

ON THE EXISTENTIAL SECURITY IN VIEW OF THE MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHY CONCEPTIONS ON TRANSCIENCE

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Abstract. This is the second of our four articles in writing, with main focus on the existential security, considered as a consciously achieved state of reduced (or eliminated) suffering and other mental fears interconnected to fears associated with the process of life's transience (death). After previous presentation of ancient views on the subject, authors focus this time on the intellectual solutions of the Middle Ages in this sphere, with its famous motto of *memento Mori* (remember that you will die), however, the philosophy of this period quite carefully pondered the issue of lethality in death, but in return did not spare its interest in transcendence of the idea of God. Death as a subject, repeatedly encountered in everyday life, has brought a new type of existential assumptions associated... less with death, and more with the aftermath of mortality, keeping in mind deeds verified by values of penalty (condemnation) or prize (salvation). In light of this, the transience was a road traveled by humans in the act of final hope towards the Creator. Therefore, fear of God's fear was a source of a bigger worry, than common daily death occurring naturally, since its face value in consideration of delayed damnation was directly connected to faith in soul possession, and the soul was at the end supposed to accept the consequences of life in the material dimensions. The continually apocalyptic vision of the universe (in the social world visible because of frequent deaths), determined earthly life to be a vestibule to the unknown immortality. Such a conception was stemming out of belief that, in essence, the Christians do not belong to the material world, whereas their temporal activities in a given moment of time, is interconnected to serenity in acceptance of Christ's teaching about death. The phenomenon of death became therefore less threatening and more a mystery. The enigmatic sense of transience was not hiding in the inevitability of being losing its life, of sufferings and daily worries, but in belief that a human being is not the somatic-intellectual unity, but a dual creation compound of eternal soul and temporal body. Even today such an outlook did not lose its prominence.

Keywords: existential security, Medieval philosophy, philosophy of security, transience, death.

This article is the second of four planned publications devoted to existential security, which is understood as a conscious state of limiting (or enduring) suffering and other mental threats related to transience (death) of life. The end of life is often seen by many as a source of trauma, stress and anxiety born of fear of non-existence. Hence, the way we consider such concerns, the existential security is an offer to promote mental comfort, that is, to bring peace to the minds of people frightened by materialistic and hopeless experience of reality, where today knowledge from quantum physics or from medical research studying cognitive processes of brain,

still does not give a remedy to human fear of death. Our level of reflection refers to the medieval conception of being which, having a real dimension, became at the same time the subject of its abstract presentation in philosophical views, which departed from the rational interpretation of antiquity. And this was explicated in our first article.

Thus, while in antiquity the fear of death seemed to be constantly present in the consciousness of its contemporaries, the Middle Ages (V-XV centuries) brought the new type of this fear, no longer associated with passing away, but with the consequences of mundane life. The fear of eternal condemnation was closely associated with the belief in the existence of the soul, because the soul who was to bear the consequences of living in the physical dimension. The still-present apocalyptic vision of the world (justified by, e.g. in the social reality by frequent plagues) produced a special type of attitude aimed at treating earthly life as just a vestibule to unknown immortality. This view was based on a more general conviction that Christians do not belong to "this world" and that their behavior in the time assigned to them is an expression of Christ's peaceful relationship to death. Death, as an alarming phenomenon, has ceased to bring awe, but the mystery of death became more important. The enigmatic sense of death was underlined by the belief that man is not either a spiritual or material entity, but a dualistic being composed of an eternal soul and an impermanent body. Before this thought took root in the views of medieval philosophers, it was previously developed in the concepts of early Christian writers.

At the source of Christian philosophical reflection on transience.

It was already in the *Letter to Diognetus* (III century), text considered to be one of the apologetic Greek writings of the "Fathers of the Church", where the anonymous author reports that the Christians live in the world, but do not belong to it. They live on earth, but their proper place is in heaven. This thesis was later developed by Saint Augustine in his *City of God*, explaining that although Christians do not belong to this world, yet, since they are in it, they can not be indifferent to it. According to the *Letter*, the author considers the Christians and the role they play in society to be analogical to the role the human soul plays in the body. In this perception of reality, invisible, yet scattered over the earth in the image of a soul, that is omnipresent in their bodies, Christians should love the world and bring it alive from within. Just as the soul, which loves its material cover, but is hated by the body, so too, are the Christians guided by empathy towards the environment of rejection.. The analogy of the relation of the body to the soul, and the world, to Christians, lies in a sense that these entities are equally imprisoned in their communities. This unites them, although humans concentrating on the material perception of reality, are not aware of the role, that the soul and followers of Christ fulfill. And still, it is obvious that

both, the body and the world, will pass away, but the soul (eternal) and Christians (in heaven) will live on¹.

Failing to reflect on what death itself is, and transferring interests to the phenomenon of “life after life”, alongside considerations about God, made the theory of the soul the second subject of philosophical investigations in the Medieval times. It was deliberate upon within the fields of metaphysics, contemporary psychology, and ethics, however deeply rooted in the problems of theology. Although, the issue of the existence of the soul first came into context in relation to explanations on the essence of the world, and the relationships of various entities forming it, some views concerned more general reflections on transience itself. It must be remembered that this reflection on the immortality of the soul was the basis of the Christian perception of death, in philosophical considerations then. An important role for the formation of medieval philosophical thought was played by the so-called “the patristic writings”, which, although *in caesura*, did not fit into the Middle Ages, since the life of their authors should be ascribed to ancient times, nevertheless the problems in consideration were closely related to later times, than the ancient historical discussions. For this reason, due to the substantive content of these texts, their placing within the history of philosophical thought was to be imputed to Medieval philosophy. These texts, however, have permanently entered the canon of the Christian thought, underlying its fundamental religious perspective in unity with philosophical persuasion, and today are known in reference to the writings of the “Apologetic Fathers of the Church”.

Some of the first interpretations of such development in “post-ancient” thought, related to the Greek patriarchs, is attributed to Justin the Martyr (II century) who, opposing the Platonic doctrine of the immortality of the soul rejected the thesis that it is alive. According to him, the soul could not be immortal by itself, because its existence depends on the will of God who gives her life. So the soul lives, because God wants it to last, as long as He wants it. At the moment of death, when the harmony of the body and soul ceases to connect, man dies, though the soul still exists, in the place where it came from. However, its eternity was not guaranteed by the Creator. It could happen that the “spirit of life” left the soul, but only when its immortality was lost due to the neglect of the moral teachings, contained in the Gospel. After all, God has provided all people with reason and knowledge. Therefore, they are capable of good and evil, are responsible for their actions, and are in no way subjected to the necessity of any conduct. What man does in mortal life depends on himself.

¹ See: *List do Diogeneta*, (in:) *Apologeci greccy II wieku*, transl. by J. Czuj, T. 18, Poznańska Oficyna Księgarska, Poznań 1925. Also in: E. Gilson, *Historia filozofii chrześcijańskiej w wiekach średnich*, transl. by S. Zalewski, Instytut Wydawniczy Pax, Warszawa 1987, p. 494.

Whereas, the price that the soul can pay for the life it chooses, can even equal to the loss of its immortality².

Following the teaching of Justin, Tatian the Syrian (II century) describes man as the unity of body, soul and spirit. The soul penetrating all beings (stars, angels, people, animals, plants and waters), at the same time takes on different forms in nature, in accordance to the different species of beings that were to be energized to life by it. Above the soul is the spirit (Greek: *pneuma*) in which the image of God is present. The soul is not immortal by nature, but is capable of immortality. If it does not know the truth (by rejecting or not recognizing the role of God in all existence) it will die with its body. Its destiny is to await until the end of time, for resurrection, when its expatriation status will be solved. The verdict will be given, determining whether the soul for committed sins is to receive, together with its body, the final punishment of the "eternal death", or whether it can expect the redemption for its offenses. The Creator's negative verdict marks the state of "eternal death". However, the soul that has acknowledged consciousness in God, rightly listening to the voices of own spirit (meaning, own essence) will not die, even if temporarily exterminated (e.g. by disturbing the proportions of good and evil in own conduct, and for not being always consistent with the message contained in the Gospels)³.

Athenagoras (II century) changed the scope of those deliberations, as interpreted by his predecessors, directing his interests in the search for arguments confirming the possibility of human resurrection after death. In his opinion, the soul and the body were the two parts of the human being, each of which served strictly defined tasks. God did not bring to life only the souls, but a human being, where the existential essence is equally formed by the spiritual and physical elements in it. The communion of the soul and the body was based on the same fate, for they merged in the same way in the act of human birth, in human nature, life, deeds, feelings and purpose (resurrection). The soul in a human being is the "mover", and the body is moved. This movement carried out in multidimensional settings (from satisfying biological functions to moral behavior) fulfills the human life. And it is its aim. This is the God's teleology given for man, therefore, the resurrection after death can not be impossible. After all, the one who created the human subject and gave it life can again give existence to the person, when it loses it. In addition, God, who is capable of resurrection, may also allow human eternal existence, for it is neither unjust in itself, nor unworthy of the Creator to fulfill his creation. In addition, the communion of the soul and matter - as Athenagoras saw it - was a prove that not only the soul

² See Pseudo-Justynowe „Zachęty Greków. Upomnienie Greków”, (in:) A. Bober, *Antologia patrystyczna*, Wydawnictwo Apostolstwa Modlitwy, Kraków 1965, pp. 28-29.

³ Cited from F. Wilczek, *Tacjan jako apologeta i filozof na podstawie jego „Mowy do Greków”*, (in:) *Streszczenia rozpraw doktorskich, magisterskich i seminaryjnych pisanych na KUL w wyborze*, UAM, Poznań 1956, pp. 20-21.

had intelligence in it and that by itself it was endowed with intelligence and reason, since the body is also necessary to achieve the human transcendental goal. For the reason the soul could not exist any further, being contingent to the existence of body (but the recognition and appropriation of God goes through the soul), and hence the reason for existence of a human being. It is because the body dies, that the reason can not exist without the resurrection⁴.

Although later the other Greek apologists in reference to questions on transience did not introduced any major changes in view of the established concepts of the patristic thought, the views of some were somewhat original, in respect to the dominating doctrine. For example, Theophilus of Antioch (II century) rejected the *a priori* theses of the eternal and transient nature of human existence, introducing into his deliberations the identity of the religious and physical concept of immortality. According to him, in the first case (eternity) man would obtain the status of God, which is impossible, in the second (death), bringing the human subject to the level of dying matter would mean that the Creator is the curator of his death, which can not be reconciled with the creative essence of the Supreme Being. Meanwhile, God made man free so that he would make a choice of inclination to either “immortal things”, or to the “mortal things”. The last tendency was to be the result of disobeying God, and as such was the cause of the “truly own death” of man⁵.

Irenaeus of Lyon (II / III century), acknowledged that the soul is not a human being, but is a constitutive because of the soul immaterial interior. In comparison to the mortal body, the soul has no body. It is the “breath of life” that God gave to a human, and this is what in turn makes the soul immortal. Death could not concern either soul or spirit, because these as “simple” entities can not be dismembered, since destruction refers only to the structures of complex matter. Nor can the spirit be divided, since it is the life itself, of those who received it as a gift from the Creator. Although the body is mortal, it can also be resurrected. For the human nature, according to Irenaeus, is indivisible, which means that the soul can not be separated from the body which it enlivens. This inseparability in the end becomes the determinant for both, the soul and the body, of the reward or punishment after death, that humans earn during the mortal life⁶.

The student Irenaeus, Hyppolitus (III century), said that indeed, the human soul's being is of non-corporeal quality, is also a rational substance capable of both, connecting with the body and separating from it. The soul is free even when it exhibits its natural dependence on the material shell, that is formed by it. At the same time,

⁴ In E. Gilson, *Historia filozofii chrześcijańskiej...*, op. cit., pp. 20-21.

⁵ See Teofil, *Do Autolyka*, Ks. I-III, (in:) *Apologeci greccy II wieku*, op. cit.; see also E. Gilson, *Historia filozofii chrześcijańskiej...*, op. cit., p. 500.

⁶ Tom B. Częsz, *Ireneusz z Lyonu – wyraziciel tradycji chrześcijańskiej Wschodu i Zachodu*, „Ateneum Kapłańskie” 1979, R. 71, T. 92, Z. 3, pp. 355-360.

this tendency is rather a manifestation of its essence, rather than the very essence. Although the soul is a composite being (moved in its spirit), it is immortal by nature, because there is no internal inconsistency between the matter and the form of which man is composed, when it is a flow of perfect harmony. After all, death, or “decomposition” of a substance can only refer to phenomena that are complex, divisible and temporary. Because the soul as an eternal element – in comparison to the body – is a simple being, therefore it can not be a disappearing act. For the essential property of the soul (that is, the human in its core) is its indestructibility⁷.

The problems with the essence of man, or soul (*anima*), took the attention of all, without exception, early Christian thinkers, since the considerations on this subject were visible in their writings various Fathers of the Church: The Alexandrian fathers (Clemens and Origen), priests (Gregory of Naziansus, Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, Nemesius) as well as Latin apologists (Tertullian, Marcus Minucius Felix, Laktantius). Of these, however, only Arnobius (the teacher of Laktantius) took a stand apart from what the Greek Patrists proclaimed. His views referred directly to the polemics of Tatian and the supporters, of attributing to the soul the “natural immortality”, although in his interpretation of the problems in discussion, he extended its scope even further than Tatian⁸.

Well, according to Arnobiusz (living the turn of the 3rd and 4th centuries of our era) people are not souls (*anima*), but intelligent animals. The difference between a human and the fauna is small, due to the limited use of mind. The common property of the animals and people is their behavior in the surrounding world. After all, they, like us, are prudent, protect themselves against cold, and act in accordance with the laws of nature. So if the animals had a directing mind and their hands would build human-like places, because nothing that lives is equipped with the gift of skill and knowledge, since those arise under the pressure of necessity. This is the reason why Plato was wrong in claiming, that human souls brings with it the knowledge from heaven, while being connected its body. If, in essence, souls were the messengers from another dimension – temporarily present in our world – then a person should be conditioned to have elementary knowledge (e.g. the ability to speak logically or be aware of manners) about himself and the environment to which he belongs. Souls are not immortal in principle, but they can acquire this as a goal, by way of knowing Christ. Those *anima* that will not be able to accept God’s wisdom, will ultimately be destroyed and will suffer eternal death. At the same time the termination of this existence, understood as the “eternal permanent destruction” is not only aimed against the body, deprived of the possibility of resurrection, but also means physical “wasting of the soul”, since, according to Arnobius, its nature could be subjected to

⁷ From M. Michalski, *Między integryzmem a progresizmem*. Hipolit, (in:) idem, *Antologia literatury patrystycznej*, T. I, Wydawnictwo Pax, Warszawa 1982, pp. 179-183.

⁸ Cited, op. cit., p. 184.

decay. This view of the philosopher was based on the teachings of Christ, who said that not all souls are immortal and some of them will be destroyed⁹.

Among the Cappadocian fathers, the two positions, namely of the Gregory of Nyssa (4th century) and of Nemesius (5th century), seem to be interesting for this discussion. Gregory of Nyssa (also known as the Theologian) believed that human, because of the reason (logos) is the culminating point of the pyramid of tangible life. The animals are lower in the hierarchy of existence because they only have sense perception, movement and life. Below them are the plants that, though not having a perfect soul, are above the inanimate bodies, deprived of any life principle. The human person does not have several souls, although its nature combines all the lower degrees of existence. So it lives like plants, feels like animals, and she understands because as a human. Gregory saw a clear differences between the body and the soul, and the spirit, although the distinction was more ethical than physical. According to his interpretation, the body is what people tend to pursue in the pursuit of sensual pleasures, while the soul becomes the behavior aimed at gaining virtue and avoiding transgression. The spirit, meanwhile, is what leads man to perfect life in accordance with the laws of God, rewarding persons after death. If the *anima* was established transcendently, hence it had to be a representation of the ideal on the basis of virtue of its creation. Just as the existence of God can be argued, starting from the created creatures, so the existence of the soul can be justified, starting from reflections on the character of man. It is an expression of the "smaller world" (microcosm), or being subject to both the power of the soul and the "larger world" (macrocosm) dependent exclusively on the authority of God.

To summarize, the unification of the soul with its body is possible because of endowing the created, animated and intelligent beings with bodily organs, which the human beings use as instruments of temporal life, suspended in time. The connection of every soul with its proper shell is absolutely indestructible, to the extent that even between the death and resurrection, the elements of the deceased body are never separated from their breath¹⁰.

Nemesius on the other hand, was claiming that the human being, as a composite creature, is in the borderline of the immaterial world and the world of bodies, where death is the moment of transition from the condition proper to temporality, to the dimension corresponding to eternity. The existence of the end, analogous to the manifestation of the spiritual-physical life, can be considered as one of the detailed examples of the universal continuity of order of things, and the clearest proof of the visibility of God. The indirect position of man (i.e. the life of the soul in the

⁹ See Arnobiusz, *Przeciw poganom*, (in:) A. Bober, *Antologia patrystyczna*, op. cit., pp. 74-78.

¹⁰ See Grzegorz z Nyssy, *Rozmowa z Makryną o duszy i zmartwychwstaniu; O stworzeniu człowieka*, (in:) M. Michalski, *Antologia literatury patrystycznej*, T. 2, Wydawnictwo Pax, Warszawa 1982, pp. 277-310.

body) was also to be the key to understanding of his destiny, because only with the participation of the psyche one could save himself or lose himself, depending on whether one turned towards virtue (virtues) in his actions, or sensual things. Nemesius himself perceived the soul as a rational quality existing in itself, exceeding the ordinary understanding of man, described as the simple composition of life here and now (*hinc et nunc*) with what is seen (*in spe*). In his opinion, the anima can not be the perfection of the body, because it is a substance which, because of its independent being, is already a pure form of perfection. Despite the fact that the soul is something separate from the body, it still uses it. However, it differs diametrically from the shell in that it is not subject to change, as the body is over time. The soul is present in the body, just as eternal God exists in us. By virtue of this presence, the immortality becomes the attribute of the soul¹¹.

Patristic views in the III-V centuries paved the way for a more universal conviction of the Middle Ages, that the separation of the soul from the body is not only possible, but also necessary because of the soteric process of man. This possibility of immortality asserted the belief in uniqueness of the human subject within the natural world, and it gave it the role of the only being who can understand the perfection of God, and is able to admire his works. The soul which is the source and the basis of the deeds and life of man, drew its vital powers from the Creator and led to fusion with him. Intangibility and eternity, as the attributes accredited to the human being, or soul, emphasized the imperishable character of the divine creation, and at the same time showed the basis of knowledge and the reason of human identity. This message was included in the concept of one of the greatest philosophers of Christianity, Saint. Augustine (IV/V century), who as a continuator and representative of late patristic thought, was at the same time the creator of the paradigm dominating in the first centuries of the Middle Ages, projecting influence on Christian views to this day.

The subject of transience in scholastic philosophy

The St. Augustine, who until the St. Thomas Aquinas (13th century) held the primacy of the “first philosopher”, upheld the views of Nemesius, claiming that the soul is a reasonable substance “adopted” for managing the body. At the same time, he was convinced that the soul’s life had meaning only in connection with the body. The two parts of man’s being separated from each other did not reflect the essence of the human being, whose content was the immortal and immaterial self and its mortal and material envelope. However, despite the existence of its eternal potency in the soul, it also made possible the loss of energy. It happened when it lost connection with God, which was the source of its real vigor. This thought led the

¹¹ See Nemejusz, *O naturze ludzkiej*, transl. by. A. Kempfi, Wydawnictwo Pax, Warszawa 1982.

philosopher to conclude that if the soul guaranteed the existence of the body, then in an identical relationship God is the rock of existence of the soul¹².

Non-being was for Saint Augustine the prose of life. After all, from the moment when a person started to exist (in the act of birth) in the body destined for the end, changes (old age) were constantly taking place in him, which favored approaching its end. Throughout life (if we can call it this temporary state of existence), the body's instability meant that it was moving towards annihilation. The source of all changes is the experienced time, which reduces day by day, of what is left of the reality that manifests itself. The entire existence of man is for some nothing but a race, and for others a march towards the nothingness, in which no one is allowed to stop or even slow down. Everyone must take part in this parade, although not with equal speed. Even those who had a shorter life did not spend the day faster, than those who lived longer, because the moments of temporal existence received from them were equally measured. "Although one of the mortals – wrote Saint. Augustine – can have a closer goal, and the other further, the speed of their movement towards the agony was no different. It is a different thing to take a long way, and still different to move slowly. So the one who is going to die at a certain time, does not reach it at a slower pace, but only experiences more hours, days, months, years"¹³. However, the St. Augustine not always have showed a distance in view of death. He wrote in a letter to the unknown friend he wrote: "my life was heavy to me and a cruel burden, and at the same time I was afraid of death. I think that the more I loved it, the more hateful and fearful I thought about the most terrible enemy, the death, that takes it away him from me (...) Maybe that's why I was so afraid to die, that I would not die with all that I loved"¹⁴.

John Scotus Eriugena (IX c.), by some considered to be the father of scholasticism, claimed that there is no existence without bearing the God's sign. Therefore all forms of existence encourage man to turn his thoughts towards the Creator, especially since they are marked by transience. A special status in this creation has a man who was the only one made in the image and likeness of God. The threefold system of cognition present in the human subject in the form of sensual ability, reason and intellect imitate the Holy Trinity in man. The very soul in which this image of transcendent potency is present, appears as one simple property as the essence of soul, i.e. it is complete and intelligent, has complete understanding and sensual power, memory and life. All knowledge is the work of one and three-fold intellect that works through reason with the help of a co-existent sense. The multiplicity of actions and

¹² Cited from L. Boros, *Mysterium mortis: człowiek w obliczu ostatecznej decyzji*, transl. by B. Białecki, Wydawnictwo Pax, Warszawa 1985, pp. 36-37.

¹³ Św. Augustyn, *Państwo Boże*, transl. by W. Kornatowski, t. 2, Wydawnictwo Pax, Warszawa 1977, p. 94.

¹⁴ Idem, *Wyznania*, transl. by Z. Kubiak, Wydawnictwo Znak, Kraków 1999, pp. 94-95.

thoughts that arise during the entire life of man comes from the intellect, co-exists with it and returns to it, just as the multitude of creatures making up the world comes from God, harmonizes in God and comes back to him at the moment of dematerialization of the body. The reunion of the soul with the Creator takes place in the moment of highest sensual interruption that a human being attains, what happens during the act of agony of its corporeality. This is because man, as a result of sin (the firstborn), has become like animals, subjected to passions, diseases and decay. In the moment of transfiguration of life, the soul disconnects itself from the body, which in turn brakes down into its component elements and disperses throughout earth. Just like a journey in which the departure is the starting point, so death of a man is the first stage of his return to God. Happiness is in the eternal life, and because eternal life is equal to knowing the truth, then knowing the truth means as much as eternal happiness. And correspondingly, if there was no other suffering than eternal non-existence, and if that would mean as much as ignorance of the truth, then there would be no other timeless torment, other than the endless unconsciousness of end, arising from the lack of acceptance of Christ's teachings and understanding of his role in the salvation of man¹⁵.

According to Albert the Great (13th c.) three issues deserved the attention of philosophy in deliberation on the essence of man. Those are: soul, body and their combination. He understood soul in a similar manner as other philosophers (mainly Avicenna, to whom we will return later), as an incorporeal substance united with body. The soul, in its first act of connection with matter gave it its existence, in the other it became the driving force of body's actions and the main reason for manifestation of human life. In the latter form, soul influenced bodily continuity of the existence in a human subject, whose life however, was limited by the temporality contained between birth and death. Thus, the soul considered from the position of its essence was a non-corporeal substance, while considered from the point of view of its body, it became its creative act and the committer. The end of temporal life finalized active functions of the soul, although it did not close the existence of its life. There was the simple and indivisible nature of the soul, associated with the occurrence of two types of intellect in it, namely active and potential (already distinguished by Aristotle, Alexander of Aphrodisia, Avicenna and Averroes, and others).

In this tradition the self intellect was understood as exclusively given only to a man, as "pure", active and creative force of consciousness, opposing passive, sensual cognitive, emotional and volitional powers. For Albert, the active intellect was not a separated intelligence facilitating knowledge of things produced by the mind (e.g.

¹⁵ From J. Legowicz, *Historia filozofii średniowiecznej Europy Zachodniej*, PWN, Warszawa 1986, pp. 198-217. See also J. Kabaj, *Ideologia Eriugeny. Czynniki kształtowania ideologii chrześcijańskiej we wczesnym średniowieczu francuskim – ideowe wartości filozoficzno-teologiczne systemu Jana Szkota*, Wydawnictwo Znak, Kraków 1981.

by means of speculation), but it was a “creator” of thought objects, registered in the mind of imaginations and perceptions of reality. The potency of the time, however, was within the act of knowing itself. One could not exist without it even for a second, for while the active intellect was the causative cause of the very understanding, the intellect was the cognition; it was the source of experiencing the reality, learning, teaching and discovering, as well as the memory of experiences. However, active intellect possessed a higher rank though epistemology because it was a rational form existing in the very act of cognition. As a permanent disposition of understanding everything that the intellect was able to follow, was simultaneously confirmed in the immortality of the soul. Therefore, both types of intellect understood as a whole were at the disposition of reason, and not of the corporal activity, hence assigned to the soul. And this one, not being a corporal energy, but of the self-existing and independent of body, could continue also after the death of its temporal coating¹⁶.

Roger Bacon (XIII c.) interpreted active and potential intellect as the “higher” and “lower” reason appearing in the soul. He understood it as a “complete spiritual substance”, consisting of three powers: rational, vegetative and sensual. In his opinion, only the rational soul was created by God, because its vegetative and sensual forms are similar to other forms where activity is an effect of material potency. The intelligent soul as an independent being was created independently of other authorities that enliven the body, because it is composed of its own matter and form¹⁷.

In view of this, R. Bacon – like other medieval philosophers – accepted the Aristotelian distinction between substance, form and matter. Accordingly, the substance is a self-existing state, existing by itself, which is not attributed to anything; form is a conceptual essence of a given subject, different from matter, as an indefinite basis of phenomena and things. Therefore, the soul considered as a form (that is, the conceptual essence of the phenomenon – the object of thought) “arranges” them with imaginations and uses for knowledge. Remaining in form, the soul is rational, its act, inseparable from the body and similarly to it becomes mortal. On the other hand, considered as substantial form (that is, an independent being not attributed to anything), the soul is never passive, but active. Intellectual action is not attributed to it as a form of the body, but as a substance separated from it (and therefore significant). Also, such action is not about “arranging” the imagination, but rather turning completely to one’s own being that contemplates intellectually cognizable patterns of things. Having a substantial (spiritual) character, the soul is immortal by nature. Hence, part of it can be considered as an active intellect (higher reason). This is why R. Bacon called the intelligent soul in its substantial form the active intellect. Only this intellect remained permanently rooted in human existence. On the other hand,

¹⁶ In R. Kostecki, Święty Albert Wielki. W *siedemsetlecie śmierci*, „W Drodze” 1980, Nr 11, pp. 3-14.

¹⁷ See. M. Wiszniewski, *Bacona metoda tłumaczenia natury i inne pisma filozoficzne*, transl. by J. Dybiec, PWN, Warszawa 1976.

the accompanying intellect, namely the mind, is dependent on the soul as a form and communicates with sensually cognizable things. It could remain as the self-separated from the body, but sensual and vegetative (associated with physiological functions of the body) episode of life, sustainable but not creative mentally, embedded it in the substance of (soul) life¹⁸.

Peter of Spain, believed to be the Peter Juliani, as one of the foremost logicians of the thirteenth century – similarly to R. Bacon – has identified the soul with substance that participates in the intellect. The immaterial soul in relation to its shell was to be a formal principle, or an act that perfects the body. Despite the fact that it appears as an independent being, it could not appear in separation, because its task from the moment of the birth of a man was to direct the body in the likeness to the role of the helmsman on the ship, or the state ruler. The soul existing on the borderline of spiritual beings and material beings is adapted for existence in both worlds. Thanks to this, it permeates the body, lives in it and guides it, and after life it returns to a higher dimension. It is immortal because it is of rational substance. Due to the fact that one of the functions of intelligent soul is to receive intellectually discoverable objects, it must have its own intellectual potency. It emanates from essence of the soul and is directed to all cognizable forms, just as matter is open to various forms of corporeality. The life of such intellect is conditioned by the existence of its active form, which the power of intelligent soul enlightens the mental cognitive forms received from the mind and senses. While the active human intellect after separation from the body is immortal, it is uniform and eternal, the potential intellect does not fulfill these conditions. And yet at the time of death potential intellect – Peter the Spaniard (later known as Pope John XXI) shows inconsistency here – ceases its activity only in its temporal functions, however, retains eternal life given at the beginning of existence. This eternity can be justified on the basis that the potential role of the intellect is fulfilled during its “life activity” when turned towards the most powerful body organs, i.e. the active intellect (otherwise the “administrator” of the rational soul) controls everything that man was equipped with by the Supreme Cause¹⁹.

St. Thomas Aquinas (13th. c.) was the one who reinterpreted theory of the soul that Augustine had established so far. Thomas claimed – based on the teachings of Aristotle – that the soul is the principle of life, but above all it is the intellect, and by this notion it is inherently indestructible and immortal. The human soul was to be a rational substance, for which the essential unity comes from the body and together with it, the same physical relationship is a fusions of matter and form; what creates a human being. A person, thanks to the *psyche*, belongs to non-material entities, and

¹⁸ From Z. Kuksewicz, *Zarys filozofii średniowiecznej. Filozofia łacińskiego obszaru kulturowego*, wyd. III, PWN, Warszawa 1986, pp. 259-263, 285-287, 304-307.

¹⁹ From E. Gilson, *Historia filozofii chrześcijańskiej...*, op. cit., pp. 290-291.

his body can exist only through the activity of his being, or soul. Because the soul is a form of the body, that's why it dominates and rules over it in such a way that it is seen as its horizon, and sets the boundaries between realm of pure intelligences (angels and God) and realm of bodily beings. The demarcation line of the temporal relationship of body and soul is "death", which on one hand separates the two worlds (i.e. the realm of pure intelligence and the area of matter), and on the other hand, allows to connect the intelligent human being with its matrix (i.e. pure Intelligence)²⁰.

The St. Thomas by identifying the indestructibility and immortality of the soul, was convinced that it can not be fragile and temporary, because as a rational substance it is endowed with an independent and eternal existence in an act of creation. The transience of man is therefore a process of losing body that contains only potentiality of material life. The soul does not die because it is further individualized by intellectual ability. Only substances without mind are destroyed. Independence of the soul from the body manifests itself already during abstract cognition, which is the subject of the causative reactions of the mind, and the inspiration for acts of will, rational desire for life, and acts of extrasensory love²¹.

Relatively less speculative view of transience, in comparison to those expressed throughout the Middle Ages, appeared in the second half of the XIIIth. c. We owe it to Boethius of Dacia. This philosopher, who next to Sigismund of Brabant was the greatest advocate of Averroes' theorems, said then that beings subjected to passing away must be previously initiated and changed. "In the same way, all death", wrote Boethius, "touches what was born, all that was born was born of that which succumbed to death." Before every emergence of any form of existence there is its beginning, just as for each finality there is an end. Therefore, it can not be assumed that there was any first birth or first death, because such a hypothesis enforces the limitations of a universal and always existing being. The world is defined as an eternal circle of births and deaths, endlessly. The structure of existence is not linear but circular, which means that the phases of life and death freely pass each other and interpenetrate. The universe is eternal, and therefore beings that are born and die are its permanent components. In this sense, existing beings can not overtake the universe itself, start somewhere and end somewhere, because the idea of beginning and end is contrary to the concept of eternity²².

²⁰ In: S. Świeżawski, *Centralne zagadnienie tomistycznej nauki o duszy*, „Przegląd Filozoficzny” 1948, T. 44, Z. 2/3, p. 131-199; also: A. Siemianowski, *Śmierć i perspektywa nadziei. Esej filozoficzny o ostatecznych sprawach człowieka*, Drukarnia „Scriptor”, Gniezno 1992, pp. 128-129; M. Gogacz, *Elementarz metafizyki*, Akademia Teologii Katolickiej, Warszawa 1987, pp. 180-181.

²¹ In: J. Salij OP, *Czy śmierć jest karą za grzech?*, (in:) *Sens choroby, sens śmierci, sens życia*, edited by H. Bortnowska, Wyd. III, Wydawnictwo Znak, Kraków 1993, pp. 328-333.

²² Op. cit., pp. 68-70.

In the fourteenth century, a new trend appeared in philosophy and became known as “nominalism”. According to its doctrine the contents of all abstract knowledge (including the most general concepts and objects of thought, understood as the fruit of extrasensory cognition) can not in its actuality have other equivalents than names (*nomina*), i.e. objects are only related to general idea, and have by itself an absolutely individual character. In one of its perspectives represented by Nicholas of Autrecourt the starting point was *atomism* of Epicurus, who generally stated that nature consists of objects created from the ordered movement of atoms. Hence claim was made that the formation and disappearance is not a manifestation of succession of different forms in the same entity, but only the result of merging particles and their decay. The soul itself, according to this, consisted of two types of spirit: intellect and senses. When the atoms making up the human body (*soma*) break up, the intellect and senses are still there, which ensures the immortality of the soul. Its transcendental status depends on the quality of human life, consisting of good and bad deeds, and this from the existence is considered as being the “reward or punishment”²³.

In the righteous people intellect and senses are well ordered, while in the unjust and wicked people they are arranged inappropriately. Therefore, it must be assumed that the senses and the intellect of the just will always be in a state of perfection when they reunite with the same combination of atoms in the body. Therefore, there must be a preservation of the ordering of the spirit and body atoms, proper to the righteous man, that should be preserved. One should adhere to the sacred laws established by Christ, because they are the beginning and conclusion of the quality of mortality, which is always evaluated after death²⁴.

The above description of views on the transience, referring to Medieval philosophy should be complemented by the mature Islamic thought represented by Abu Ibn Sina (Avicenna) and Ibn Rushd (Averroes). Especially since their views have made a considerable intellectual mark on explanation of Christian thinkers. Thanks to those two great philosophers, respectively – the Persian, and Arab from Cordoba, Aristotle’s thought became one of the most important intellectual teacher in Europe. But we should also remember that, in a way, the Islamic considerations anticipated the scholastic associations between “parts of the intelligent soul” (e.g. the role of active and potential intellect), substance and form, spirit and body, and finally the phenomenon of death and immortality of man. Although these presentations, unchanged from the content of the current narrative, have to be mentioned due to their historical role in shaping the medieval humanism, the same can be said about considerations of the twelfth century Jewish scholar Moses Maimonides. In his writings on transcendental psychology, there is a thesis on human necessity to actively

²³ E. Gilson, *Historia filozofii chrześcijańskiej...*, op. cit., p. 453.

²⁴ In: *ibidem*, pp. 453-454.

seek salvation of the soul. It is precisely the possession of an “updatable intellect”, an individualized passive intellect illuminated by active mind, which requires of man such activity. His moral postulate of good life conduct, according to his description was based on need for an appropriate philosophical approach to temporality of being. In consequence this meant that by studying philosophy itself, good and desirable effects on the way to salvation can be obtained. Knowledge (philosophy) in fact contributes the most to enrichment of one’s intellect, considered to be the most important (because of immortality) part of soul, since subjected to God’s evaluation after the vital abilities of the human body become exhausted²⁵.

Nonetheless, beginning of intensive and serious interests in thought of “Saracens”, so called in the medieval times, is related to work of Abu Ibn Sina (living at the turn of 10th and 11th centuries), whose views were later projected on epistemological, ontological and metaphysical observations by philosophers in Europe. One of the main reasons for this was, as already stated, very obvious inspiration in his writings by the Aristotelian philosophy. It was Ibn Sina who introduced into the Medieval philosophy division of soul abilities, into the theoretical and practical intellects. While the first dealt with ontology of objects (so valued by Christian thinkers), the second concerned the objects of human activity. However, both abilities were not intrinsically a property of soul, but only served for his expression and acts of knowledge. According to Ibn Sina, the soul was an intrinsic rational substance that animated the body, acquired knowledge, and had the ability to recognize things and make them abstract. For this reason, Ibn Sina claimed that each body possesses its own rational substance, while the soul remains “numerically” separate, because it obtains from the Creator a “principle of individuality” (distinctness) other than matter. Due to the fact that body is also a substance, the relationship between it and the soul itself is accidental, that is, based on the relationship of their functions and roles in life. When one of the substances disappears, only associations between them are destroyed, while some of them may still remain. Therefore, survival after death is probable. In this approach, transience is related to life in its weaker and irrational quality (since it tends to disintegrate), while mental powers remain. It is so because reason comes from the immortal God, therefore, the soul that is equipped with intellect also must be immortal. In this sense soul is the intellect, in other words a rational substance that needs body to manifest itself (re-evaluate). It follows that in an unlimited time, and after achieving its individualized potency of life (self-update), it does not fall into nothingness.²⁶

The philosophical views of another great Islamic thinker – Ibn Rushd (XII c.) – affected the entire medieval intellectual tradition of Christianity. It was mainly due

²⁵ See also, op. cit., pp. 209-210.

²⁶ In L. Kołakowski, *Avicenna, lekarz dusz i ciała*, „Myśl Filozoficzna” 1952, Nr 3, pp. 36-55.

to two facts. First of all, his works derived from teachings of Aristotle and won him the opinion of his commentator. He was very prominent in popularizing Aristotle's philosophy in the milieu of medieval philosophers. Secondly, Ibn Ruszd's attempt to define mutual relations between philosophy and religion broadly influenced contemporary scholars of those times. And obviously, those were some of the main reasons for Aristotelian influence on the emerging and weighty concepts in philosophical learning (for example in evolution of Saint Thomas Aquinas thought)²⁷.

According to Ibn Rushd, human ability to think is derived from dynamic intelligence called Active Intellect, which is the source of order from the first matter devoid of all forms. The human subjectivity was endowed with awareness of his own inadequacy in perception of reality (both visible and invisible), that is, the epistemic ability in humans is directing the mind's focus towards the understanding of the First Cause. In such correlation the cognition of being, in relationship between human mind and Active Intellect, is established, as the beginning and the cause of man's cognitive powers. Such a union is possible in a universe in which active intelligence is common to the whole human race. It is the source of rational cognition in individual souls, just as the sun – thanks to light – is the reason for perceiving things through empirical sense of seeing (with eyes). Put simply, there are two types of intellect in a soul: active and potential, accommodating each other due to appearance of "deadly imagination" within it. The potential intellect owes its significance to the fact that it is only a more detailed active intellect (God's spark) contained within human beings. Therefore, it is creative of eternity for the soul, since everything that is permanent or able to perpetuate in individuality fully belongs to Active Intellect, and is immortal in its eternity. However, next to rational soul (common to all), Ibn Rushd also distinguished in humans sensual soul, consequential with the material potency. It is incremental to the extent corresponding with quantity ("numerically multiplied") of people in their temporal existence. This soul, united with the body, came with it and died with it²⁸.

It is important to realize, however, that in the final period of Scholasticism, the apogee of which was Thomism, a strong opposition against the followers of Ibn Rushd's philosophy was visible. Mainly because his views would shake the Augustinian tradition, and many of the antagonists felt uneasy. One of them was the bishop of Paris, Stefan Tempier. Who inspired by the attacks of the neo-platonist sympathizer Johannes Fidanza (known today as the St. Bonaventure), condemned the 13 major theses of "averriorsism" present in Christian philosophy and theology of the thirteenth century. And the following were rejected: "1) The intellect of all people is one and numerically the same; 2) The sentence: man understands, is false or improper;

²⁷ In E. Gilson, *Historia filozofii chrześcijańskiej...*, op. cit., pp. 204-205.

²⁸ In J. Zielińska, *Awerroes – komentator czy filozof*, „*Studia Philosophiae Christianae*” 1973, Nr 2, pp. 5-20; also: E. Gilson, *Historia filozofii chrześcijańskiej...*, op. cit., p. 590.

3) The will of man implies choice of necessity; 4) Everything that occurs here on Earth is subjected and determinative of celestial bodies; 5) The world is eternal; 6) There never was “the first man”; 7) The soul, which is the exact form of a human bodily form, dies with the body; 8) After death, the separated soul can not suffer from carnal fire; 9) Free choice is a passive ability, not an active one, and is necessarily brought about by the desired object; 10) God does not recognize individual entities; 11) God does not know other beings apart from itself; 12) God’s providence does not guide the human acts; 13) God can not give immortality and indestructibility to mortal and destructive things”²⁹.

It is the Medieval philosophy that developed Christian understanding of death, and its anthropological expression was the *homo viator* (a wandering man, a traveler). According to this concept, the human being had two dimensions: a transient physical existence associated with the temporal life, and the eternal life of the soul temporarily animating the body. From this perspective the transience did not imply the end of man, but the way of transition, or in other words, birth to a new posthumous life. Thus, the theological view connected with this interpretation was that: disappearance of existence had to be overcome by Christ, in his act of redemption saving human beings from the sins of humanity. And the essence of His teaching determined the belief that there is a transit from the state of death (on the cross) to life (resurrection), and what was promoted. This act, however, did not change the fact that act of transience was perceived as a manifestation of an unforgivable fate, condemning a man to severing of bodily-spiritual oneness. It was a consolation that, although everyone must depart this life, no one is completely gone, for one is vitalizing the existence personified by the soul wandering the paths of transcendental life. Thus, death was torn away from the whole of life, because this was only an act of a one-time transition to a new dimension of being, or it became a stage to return of the soul to the source of the ongoing existence found in God. The transience became an isolated event accelerating the fulfillment of the purpose of the main human existence, which was the salvation (meaning the life in the light of God). This position differs from the presently presented Christian view, in a sense that Christians now mostly believe that between the life and death (in the spiritual dimension), there is a strict “inner unity”³⁰.

Death – or more precisely, the new human existence within a process leading to eternity – contains within itself “the whole of earthly life, its stages of progress or regress”. It expresses the close relationship of all existence with the cessation of biological functions of the organism, and the immortality of the soul is freed because of death. An illustration of this fusion can be seen in a sentence, “let all live as they

²⁹ E. Gilson, *Historia filozofii chrześcijańskiej...*, op. cit., p. 362.

³⁰ Op. cit., p. 28.

would die” which emphasizes the existential dependence between the moral quality of human wandering and the nature of its disappearance³¹. The transience, death, as an inseparable element of life can not be cut off from it, nor also refined or elevated. Today, on the other hand, it is said that human beings, as the immortal beings, since destined for eternal life in God, deserve special consideration, because of specific quality of life dignified by own unity. We must remember nonetheless, that life’s value rests in acceptance of the ancient symbolic understanding of consciousness. It stresses, that it is not only a part of the visible world that the soul crosses through within its sensual body, but that also there is conscious center of those senses, and it is not material. Although the human beings, through corporality, are included in the vortex of natural phenomena, their potential powers surpasses the nature, harnessing it for own service, but at the same time bearing responsibility for it, because it is from beyond the world, and because it has an element of immortality in it³².

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WOKÓŁ BEZPIECZEŃSTWA EGZYSTENCJALNEGO, CZYLI PRZEMIJANIE W FILOZOFII ŚREDNIOWIECZA

Abstrakt. Artykuł jest drugim 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. Pomimo tego, że manifestem średniowiecza było sławetne *memento mori* (pamiętaj, że umrzesz), to jednak filozofia tego okresu dość ostrożnie odnosiła się do problematyki letalności, nie szczędząc w zamian zainteresowania transcendencją wyrażoną w idei Boga. Przemijanie nagminnie napotykanie w codzienności przyniosło nowy typ

egzystencjalnego namysłu związanego mniej ze śmiercią, a bardziej z następstwami życia doczesnego weryfikowanego w geście kary (potępienia) lub nagrody (zbawienia). Przemijanie zatem było traktem, po którym człowiek zmierzał w akcie ostatecznej nadziei lub rozpacz w stronę Stwórcy. Dlatego też obawa przed jego gniewem była źródłem większej troski niż sama pospolicie zdarzająca się śmierć, bowiem to jej obraz związany z odroczonym potępieniem ściśle wiązał się z przeświadczeniem o istnieniu duszy, gdyż to ona właśnie miała ponieść konsekwencje za życie w cielesnym wymiarze. Ciągłe obecna apokaliptyczna wizja świata (uzasadniana np. w rzeczywistości społecznej częstymi pomorami) wytwarzała specjalny typ postawy nakierowanej na traktowanie życia ziemskiego jako jedynie przedsionka do nieznanej nieśmiertelności. Pogląd ten bazował na ogólniejszym przekonaniu, że chrześcijanie w istocie nie należą do świata doczesnego, a ich postępowanie w przypisanym im czasie stanowi wyraz odpowiedniego do nauk Chrystusa pogodnego stosunku do przemijania. Śmierć przeto jako zjawisko zatrważające przestała siał grozę i zaczęła budzić zainteresowanie swoją tajemnicą. Tak oto enigmatyczny sens przemijania nie krył się w nieuchronności zaniku bytu tracącego logikę w obliczu cierpienia i trosk banalnego życia, ale w przeświadczeniu, że człowiek nie jest somatyczno-intelektualną jednią, ale dualistycznym tworem, złożonym z nieprzemijalnej duszy i przemijającego ciała. Do dzisiaj pogląd ten nie stracił na ostrości i znaczeniu.

Słowa kluczowe: bezpieczeństwo egzystencjalne, filozofia średniowieczna, filozofia bezpieczeństwa, przemijanie, śmierć.