

Unity of identity does not unity or multiplicity of *self*; it is not corporality, it is not the proprioceptional reception of the body's borders. The consciousness of one's own person, its unity in the dichotomous or synchronic sense – is also something not related to the brain, or at least according to J. Bremer not directly. A human being also means someone who has been shaped on the basis of corporeality via the process of socialization, the process of gaining skills in relations with others. A person is not only the *self* or its multiplicity existing in time and space, shaped on the basis of corporeality. The person on the view presented by Bremer is the *I* made corporeal in relation with the other. It is also the existing *I*. „Existence” as the primal and indefinable term in this description points to the existence of a dimension exceeding the spatial and temporal conditions of the human being.

The book is an ambitious attempt to present contemporary reductionist views on cognition and neurobiology against the background of a wide spectrum of philosophical and philosophical–neurological concepts. It does not depreciate the empiricist trends of interpretation of the human phenomenon, the author crosses the border of determinism by means of the concept of the relational nature of the human being and their existence.

The final paragraphs of the book are meaningful. J. Bremer asks: *whether speculative theses in neurology are actually empirical knowledge. Even if we say that we understand the structures and functioning of the brain, we still do not know how such a category as „sense” appears in it; does meaning appear in the external world, and if so, how*” (p. 462).

The book presents a broad discussion of contemporary problems in the analysis of the self, identity, and the personal *I*. Reading it allows us to discover the core of the difficulties in the anti-reductionist vision of man. Although the author does not express this *expresis verbis*, one may easily recognize that the problem involves the elimination of that level of reality, which, in the classical sense, is described as ontological from scientific interest.

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Ireneusz Ziemiński, *Śmierć, nieśmiertelność, sens życia. Egzystencjalny wymiar filozofii Ludwiga Wittgensteina* [Death, Immortality, the Meaning of Life. The Existential Dimension of Ludwig Wittgenstein's Philosophy], Krakow: Aureus 2006, 368 pp.

I strongly believe that philosophy plays (as it indeed should play) an important role in our culture, influencing the ways we think and the ways we treat values. What is more, I think that philosophers have a duty to show how the sophisticated and extremely abstract philosophical theories can be useful for non-philosophers.

This can be achieved in a number of ways, through writing in different registers and styles, and through applying philosophy to a variety of topics. The information age in which we are supposedly living shows a tendency towards escapism when it comes to difficult and disturbing existential matters, including such topics as death and the process of dying or the passing of a human life. It seems that everyone wants to be young and beautiful, and hence not only do we hardly ever talk about death within the sphere of public life, but we also tend to exclude any visual representations of elderly or dying people. In this context I truly admire the philosophical work Ireneusz Ziemiński has done on this issue, both in his previous books and in this one, devoted to the philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein.

The author of *Philosophical Investigations* and his philosophy hold a unique place in the history of philosophical writings. Wittgenstein's work, the influence of which reaches far beyond the field of philosophy (and into such fields as linguistics, psychology, cultural studies and literary criticism), continues to inspire endless commentary and interpretation. It might come as a surprise that an author who published only two pieces of written work during his lifetime remains so intellectually stimulating and so ambiguous. Personally, I believe that the specificity of Wittgenstein's works lies in the fact that we as readers feel that he has something important to say, even if it is not fully expounded. Hence, we are struggling to make plain what has been put into such a „foggy” philosophical shape. It is by no means an easy job, as we can see by looking at a large number of philosophical works dealing with Wittgenstein's philosophy. Ziemiński is well-aware of these facts, and yet he is not afraid to try to convince the readers that his own elucidation of Wittgenstein's understanding of the phenomenon of death is not only coherent and reasonable, but can also teach us something about death itself. Ziemiński is a wonderful example of a philosopher who wants to learn something from the author of *Philosophical Investigations*, rather than simply present the one and only correct interpretation of his thoughts (p. 13). I admire this attitude very much, for I find the standard discussions about whose interpretation of Wittgenstein's philosophy is closer to Wittgenstein's own point of view to be cognitively fruitless. Additionally, while the Polish tradition of interpreting Wittgenstein's philosophy concentrates mainly on the logical and metaphysical ideas of *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*, this book, where Wittgenstein's philosophy is looked at mainly from the existential perspective, re-establishes the proper balance of interpretations available in Polish. Since the existential perspective is very much present in the *Philosophical Investigations* themselves its employment by Ziemiński is another undisputable advantage of his book.

It is a great pity, however, that the author does not explain in a more personal mode what motivated him to choose Wittgenstein while writing about death. Are the reasons for doing so purely philosophical (in the sense that Wittgenstein has something important to say in the history of human writings about death)? Or is it simply the beauty of the mysterious style of Wittgenstein's text? Or is it something

else? Maybe it is the attitude toward the phenomenon of death which Zieminski shares with Wittgenstein? This attitude can only be personal when such existential matters as death are considered. It is my firm belief that philosophical writings will lose nothing of their essential content or their coherence of argumentation when enriched with the personal opinions or even feelings of their authors. On the contrary, I think they would become more philosophical in a sense that is close to Wittgenstein's own way of philosophizing („I should be merely the mirror in which my reader sees his own thought with all its distortions and with this help can set it aright", *Big Typescript*, vol. VIII, 226). There is nothing wrong with using Wittgenstein's biography in order to explain some of his philosophical thoughts, since philosophers' biographies and the philosophical content of their works are unavoidably interrelated in many, often very sophisticated, ways. In this sense, I would argue that the biographical aspects are not of lesser value for philosophical reasoning (see p. 277, including note 63). Zieminski openly declares that as a historian of philosophy he is obliged to be neutral and unprejudiced (p. 12), which I find not only impossible to achieve, but also philosophically harmful. He states that the aim of his book is to make a small contribution to the reconstruction of the history of the philosophical problem of death (p. 13), which is, in my opinion, just another name for conducting an interpretation - an interpretation naturally determined by Zieminski's philosophical knowledge, his education, cultural background, his conscious and unconscious attitudes towards Wittgenstein's philosophy, his convictions about how to do philosophy, about what constitutes proper philosophical writing, his personal views on death itself, etc. All this does not make his position neutral, it is full of various values, which I find absolutely exact. This is, however, a topic for a slightly different kind of discussion, which I will postpone for now.

The book is about...

Zieminski employs various tools with the aim of establishing what death means for Wittgenstein and what his way is of making this phenomenon reasonable (p. 18). It should be emphasized that Zieminski is not afraid to build a full, detailed and sophisticated interpretation of a given matter on the basis of just a few sentences taken from Wittgenstein's work. This reveals not only the analytic and hermeneutic skills of the author, but also shows how one can be doing philosophy using the ideas of one's brilliant predecessors; and yet be doing philosophy of one's own and for one's own purposes. The book consists of six chapters, an introduction and a conclusion. They are all organized around quotations taken from Wittgenstein's book, which are used as titles of chapters and subchapters. This maneuver not only keeps the argumentation of the book in perspicuous order, but additionally gives the impression that the author is providing his readers with a kind of map which helps them to navigate through the labyrinth of Wittgenstein's considerations about death. Subsequent chapters deal with the following issues: the relation between life and death (Chapter I); the idea of death not being an event in life (Chapter II);

understanding eternity as presence (Chapter III); the obligation to live a happy life (Chapter IV); the fear of death as a sign of leading a bad life (Chapter V); suicide as an elementary sin (Chapter VI).

I am not going to summarize the entire contents of the book here, I will just point out some issues which are either crucial for the book as a whole, or which for some reason I found interesting. I use the adjective „interesting” here as a synonym for „philosophically refreshing” or „explanatory” (providing further inspiration for philosophizing).

In the first chapter, the author focuses on Wittgenstein’s famous saying: „Tell them I’ve had a wonderful life” and tries to explicate what it tells us about the way Wittgenstein was preparing for the experience of death and about his attitude towards it. I find the analyses of holiness and of Wittgenstein’s understanding of the meaning of life („be a genius or die!”) especially significant. They show the specific mood of Wittgenstein’s texts devoted to existential matters, as well as his constant life-and-death struggle to lead a good life, a struggle present also while he was writing texts in logic and philosophy. This ethical drift is repeatedly mentioned by Ziemiński throughout the whole book, and rightly so.

The second chapter deals with the old, philosophically weighty and existentially crucial problem of the status of death (from the perspective of the transcendental subject). Is death an event which cannot be described (p. 75), for while there is death, there is nothing (p. 77)? What does it mean to say that the notion of my own death is without sense (p. 83)? How to understand Wittgenstein’s claim that death is axiologically and existentially the most valid nonsense (p. 90)?

The third chapter is organized around the problem of eternity and eternal life, and their relation to human earthly life. Ziemiński is trying to explicate what these notions mean for Wittgenstein himself (p. 114). His considerations lead to the interesting and surprising conclusion that it is impossible to give any content to the notion of eternal life (p. 119). If we can obtain eternal life at all, it can only be possible here, during our present life (p. 147), and the very notion of „eternal life” has to be treated as a great metaphor (p. 156). Eternal life seems possible only when we change our attitude toward our earthly life and toward temporal categories (p. 167). It follows that for temporal human life there is no death, which is the Wittgensteinian way of deleting the problem of death as such (p. 163).

Chapter four can be interpreted as a kind of call to live happily! Happiness is understood here as a way of living which will permit us to escape the power of time (p. 215), and as such it is an objective notion. I have to admit that I am not sure what kind of objectivity the author has in mind here. The book claims that although happiness is subjectively experienced by the subject, it is objective as a given way of existence achieved by the man (p. 219). Is this way independent of the cognitive capacities of human beings, their symbolic and cultural background, and the history of their form of life? Is it the same for all people? Who is going to decide which way is right? It is a pity that Ziemiński does not explain this fascinat-

ing issue in more detail. Finally, according to Wittgenstein the aim of human life is to maintain being (existence) (*zachować byt*) (pp. 240-241), i.e. to achieve the absolute fullness of being (p. 245). It seems that the crucial matter here would be to ask what this aim means practically, in the context of daily life? Are we able to provide an example of such an existence? Zieminski admits that Wittgensteinian ethics is formal and not material (note 104, p. 252), but he makes no further comments on the subject. Yet we as readers are left with a number of weighty questions: Is such a ethics useful for concrete human beings, who are, after all, 'material' (by the way this question is particularly valid in the context of Wittgenstein's late philosophy)? Is it truly the case that all ethical discussions have to end with a dispute over absolute good and evil (p. 315, 333)? And must this dispute, as it often does, lead to a philosophical stalemate?

In chapter five Zieminski considers the phenomenon of the fear of death, which is believed to be an indication of a bad life. In accordance with Wittgenstein's attitude toward praxis, a bad life is not the result of any epistemological or cognitive mistakes, but rather of an improper attitude toward life on the part of the subject. Specifically, this refers to an inconsistency with the subject's nature, though it is not clear from the text what exactly this nature is (p. 265-266). Here, an unhappy life is defined in the most abstract way, as a life in which the subject does not fulfill their destiny, which is to be a subject as subject (p. 268). We can find out if someone's life is happy, by checking if he or she is afraid of death. Those who are not afraid of death have managed to lead real eternal lives (p. 295).

Chapter six is devoted to the problem of suicide, which is treated as an elementary sin. Since the aim of human (subject's) life is to continue human existence (being), committing suicide radically and irremediably destroys the subject (p. 328), and as such has to be understood as an absolute evil. Additionally, since the subject constitutes its own world, destroying it equals destroying this world, which is a metaphysical sin (p. 329).

A few detailed remarks

The amount of references to the relevant literature, throughout the book, is very impressive. One can treat the information given in the notes as a guidebook to both Wittgenstein's biography and Wittgenstein's bibliography. I admire the author and his competence in dealing with so many different texts on Wittgenstein's philosophy. What is more, Zieminski places a lot of curiosities in the notes, which makes the book even more interesting and vivid, which I find crucial in the case of philosophical books. Let me also mention that there are many useful and interesting analyses of basic Wittgensteinian notions, including some remarks concerning translation both from German to English and from German to Polish (see for example p. 77).

There are several places where the author stresses that Wittgenstein was treated by some of his pupils and friends as a prophet (p. 21); a philosophy guru (p. 12),

etc., and, as an impatient reader who was once upon a time fascinated by Wittgenstein's philosophy, I cannot help but make a small comment here. It is clear for me that Wittgenstein fascinated people in Cambridge because of his anti-academic attitude towards doing philosophy and towards the professional academic life. Among many similar figures, whose training and subsequent work restricted them to fulfilling academic duties, he stood out as an example of a man who actually lived a philosophical life. It is worth mentioning here that if Wittgenstein were working at a university nowadays, he would be quickly dismissed because of the miserable number of his publications (following the golden rule of the university life: publish or perish!).

I can only raise an objection to the fact that Zieminski puts in notes nearly all the remarks concerning the philosophical insight (revelation) connected with philosophical work (for example: note 8, p. 21, note 40, p. 32). In a certain way this suggests that philosophically it is not so important, or is only related to Wittgenstein's life and not so much to his thoughts. I believe that the very fact that Wittgenstein attached some weight to the role of certain personal experiences which simply could not be explained by science, or by the philosophy of his day, shows he was ahead of his time. This partly explains why his thought is so inspiring, for example for contemporary theories of the cognitive subject (the embodied and enactive approaches).

With a view to my own philosophical attitudes and specific sensitivity, I am forced to note two other marginal points. Firstly, Zieminski sometimes describes the human being in a dualistic way (biological organism and consciousness, p. 53) as if this dualistic construction was unquestionable and obvious. However, it is not, and it seems to me that almost the whole force of contemporary research on the cognitive subject and in philosophical anthropology is applied in order to treat the human being as a certain totality, a bodily organized wholeness, which cannot be easily divided into a biological and a transcendental part, hence I would be more careful here. Secondly, at a certain point he admits that the interpretation of the word „death” as a public metaphor is not an adequate reading of Wittgenstein's view, because the public forms of discourse are not able to reveal the essence of death (p. 93). How can one, who only wants to make a first step in the reconstruction of Wittgenstein thoughts on death (see the declaration in the introduction), be so sure what is adequate and what is not in this case? Either the aim of the book is half-hearted or Zieminski applied improper categories here. What is more, it seems to me that one can claim that the public linguistic discourse is all we have in talking about the truth, but the essence (in a non-traditionally philosophical sense) of death lies in the fact that it is above all a personal experience.

While reading others we are faced with another idiolect, which can enrich our own language, can surprise us or even give us some insight into our thoughts through its specific beauty. I have benefited a lot from Zieminski's language. It is clear, easy to follow in reading, beautifully balanced between philosophical jargon

and everyday speech. From time to time, however, one misses a more poetic tone, more personal and emotional attitudes while talking about existential problems, which could revitalize the style of the book. For example, following an old academic habit, Ziemiński stubbornly uses the first person plural – „we” – when referring to his views, which becomes annoying for me, taking into account the content of the book. Moreover, such phrases as „obligacja” (p.21) or „precyzacja” (pp. 102, 213) hurt the ears of readers (even if they are technical terms). Let me quickly add that, luckily, they are very rare, and so are typographical errors (p. 145, 201, 241), which is quite unusual in publishing today.

Ziemiński has managed to write a book about death which presents high quality philosophical analysis, and expresses it in an appropriate language. There is something in the style of the whole book which makes the reader sit down, slow down, reflect on his own life and its destination- death. I hope that a lot of people will benefit from reading the book, both in the philosophical and personal dimension.

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Hilarion Alfeyev, *The Holy Mystery of the Church. Introduction to the history and problems in the debates on the onomatodoxy*, Saint Petersburg: Oleb Abyshko Edition 2007, 910 pp.

No doubt, the book by the Bishop of Vienna and Austria, Hilarion Alfeyev, does not need any special recommendation. The first publication of *The Holy Mystery of the Church* appeared in 2002. This book, for which Bishop Hilarion received a Macaries prize, is considered to be a classic work on the debates concerning the onomatodoxy. The second edition (amended and supplemented) was published in 2007 in the series „The Library of Christian Thought. An Investigation”.

Bishop Hilarion is known as the author of many research works on the Fathers of the Church and on Orthodox doctrine and tradition. He has also edited an anthology *Debates on the name of God. Archival materials 1912-1918*. In *The Holy Mystery of the Church*, which we recommend to readers, Bishop Hilarion explores deeply the debates concerning the onomatodoxy, concerning the nature and the worship of the name of God, namely: whether it is only a sign of, or a real expression of the essence of God. The author mentions that the title of his book refers to the Letter of Fr. Paul Florensky to I. Shchedrov from 13.05.1913, in which Florensky called the onomatodoxy „the ancient holy mystery of the Church” (p. 10).

The book consists of three parts; with each of them divided into chapters. In the first part „The Pre-history of the Debates on the Onomatodoxy. The Name of God in the Holy Scripture and the Tradition of the Church”, Bishop Hilarion examines the issue of the worship of the name of God in the Old and in the New

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