

Summary

The submitted doctoral dissertation pertains to the phenomenon of dying, death and mourning in the context of practical philosophy. The study is mostly aimed at bringing closer the essence of death and at emphasizing the significance of keeping company to a dying person. The figure of psychopomp (in Greek: *psychopompos* – the “guide of souls”) is used in the dissertation – its task is helping to notice the essence of death, to become aware to what the event of dying is related and what influence the mourning process has on the reception and experience of death. In every epoch, the topos of psychopomp – despite its changeability over the centuries, its being forgotten and rediscovered – acquires a new sense and new functions. Thus, the aim of the study is to show the universality and necessity of the psychopomp’s role in a human being’s appropriate experience of going through death.

What has been applied here as the key to the analysis of the collected material and to the interpretation of the phenomenon of keeping company in the face of death are the following ways of understanding death: as an end or a beginning, as a transition, and finally as loneliness or dialogue.

In the study, the following methods were used: critical analysis of the works of particular thinkers, elements of the comparative approach and synthesis (interpretative, anthropological, historical, and hermeneutic methods). The main object of my analyses were texts of particular philosophers; their interpreters’ works; preserved historical, literary, religious materials; and supporting literature in the field of philosophical anthropology. I made use of expert literature in such scientific disciplines as philosophy, religious studies, psychology, or medicine in the Polish, English and Italian language.

The presented dissertation constitutes a multi-layered mosaic, written over a long period of time and getting mature alongside the growing interest in the issue of death in the last decade. However, I do believe this will be its advantage and will help to show my engagement and my wish to draw attention to the event of death, which personally concerns every human being.

Structurally, the study comprises the introduction, three chapters, the ending and bibliography.

The first chapter *The anthropological view on death* is aimed at presenting death in compliance with the aforementioned interpretation key, with the assumption that the vision of death is strictly associated with a particular anthropology. Firstly, death is considered here as an end or a beginning in the aspect of temporality and spatiality and by presenting human life as a certain dynamic process. Secondly, my intention is to show death as a transition, reflected

in funerary ceremonies and rituals. Thirdly, death is considered in the categories of loneliness and dialogue, from the angle of keeping company, as well as in the horizon of such values as love, faith and hope.

The second chapter *The historical view on death* is focused on the analysis of the collected historical materials, extracted from the literature and philosophy of the Ancient Greek culture, as well as from the legacy of the Old and New Testament – from the period of Judaism to the times of late Middle Ages. This is done from the angle of death and its presence in its particular interpretations and stages of the topos of psychopomp.

The third chapter, *The hermeneutic view on death* is aimed at zooming the issue of death in two scientific disciplines – psychology and modern philosophy. As this chapter consists of a hermeneutic analysis and interpretation of selected thinkers' texts, at first I make an attempt to describe each particular vision of the human being and to outline the author's biography, which are both associated with the concept of death and the need of keeping company in the face of it. In the field of psychology, the thanatic current is presented on the basis of the works of two psychiatrists: Elisabeth Kübler-Ross and Antoni Kepiński, and in the context of the movement of palliative care. In philosophy, the works of Simone Weil and Józef Tischner have been explored.

The composition of the dissertation is assumed as a coherent whole, however – each of the three chapters might constitute a closed part and might be treated separately. The diversity of motifs and notions, which finally have the same goal of presenting the function of psychopomp, ultimately leads to a multidimensional presentation of the issue of dying, death, and mourning.

The phenomenon of death poses many difficulties for a researcher. Therefore, the issue of death and the role of psychopomp were not comprehensively described in this dissertation. Yet, on the basis of the drawn conclusions, it can be stated that the conducted analysis provides arguments which justify the thesis on the universality of the motif of psychopomp, because dying, death and mourning is an exceptionally complex process, stretching in time and engaging the dying and the people accompanying them in this, regardless of time and space.

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