

English Translation of Abstracts and Tables of Contents

History and Ideas of Neurocentric Concepts of Human Death

Robert Roczeń

Abstract

Traditionally, death is understood as a complete termination of functioning of those organs that are crucial for the organism as a whole. This implies that the organism is understood as functionally interconnected systems (*systema*), and not as a sum of individual elements. Is thus death a singular event, or a process? In the light of the contemporary medical knowledge it is a process. However, it can be perceived as a singular event in a biographic context. The process constitutes of non-simultaneous functionality disappearance of the individual systems. For example, the first organ that ceases to function can be the brain, and this provides grounds for the discussion of neurocentric concepts of human death. These concepts have been evolving over a century, occupying the minds of physicians as well as philosophers and theologians. The issue of brain death brought a new aspect into the discourse on the structure of the human being and, as it was in antiquity, medicine unifies in this matter with philosophy. New clinical states highlighted the division of the human being into the mind understood as a function of the brain, and the body. Therefore, to be able to consider these issues it is not necessary to go into the clinical details of the states in question. Details of this kind are useful for diagnostic purposes but not for considerations claiming a certain degree of generality. Contemporarily, the following neurocentric concepts of human death are discussed: (1) death of brain as a whole, (2) death of brain stem, (3) death of the higher brain and anencephaly. Neuronal correlates of axial phenomena in brain death states constitute biological foundations of bioetic discourse. This gave the rise to philosophical views justifying or proving the lack of legitimacy to accept these states as the state of human death. Among these views one can distinguish those focusing on: (1) death of cerebral hemispheres, with anthropological and axiological argumentation, (2) death of brain, with biological argumentation, and (3) death of the whole brain, with argumentation unifying the concept of brain death. While the views referring to biological foundations appear to be well justified, those referring to axiological and/or personalistic argumentation lead to continued and vivid discussion.

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Ambiguity of Death in the Context of Transformations of its Understanding in the Christian Thought

Andrzej Dańczak

Abstract

The objective of this work is to present some selected aspects of the changing Christian interpretation of death and to make an association between the resulting conclusions and the possibility to justify the multitude of ways in which death is understood nowadays. The phenomenon of death is demanded by any culture to be explained and incorporated into a consistent system of the understanding of the world. In the Christian tradition, death has for a long time been perceived solely as a consequence of sin. 20th century theology re-interpreted death significantly. This re-interpretation is based not only on the observation of the universal character of death in the entire Nature, but also on a new approach to a man, allowing one to view death as, among others, a state of anthropological fullness. Such comprehension of death may contribute to the understanding of certain aspects of the Christian concept of the world, and also of God, with whom a complete encounter takes place beyond the line of death and beyond the actual form of the "world of things". It can also be used to portray death using the topos of the way, often limited only to the description of life itself.

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The Issue of Human Death in the Context of Evolutionistic Megaparadigm

Adam Świeżyński

Abstract

The progress of biological evolution is marked by the appearance of higher and higher species and ends at a man, the highest of the life forms existing on the Earth. However, with the appearance of a man the passive phase of the evolution has undergone a change into the anthropic phase, since a man can direct the evolution towards specific goals. This became possible because together with a man a new, higher ontic level came into existence: the human spiritual layer opening a man for transcendence. The task of the evolution with respect to a man is to completely transform and elevate him to this higher level of ontic perfection.

When considering the issue of death as expressed in the frame of the evolutionary concept of the being one begins with the fundamental assumption of the evolution theory stating that every evolution advances by providing a kind of evolutionary novelty. The latter is always "something more" in comparison to the initial form: it transcends it. According to the concept in question, the moment of death is the key and ultimate threshold in the evolution of the whole man, not only of one of his constituents.

In the evolutionary view, death is not dying in the traditional sense of this word meaning decay and destruction. In the evolutionary sense, death appears not as a regress or collapse in the lineage of development: to the contrary, it appears as the moment that is most positive for a man during his whole history of life and growth. Death is also the moment at which a man becomes transferred from the category of ontic becoming into that of ontic contemplation, i.e., into the state of possession of the fullness of the being. Such a stance meets the demand reported by many contemporary people, for whom to treat the moment of death as the moment of separation of body and soul appears unsatisfactory from philosophical as well as theological points of view.

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The Teaching of Anselm of Canterbury on the Incarnation and Redemption

Tadeusz Grzesik

Abstract

Saint Anselm of Canterbury, who lived at the turn of the 11th and 12th centuries, was the first philosophizing theologian of that period. When discussing the problems of the Incarnation and Redemption, he refers to the notion *rectitudo* (rectitude, rightness, righteousness) in order to explain the reasons of God's provisions for man, who by his iniquity had disrupted the order established by God in the world. The argument from appropriateness (*convenientia*) allows Anselm to expound the will of God, making it possible to be understood as consistent. In his explanation of the Christian doctrine on Redemption, Anselm points to the attribute of divine mercy as to the crucial reason, which makes it clear why God became a man and why, as the God-man, He chose to suffer and to die on the cross. For Anselm, the will of God is never irrational, and that is why, underlying every one of its decisions, there are reasons for God acting as He does. Both the Incarnation and the Redemption reveal to man the immense love of his Creator. They also illustrate how precious a human being must be in God's eyes, if the Creator was pleased to renew fallen humanity in such a way (*humana restauratio*). The unification of God and man in the God-man also has eschatological significance: man was created for the purpose of everlasting joy in union with God. This medieval thinker changed the theological outlook on the Incarnation and the Redemption. Instead of talking about redeeming the human being from the power of the devil, Anselm brings to our notice the satisfaction, which a sinner owes for justice's sake to God, and which was effected through the intermediary of the God-man, Jesus Christ.

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The Universal Salvation in the Philosophy of N. A. Berdyaev

Jan Krasicki

Abstract

The issue of the universal salvation in the philosophy of N. A. Berdyaev is undertaken. It is shown that it cannot be understood without relating the thought of the author of "New Middle Ages" to the spiritual tradition of the Eastern Orthodox Church. This tradition is more an "orthodoxy" of life than of indoctrination (after Berdyaev). It has never been dominated by what is typical to the western tradition: by the idea of the juridical, legal approach to the Last Things that operates with the concepts of guilt, eternal punishment, and retribution. In this context the category of meonic, uncreated freedom that is central to the thought of Berdyaev is shown on the one hand as a freedom to chaos, freedom to evil, and on the other hand as a category that allows a man to reach the fullness of his creative vocation in mundane as well as eschatological dimensions. The thought of Berdyaev is presented as inscribing itself in the "Orthodox Truth" – the immemorial truth about the hope for the salvation to everyone.

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Sources of the Hope for the Universal Salvation

Robert M. Rynkowski

Abstract

The Four Last Things of the Catechism: *Death, Last Judgment, Heaven or Hell*, clearly suggest that the ultimate destiny of some people will be condemnation in hell. This is confirmed by biblical statements on hell, on eternal suffering, and on the fiery lake. Apart from them there are, however, verses on God's desire to save everyone. To Origen or to Gregory of Nyssa they were the basis for talking about apokatastasis, understood as a hope for the universal salvation. Apokatastasis was condemned by the Synod of Constantinople in 543. However, some theologians are of the opinion that this condemnation refers only to the form of apokatastasis understood as universal amnesty and not as a hope for universal salvation. Other theologians point out that claims about eternity of hell do not have particularly strong foundations in the teachings of the Church. The teachings of the Holy Scripture, of the Church Fathers, and of the Magisterium on the possibility of condemnation are the subject of controversy between protagonists and antagonists of the hope for salvation to everyone. This paper presents the nature of this dispute and describes the conditions allowing one to treat the abovementioned theological sources as the sources of the hope. It also indicates other sources of this hope: namely, the Christian realism in the matter of human life and the trinitarian view of God.

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How to Reconcile the Universality of Salvation and the Threat of Damnation

Jarek Dąbrowski

Abstract

According to the Bible, God does all that he pleases (Ps 115:3). He will not reject forever (Lam 3:31), but wants all men to be saved (1 Tim 2:4). Nevertheless, the doctrine of apokatastasis (belief that all will certainly be saved) is often objected. It is being supposed to be incompatible with the justice of God and with the fundamental dogma that we have the freedom of will. It is being held that the belief in universal salvation takes away the motivation to avoid evil deeds. It is also being pointed out that apokatastasis was condemned by the Church and that the Bible talks about eternal hell. This article makes an attempt to counter these and other objections and to demonstrate how apokatastasis can be reconciled with its verbal negation, "infernism" (belief that the threat of eternal damnation is real). Towards this end, argumentats are presented showing that the eternity of hell may be infinite not objectively but only subjectively: while in the condemned state, the condemned person is at every single moment completely convinced that hell is his or her ultimate fate – but this person is mistaken. Such a distinction between the objective eterninity and the subjective eternity allows one to accept the universality of salvation with no need to reject the meaning attached to the notion of condemnation by some biblical verses, by the Magisterium, and by the Tradition. In order to make the discussion univocal and precise, an integrated theory of person, free will, justice, and the good and the evil is outlined. Furthermore, it is shown that the apokatastasis cannot be rejected in a logically correct way without a simultaneous rejection of at least one of the fundamental attributes of God (omnipotence, justice, love) and/or without the assessment that sentient beings have no free will. The significance of the approach developed here is that, if correct, it may help to reverse the ambiguous consequences exerted by the Second Council of Constantinople on the catholic theology.

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What Happens to Animals After Death? Reflexions on the Basis of the Thomistic Theory

Remigiusz Kalski SJ

Abstract

"Souls of irrational animals are not immortal" – held Thomas Aquinas. Would he be willing to maintain his claim today? It appears that, due to a number of reasons, he might recognize the post-humous existence of animal souls as well-founded. Since the substantial form of an animal does not "appear" independently from matter, it cannot disappear with it (i.e., it cannot "decay" to some material forms). Animal souls have a distinct ontic status, irreducible to the ontic status of matter with its rich potential. Life – such as it is available to our observation – is not a consequence of "highly ordered" matter. To the contrary: "highly ordered" matter is a manifestation of life. Death does not seem to be an annihilation nor a substantial transformation, but it is rather something what paralyses the action of the substantial form in matter. Immortality is a natural property of a soul (and of life). A particular dog or cat is "forced to abandon the material" when he is unable to rebuild the body, to integrate the physiological and mental processes, etc.

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A Long Way to the Global Ethos: Are Religions a Chance or an Obstacle?

Stanisław Obirek

Abstract

One of the signs of contemporary times is the stunning career of the notion of dialogue. Dialogue is not a precise concept, but it associates with the beginnings of European civilizations, in particular with the Greek tradition. Also Christianity was born in a kind of dialogue with Jewish and Greek traditions. The Author attempts to confront this new reality of dialogue with the practice of the Catholic Church, which on the one hand declares its readiness for dialogue with the world, and on the other hand it emphatically determines the conditions on which this dialogue is possible. In the opinion of the Author, this is a false assumption since it contradicts the very idea of dialogue, which relates to openness and to the ability to question one's own stance. The only criterion that allows to distinguish between a real dialogue and its caricature is fidelity to one's own conscience. It is externally visible as the consistency of reasoning. The historical argumentation needed to justify the proposition of this paper illustrates the dangers of dialogue "with limited responsibility" that is typical for the Catholic Church. An example how this type of constraints are overcome is the theology of the Swiss catholic theologian, Hans Küng.