving the circle of life<sup>41</sup>. It varies, of course, given the impotence of people in surpassing the limiting boundaries of natural law. At the same time, defeated by own consequential existential fears. On the one hand, awareness of one's own existence and transience, and, on the other hand, ani-

<sup>35</sup> L.A. Seneca *Myśli*, transl. A. Stabryła, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków 1987, pp. 352-353, 449-450.

<sup>36</sup> Idem, *Listy moralne do Lucyliusza*, transl. W. Kornatowski, PWN, Warszawa 1961, pp. 242-243, 440.

<sup>37</sup> Idem, *O zjawiskach natury*, [in:] *Myśli*, op. cit., p. 553.

<sup>38</sup> Idem, *O pocieszeniu do Marcji*, [in:] *Dialogi*, transl. L. Joachimowicz, Wydawnictwo Pax, Warszawa 1998, p. 440-441.

<sup>39</sup> Idem, *O gniewie*, [in:] *Myśli*, op. cit., p. 127.

<sup>40</sup> Idem, *Myśli*, op. cit., p. 396.

<sup>41</sup> In: Epiktet, *Diatryby. Encheiridion*, przekł. L. Joachimowicz, PWN, Warszawa 1961, p. 106.



malistic instinct to live, creates chain of fears undermining human integrity. These chains cannot be broken, only loosened. Therefore, the only notable manifestation of understanding and an emanation of reason, leading towards the natural order, must be through distancing oneself from life, even by rejecting it when necessary reasons. The human value of decency should be measured by the symmetry of the human capacity to part with a life with dignity and without regrets<sup>42</sup>.

According to Mark Aurelius (II c. C.E.), who was especially interested in death, the end was one of the phenomenon associated with the will of nature, the one that could not be held in contempt or without the love of harmony. Death, the same as birth is nature's secret<sup>43</sup>, which by allowing for disappearances of senses, drives, and thoughts, is a proof of natural harmony and primal justice determining understating of transience without disregard, loosely or hatefully. Hiding or downplaying the fact of our transient nature cannot be accepted since it irrationally falsifies the existential role of death, which is not only necessary for the exchange of generations, but also for the remedy and a method of finding oneself and the source of our memory, beginning to immortalize oneself. The terminal (final) moment of life is a testimony and example of our temporality, for people having very significant meaning rooted in epitaphs<sup>44</sup>. According to Mark Aurelius, during the moment of death soul leaves the material body, and this moment is similar to the moment of birth. The birth means coming into life, and death, coming out of life, where every being has to find its place<sup>45</sup>. What we experience meanwhile, and what could not be avoided in life, has to be tolerated. The personal life is only a residue, of what we come across to know as personal interrelations with various consequences. Even if we do not like some of those incidental meetings, we have to respect all, and help all, and when necessary to defend. In this residue of life, there are people close to us, of similar virtues, that energize with various emotions and beautiful experiences, yet giving pain when departing<sup>46</sup>. Only in time of departure when death touches us (of friends and ones we love) the absurd and hard to accept judgment of life, that lies in a shadow of its end. It's not a big conciliation (as it seems), when we realize that departure of the close ones make our life empty, not giving a reason to continue living. Surrounding oneself with inanimate objects – whatever their value and demand – will not do away with the loneliness, or similar feeling when we have to be among the people that we dislike, what turns us into something less. Those two states are close to the vegetative states, but are worse than the one presented by nature. Our

<sup>42</sup> Ibidem, pp. 106-107.

<sup>43</sup> Marek Aureliusz, *Rozmyślenia*, transl. M. Reitera, PWN, Warszawa 1988, p. 33.

<sup>44</sup> Ibidem, p. 104.

<sup>45</sup> Ibidem, p. 105.

<sup>46</sup> Ibidem, p. 106.

common conciliation is a belief that when we say goodbye to this earth we meet somewhere else on the other side again, with those of the similar nature to ours"<sup>47</sup>.

The Neo-Platonism (III c. CE) it seems was the last ancient philosophical school that considered the problem of human immortality, in view of the existence of the soul. Plotinus, basing his philosophy on that of Plato, added to the idealistic doctrine a concept of emanation. It was explaining the origin and evolution of the world through different stages of change from the most ancient energy of being. As Plotinus believed, the human soul is only a middle man between the material and immaterial. Every being, according to him, has its source in the absolute Oneness that is the beginning and the end of everything. The soul in the ecstasy of reaching the cleansing virtues in ascetic formulas getting closer to the Absolut is the goal of life. The virtues available as the instruments of human activities can be used if the moral discipline is kept, what allows the connection.

The moral discipline, just like the intellectual one (reaching for the absolute truth), during the existence plays a role of a compass directing away from overused sensory sphere, to lead the soul towards the spiritual evolution. The evil evolves out of the matter that never allows the soul to fully understand its own essence and becoming. This *hylemorphism* being the fundament for earthly being, forbids the humans from reaching the bliss of peace in Oneness, and brings despair of natural discord. Therefore, dying allows the escape from the temporal pain and ends the transfiguration of the material being into the spiritual one, leading to transcendental Absolut. The material essence of life does not allow the existence of good people; we are nothing else but the emanation of the evil, that in different ways strive to ascend towards the Absolut, the beginning and the goal of everything<sup>48</sup>. The criteria of transfiguration of evil into goodness, evolves from virtuous deeds and asceticism.

The Neo-Platonism, founded by the Plotinus' teacher, Ammonius Saccas living at the turn of II and III c. CE, was always an important factor influencing the evolvement of the intellectual tradition of Christianity. It was evolving within the philosophical constataions of Plotinus and his students. This school was a bridge connecting the Greek philosophy - especially the idealism of Plato – with evolving new Christian philosophy, dominant in the Medieval ages throughout the Europe, stimulated by known in Spain Persian/Islamic and Jewish ideas. However interesting, this will be the subject of the next part of this topic, aimed in the following article to present the face of existential security in the Medieval times of Europe.

<sup>47</sup> Ibidem, p. 105.

<sup>48</sup> J. Legowicz, *Zarys historii filozofii. Elementy doksografii*, Wiedza Powszechna, Warszawa 1983, pp. 115-116.

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### **WOKÓŁ BEZPIECZEŃSTWA EGZYSTENCJALNEGO, CZYLI GRECKO-RZYMSKIE POGLĄDY NA PRZEMIJANIE**

**Abstrakt.** Artykuł jest pierwszą z czterech planowanych publikacji poświęconych bezpieczeństwu egzystencjalnemu, które jest pojmowane jako świadomy stan ograniczania (lub znoszenia) cierpienia i innych zagrożeń umysłowych związanych z przemijalnością (śmiercią) życia. Kres istnienia jest zatem traktowany jako źródło traumy, stresu oraz niepokoju zrodzonego z obaw przed niebytem. Bezpieczeństwo egzystencjalne jest więc ofertą upowszechniania otuchy mentalnej, czyli wprowadzania spokoju do umysłów ludzi przestraszonych materialistyczną i pozbawianą nadziei analizą rzeczywistości, nie znajdując potwierdzenia ani w fizyce kwantowej, ani w medycznych badaniach nad NDE (doświadczeniami śmierci klinicznej). Bezpieczeństwo egzystencjalne oddalone jest od teologii, pomimo że odrzuca także jednowymiarową interpretację bytu i opowiada się za sugerowaną w mechanice kwantowej, neurobiologii, psychiatrii oraz noetyce dualistyczną koncepcją organizacji bytu, wedle której świadomość jest istotą niezależną od mózgu (materii) i strukturą życia oddzielną od powłoki somatycznej niemającej osobowości, gdyż ta jest we władaniu umysłu (świadomości). Jednakże celem artykułu nie jest metafizyczne uzasadnianie bezpieczeństwa egzystencjalnego, lecz ukazanie jego przejawów w myśli filozoficznej. Dlatego też w materiale naszkicowane są pierwsze stanowiska na śmierć mające kontekst egzystencjalny i sekuralny uwidoczniony w antycznej europejskiej filozofii. Z tego też powodu w tekście przedstawiono poglądy na przemijanie obecne w tradycji orfickiej, pitagorejskiej, heraklitejskiej, sokratejskiej, platońskiej, arystotelesowskiej, epikurejskiej, stoickiej oraz neoplatońskiej.

**Słowa kluczowe:** bezpieczeństwo, życie, śmierć, bezpieczeństwo egzystencjalne, filozofia starożytna, filozofia starożytna a bezpieczeństwo.

