

Janusz SALAMON*

PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEMS WITH DISEMBODIED EXISTENCE AND SURVIVAL OF DEATH

It may be surprising to realize that the belief in life after death, widely shared by the adherents of the majority of religions, is more commonly linked to the idea of embodied post-mortem existence, rather than to the idea of disembodied existence. Although due to the powerful influence of Plato on early Christian, as well as Jewish, writers, the belief that a person is an immaterial soul that at death leaves the body which it previously occupied and continues to exist in a disembodied state became popular among the theistic philosophers, it is neither an undisputed orthodoxy, nor arguably a majority view of the matter. It appears that both Western theistic religions (with their concept of the resurrection of the body), and at least some Eastern traditions (with their concept of reincarnation), favour the view that a person continues to exist after her death in a bodily state of some kind, over the view that it is a disembodied soul that survives death. This, at least at first sight, would seem to make it even more difficult to defend the rationality of the belief in afterlife, considering that the biological death of one's body appears as well-established fact as any in science. And yet, taking into consideration the contemporary discussions in philosophy of mind, one has to conclude that the belief in the possibility of disembodied existence is by no means easier to be backed with a convincing philosophical argumentation. As *tertium non datur*, it would seem wise for a believer in afterlife to opt decisively for one of the two alternative positions in the metaphysics of mind: either to go for the mind-body dualism (and to claim that personal identity consists in identity of immaterial soul

* Dr Janusz SALAMON SJ, University School of Philosophy and Education
Ignatianum, Kraków
e-mail: janusz.salamon@univ-oxford.com

which continues over time and beyond the bodily death), or to go for more monistic or holistic view of a person according to which personal identity would reside in the unity of mind and body (hence for the person to survive her bodily death would require being embodied in her post-mortem state). Usually one argues for one of these positions by attacking the alternative solution. However, after a closer look, it turns out that for a theist (certainly for a representative of the mainstream Christianity) the situation is far less comfortable than that, because a theist often holds the two following beliefs: the belief in the resurrection of the body (which implies the possibility of embodied post-mortem existence), and the belief that God is a disembodied Spirit (hence disembodied existence has to be possible too). So a theistic philosopher, as it were, needs to keep two balls in the air at once. In the present paper I want to explore the feasibility of the theistic position with regard to the possibility of disembodied existence and survival of death. I will argue that, after all, it can be done.

It is good to stress right at the beginning of this discussion that the two issues I will be concerned with (disembodied existence and survival of death) are in the philosophical literature often treated quite independently. For example, providing arguments for the possibility of disembodied existence does not in itself commit one to the belief in the possibility of personal survival of death. After all, arguing for the possibility of disembodied existence may be a part of a project of idealistic metaphysics of such kind, that it has no place for God who would be a person or human persons existing post-mortem. What links the two issues is that they both can be properly addressed only after sorting out what are the necessary conditions of persistence of persons in time. The lack of consensus among contemporary philosophers of mind in these matters, I will suggest, makes it easier for a theistic philosopher to argue simultaneously for the possibility of disembodied existence and bodily survival of death. Not least important in this context is the possibility, a theist can argue for, that personal identity of human beings may consist in something different than personal identity of God.

Mind-Body Dualism, Disembodied Existence and Survival of Death

Statistically speaking, philosophers who defend the claim that persons can exist in disembodied state, tend to be substance dualists in philosophy of mind, though some of them (John Foster is perhaps the most notable example) occupy an ultimately monistic position, holding that reality is ultimately wholly mental.² A dualist defender of disembodied existence

² See John Foster, *The Immaterial Self*, London 1991.

needs to argue that what is of crucial importance for the identity of a person is on the side of the mental, and not the physical. It can be argued that for someone who believes in the possibility of survival of death, some sort of dualism is a natural option, as this belief usually implies that a person survives death, although her body is apparently subjected to decay. It would seem that a believer in after-life who is not committed to the possibility of disembodied existence, has no choice but to opt for the view that a person survives her death by means of becoming embodied in a body which is somehow different from the body it had before death. And this would seem to imply at least that her mind was not identical with her body/brain, which entails mind-body dualism of some sort. This, however, does not have to be the case, because the belief in the possibility of survival of death is compatible with some monistic, even with certain physicalist accounts of the mind.³ Granting the basic theistic belief that it is the omnipotent God who sustains the Universe in every moment of its existence (not only creates but also „conserves“ the Universe), it would not be too extravagant to suggest that human persons survive their bodily death, just in case God keeps them in existence after death, as he always does. For a theist, the transition between the two stages of embodied existence of a human person (which must be explained because of the obvious decay of the body of the dead individual) may appear no more mysterious than e.g. conversion of matter into energy, and vice versa. Thus it seems clear that if one would focus on the belief in post-mortem existence alone, it seems to be no problem for a theist to admit that the arguments against the possibility of disembodied existence appear to be more convincing, than are the arguments for such possibility, because a theist can postulate that it is God who is responsible for the „re-creation“ of the body of the person who survives its biological death.

Certainly Plato's arguments for the possibility of disembodied existence are far from being convincing. Plato was a model mind-body dualist. He believed that it is the immaterial soul (rational soul) that constitutes the focus of personal identity of human beings. As for Plato the rational soul is this element to which the mental life of human beings pertains, for him the term „rational soul“ refers to the same reality as the term „mind“, more frequently used these days. Thus it can be said that Plato believed that at death mind and body are separated, and while the body decays, the mind continues to exist and function without interruption. Interestingly, this belief did not follow with logical necessity from Plato's substance dualism. After all, one can think of the mind as a „thing“ ontologically different than the

³ See Trenton Merricks, „The Resurrection of the Body and the Life Everlasting,“ in Murray, Michael J. (ed.), *Reason for the Hope Within*, Grand Rapids 1999, 261-286.

body, but being in such relation with the body, that the mind ceases to exist at death, when the body ceases to function.

What makes Plato's account of survival of death crucially different from the Christian account of it, is, of course, the absence of some supernatural Being whose involvement would explain what makes the survival of death possible in the first place. True, Plato provides a number of arguments designed to show that the soul is immortal in virtue of its own nature, and it will continue to exist after death and forever, just because of what it is. However, it seems that even if these arguments would be convincing (and they are rarely considered to be such), they would establish at most that the mind continues to exist after death of the person, but not that it does continue to exist in disembodied state. Plato's argument for the natural indestructibility of the soul as a simple thing (it cannot disintegrate as it has no parts), or his argument from the supposed necessity of pre-existence of the soul (because human beings supposedly know things and have concepts which they have not learned or acquired on earth), may support the belief that the soul continues to exist after death, but from the supposedly natural immortality of the soul it does not follow that the soul can exist in disembodied state.

Thus even if Plato would establish that human soul is immortal, it may still be true that human soul can exist and does exist only in connection to a body/brain, and so after death of the body to which it is connected, it does need to be embodied in another body. And perhaps it may be a body of somewhat different kind, that the „earthly” body (after all, why should we suppose that human soul may exist and function only in connection with body of one kind, the one known to us from experience?). As there is enough evidence that the functioning of human soul (to use Plato's terminology), its having mental life, depends essentially on the functioning of the brain (and so a serious damage to the brain renders a person unconscious), one would need to provide more positive arguments to show that the soul could function in the absence of the support of the body/brain. (By the way, the „empirical” data, often referred to in the discussions of the possibility of post-mortem existence, like „near-death experiences”, reports made by people-mediums supposedly contacting persons already dead, claims made by children supposedly able to recall events of a previous life, have the same basic flow that they may support the general belief that life after death is perhaps possible, but not that disembodied existence is possible.)

There is, however, one argument in favour of disembodied existence, inspired by another famous mind-body dualist, namely Descartes, which proved to be serious enough to attract attention of a number of contemporary critics who favour a physicalist account of mind. Descartes argues that

I know infallibly that I exist as a thinking thing (i.e. my belief is „incurable”, as a contemporary epistemologist would say), but I do not know infallibly that I have a body (perhaps I only dream that I am embodied). According to Descartes, it follows that my body is a separate thing from what is essential to my identity, namely from my soul (the thinking substance), in such a way that makes it imaginable for me to exist as disembodied.

At first sight, this argument may appear easy to dismiss. After all, from the mere fact that I do not know infallibly that my body exists, it does not follow logically that it is actually separable from me. Perhaps I simply do not know what is involved in my present existence, what it is to be me, what is essential to my personal identity. Such response to Descartes would treat his argument as an argument from knowledge and ignorance. But Descartes's argument can be interpreted in such a way that the above objection will be insufficient. Perhaps what Descartes has in mind is in fact an argument of a different sort: an argument from logical possibility and impossibility. Descartes, writing in various places about what is „imaginable”, seems to suggest an argument which could be phrased in (more or less) the following way:

- (1) I exist as a thinking thing now.
- (2) It is logically possible for me to continue to exist as a thinking thing without my body.
- (3) It is not logically possible that any thing continue to exist unless some part of it continue to exist.
- (4) Hence I must already have some component which is different from my body, and whose persistence is the persistence of me (and it is my soul/mind).
- (5) So I must have mind which is different from my body (which therefore can exist as disembodied).
- (6) So I can exist as disembodied.

Can such an argument be considered decisive? Descartes's contemporary objectors, like Sydney Shoemaker,⁴ deny the premise (2). They claim that it is not logically possible that I survive without my body. They reject the idea of disembodied existence as a living possibility by pointing to the fact that being embodied is so central to what it is to be a person that the concept of a disembodied person is in fact unconceivable. In short, there is a disagreement here what does „logical possibility” amount to. But I think the defenders of the argument from logical possibility can stand their ground

⁴ See Sydney Shoemaker, „Immortality and Dualism”, in Shoemaker S., *Identity, Cause and Mind*, Oxford 2003, 139-158.

by holding that the basis for supposing something to be logically possible is that we can simply make sense of it (i.e. we can spell out what it would be like for it to be true). Thus „logically possible” would mean „conceivable”. After all, what are grounds for supposing something to be logically impossible? Arguably, the only grounds we can think of is that we can derive a contradiction from it. Surely, in this sense disembodied existence is conceivable (and so logically possible). It is not difficult to tell a coherent story of a person who continues to think, despite losing her body. And if so then the premise (2) is true, and Descartes’s argument for the possibility of disembodied existence seems sound.

Moreover, one needs to note one crucial difference between Descartes as defender of the possibility of disembodied post-mortem existence, and Plato as defender of such possibility. Descartes is a theist who affirms the possibility of backing the existence of God with philosophical arguments. As such he can more easily than Plato explain the possible Divine involvement in bringing it about that what is logically possible (disembodied existence) is true in the actual world.

Disembodied Existence and Personal Identity

If Descartes’s argument establishes the possibility of disembodied existence, it is still only *prima facie* possibility. In order to show that disembodied existence of human persons is not just logically possible (coherent in itself), but epistemically possible (coherent with everything we know about the world and its workings), one needs to explore further the essential relations between a person and her body.

A good way to start such exploration may be by asking, in virtue of what a human person refers to a particular body as her body? What are the relations which justify this reference? Only taking into account an answer to these questions, one can properly address further question, namely whether this person can continue to exist as a human person when these essential relations between that person and her body cease to hold. In other words, we need to specify whether there are any essential elements of personal identity which pertain to the person’s body. If the answer will be yes, then the defender of disembodied existence will need to explain how is it possible for a person to exist as person after losing some essential elements of personal identity. Cartesian metaphysics denies that personal identity is essentially linked to embodiment, but it is plausible to suggest that Descartes did not go into detail of the matter (enough to say that he himself admitted that his own account of the mind-body interaction did not strike him as satisfactory).

It seems that we can uncontroversially point to two sets of attributes which characterize a human person's relation to her body. One set has to do with intentional action. Another set has to do with perception. As to the first set, there is just one body which the person is able to control directly, that is without performing any additional intentional action, and it is this person's own body. This power of voluntary agency relates a human person to her body in a unique way. As to the second set of characteristics of the relationship between a person and her body, a person's perceptions of the world clearly depends on the position and condition of her body. Thus, arguably, to say that this particular body is the body of this particular person is (at the very least) to assert that this particular person has a direct voluntary control of this particular body and that her perceptions of the world depend on the position and condition of this particular body.

Having established as much, can we still plausibly claim that after having lost her body at death, a human person can continue to exist as person? An answer to this question will depend crucially on whether we agree that by continuing to exist as a person we mean to continue to exist in a way which is similar enough to the existence of a human person in an ordinary (i.e. embodied) state, which is the only state of personal existence known to us from experience. It does not call for too much imagination to conclude that the idea of perceiving material objects in the external world (the world external to human person's mind) by a disembodied person is very hard to grasp. Take, for example, the sense of sight: it is the position of a person's eyes (relative to the position of her entire body) that determines what she sees (she always looks in a specific direction, under a specific angle, from a specific distance, and so on). It is just hard to grasp what would a disembodied person see when located e.g. on the top of the Empire State Building (would she see in all directions at once, for example?). Of course, analogical problems will emerge when we consider other senses. But what about the location itself? Presumably a disembodied person is an immaterial person. Can an immaterial person have a specific location which would define the point in space from which she would „perceive“ her environment (whatever the nature of her perception)?

Similar problems come into focus when we address the question of intentional action. Could a disembodied person operate on her environment? Of course, it would need to be able to perceive it appropriately, in the first place, in order to be able to operate on it. But leaving the problem of perception behind, there is an equally puzzling question of the possibility of having direct voluntary control of something different than one's own body. How could this be done? True, a well read child can tell us a story involving telekinetic phenomena, but how could one plausibly account for such *modus operandi* of a disembodied person? Should such a person be

ascribed the ability of moving telekinetically any object, or perhaps only not too heavy ones, or placed only few meters away? And do we mean by „operating on the person's environment" also communicating one's thought? Should a disembodied person be able to have a conversation with another disembodied person?

These are all very puzzling questions, and I think many people who believe in life after death and understand such a life in dualist terms don't find such questions too puzzling, only because speaking about disembodied persons they in fact think about such persons as possessing bodies, except that they are very different from our ordinary bodies, being invisible for us, and so on.

I, for once, am inclined to think that this would be the right direction in which the believer in survival of death should look for philosophical solutions. It is worth noting that the whole analysis of a human person's relation to her body, presented above, can be effectively employed in constructing an argument for the possibility of the relation between a person and her body being transferred from one particular body to another particular body (perhaps this time to a body of somewhat different kind). In this way we would at least get rid of the difficulties mentioned above.

Would such a possibility amount simply to a „change of bodies"? In other words, would it entail substance dualism, which allows one to think in terms of mind being only „attached" to a particular body, because body and mind are two fully distinct and separable substances? Not necessarily. I would think, it is possible to give a more subtle account of this „transition" (secured by God) from the state S1 (in which a human person is embodied and remains in relation to a particular body which she loses at death) to the state S2 (in which the same human person is embodied in a body which is not identical with the „lost" body). It would probably need to be some sort of variation on Aquinas's view of these matters: a half way house of some kind between the fully fledged mind-body dualism and monism (be it materialist or idealist).

However, before I will address the issue of embodied post-mortem existence of human persons in some detail, it is important to notice that one can take seriously the strength of the conclusions drawn from the analysis of the elements of personal identity pertaining to the body, and still be able to defend the possibility of disembodied post-mortem existence. One could do it by accepting that the person who survives her death while losing her body, does indeed lose her ability of perceiving the external world and operating on her environment. No doubt she pays a heavy price for her survival, but still it is not an incoherent idea that she exists after her bodily death. Now, this would be in full harmony with Descartes's argument for the possibility of disembodiment, as the only thing he managed to show is

that the soul, as the „thinking thing”, can exist without a body. He did not show that when existing without a body, this „thinking thing” retains the ability of perceiving the external world and operating on her environment. What could such a disembodied person busy herself with? With thinking, obviously. A person without a possibility of perception and intentional action, but able to think (having all the old memories, ability to imagine, dream, plan, compose music, etc.) – it may strike one as somewhat weird or unattractive vision, but it is not an obviously incoherent one. But could a disembodied person retain after her death the memories, or even the very ability to think? Perhaps they depend totally on the fact that the mind supervenes on the body/brain, and once the body is dead, all the mental processes come to halt?

The very fact that these issues can be raised makes it perfectly clear, that in the context of the debate about personal survival of death one cannot escape the question, what are we actually concerned with hoping for survival of death? If it would appear that we are prepared to give up these elements of the way we operate as embodied persons which perhaps are so essentially linked to our embodiment that they cannot be retained in the disembodied state, it would be worth asking, which of the elements that define our identity as human persons are the elements that are the objects of our hope for survival? Which are the elements that the person in question would not to give up, otherwise she would have to conclude that she should have no concern for survival of this sort, simply because it would make no sense to say that it is really she who survives?

Here the split brain experiments, the famous thought experiments inspired by an Oxford philosopher, Derek Parfit,⁵ can be of help. One of them seems especially useful in our context. Let's imagine that my brain is divided, and each half is housed in a new body. It turned out that both semi-encephalic persons who resulted from this experiment have apparent memories of my life and traces of my character. How should we interpret the outcome of the experiment? Which of the three interpretations is correct: (1) I didn't survive the experiment (none of the two semi-encephalic persons is really me); (2) I survived as one of the two persons; (3) I survived as two persons? It seems that we would have no reason to claim that I didn't survive at all (after all, there would be someone who feels to be me). We would also have no reason to decide which of the two semi-encephalic persons is me (considering they both feel to be me). Hence, we would need to conclude that I survived as two persons. In the light of this conclusion, it is hard to deny the force of Parfit's suggestion, that if we don't assume that it

⁵ Derek Parfit, „Personal Identity”, *Philosophical Review* 80(1971), 3-27.

is exactly the connection of a person to a single body that constitutes the basis for individuation of persons (i.e. also the basis for deciding which person is me), then (granting the possibility of survival of death) it would be by no means obvious that after losing her body at death, the person under consideration would continue to exist as one, rather than more than one.

This thought experiment is valuable, because it points to the possibility, that it may well turn out that the unique relation between a particular person and a particular body is, after all, so crucial to the person's identity, that losing this relation equals losing personal identity. I think this possibility is yet another reason for a theist to favour the view that the post-mortem existence of human persons takes an embodied form.

Embodied Post-Mortem Existence of Human Persons and Disembodied Existence of God

I hope that from the preceding discussion it is clear that the outcome of the debate about the possibility of disembodied post-mortem existence of human persons does not depend on the outcome of the debate about the mode of God's existence. All the problems with disembodied existence of human persons discussed so far are rooted in our experiential knowledge of what it means to be an embodied human persons (we don't know any other kinds of human persons, after all). True enough, from the fact that we usually affirm about God that God is a person by way of analogy that is referring ultimately to our understanding of what it means to be a human person, it follows that we have to attach to the notion of person which we apply to God enough meaning as not render the belief that God is a person completely vacuous. For this reason, the conclusions about the identity of persons in general will have some bearing on the discussion of what can be the mode of existence of God if God is a person. However, this bearing is actually rather limited, as the list of person-making conditions may turn out to be different (shorter) when we consider the identity of persons in general, and different when we focus on the identity of human persons. For example, it may turn out that for a human person to be a person at all, it is necessary to be embodied (because it can be argued that one of the general conditions for being a person at all is to be able to think, and perhaps God as Creator so designed human beings that they can only think when they are embodied). But this second-level condition of personal identity (being embodied) may not apply to God, because perhaps God can think (thus satisfying the first-level condition for being a person) while existing as essentially disembodied.

There seem to be no danger here that we will run too easily into apophaticism of some problematic kind, when we assert that when affirming that God is a person we use the term person in a very different sense, than when we apply it to human beings. There seem to be no problem with affirming that God can think and learn about the world external to God while being essentially disembodied. And I suppose, there is no need to argue why from the point of view of a theist it is very desirable to affirm that God has no body (even in an analogical sense of the word).

Unlike in God's case, when we speak about human persons, the danger of rendering vacuous the belief in embodied post-mortem personal existence is a serious danger. It is for this reason, I think, that it is not the best way to argue for the possibility of survival of death, by asserting that the nature of the post-mortem existence of human persons is a complete mystery. Thus, while it seems a reasonable move on the part of a theist to claim that a human person having survived her death is a transformed person (by which I mean that her way of existence is to some extent different than her ante-mortem existence), it is undesirable to affirm that this transformation is so radical, that the two ways of personal existence of a human being (ante-mortem and post-mortem) have no common characteristics whatsoever. This, arguably, would be unacceptable because we would have no basis at all to affirm that the human person under consideration actually survived her death. Perhaps the being which exists post-mortem (supposing that it does) is simply not the survivor of the human person in question at all. To affirm that it is, we need to be able to refer to the elements of personal identity which are present in both the ante-mortem and post-mortem state of the particular person. If by definition (i.e. by defining the two states of existence as totally different) we leave no room for this common ground between the identity of ante-mortem and the identity of post-mortem person, we may be totally unable to affirm that she survived (and then the belief in the survival has no content and makes no sense).

These considerations make me think that in order to defend the rationality of the two important theistic beliefs, which I considered in this paper (the belief in disembodied existence of God and the belief in survival of death by human persons), it is better to argue for the possibility of embodied rather than disembodied post-mortem existence of human persons.

Janusz SALAMON

FILOZOFICZNE PROBLEMY EGZYSTENCJI BEZCIELESNEJ A ŻYCIE PO ŚMIERCI

Streszczenie

Zagadnienie racjonalności wiary w życie po śmierci spotyka się na płaszczyźnie filozoficznej z kluczowymi problemami współczesnej filozofii umysłu, zwłaszcza z kwestią tożsamości osobowej, określonej relacją umysłu i ciała człowieka.

Wpływ Platona na myśl wczesnochrześcijańską oraz na współczesną jej filozofię żydowską, a nieco później także na filozofię islamu, sprawił, że powszechną wśród wyznawców religii teistycznych wiarę w życie po śmierci wiąże się często z dualistyczną koncepcją osoby. W myśl tej koncepcji, brnionej na gruncie filozoficznym już przez Platona, a rozpowszechnionej i wcześniej na Bliskim Wschodzie, w szczególności zaś sposób w starożytnym Egipcie, człowiek składa się z dwóch całkowicie odmiennych i odrębnych ontologicznie pierwiastków, połączonych ze sobą jedynie incydentalnie: niematerialnej duszy i materialnego ciała. Według dualistycznego scenariusza, w momencie śmierci ciała, dusza, która jest nośnikiem wszystkich istotnych cech człowieka, kontynuuje swą egzystencję, tym razem jako istota bezcielesna. Dualizmu substancjalnego, który był zasadniczo podobny do platońskiego, bronił później Kartezjusz, choć czynił to w sposób odmienny od Platona.

Z niejakim zatem zaskoczeniem mógłby ktoś skonstatować, że nie tylko w chrześcijaństwie, ale również w innych religiach teistycznych, a czasem i nieteistycznych, poglądem na pośmiertną egzystencję człowieka uważanym za ortodoksyjny jest pogląd Platonowi przeciwny. Takie religijne idee, jak zmartwychwstanie ciał czy reinkarnacja, zakładają, że po przetrwaniu swej śmierci biologicznej człowiek będzie istniał jako istota ucieleśniona, a nie bezcielesna.

W niniejszym artykule argumentuję, że z punktu widzenia filozofa teistycznego, opowiedzenie się za tą drugą opcją jest bardziej pożądane. Nie

napotyka ona bowiem na te trudne do przewyciężenia (jak pokazują) teoretyczne trudności, które pociąga za sobą dualistyczna wizja pośmiertnego istnienia osób ludzkich pozbawionych ciała. Do głównych problemów należy tutaj na przykład niemożność wskazania elementów fundamentalnych dla tożsamości osobowej, które miałyby charakteryzować osobę ludzką zarówno w stanie egzystencji przedśmiertnej, jak i pośmiertnej. Identyfikacja takich elementów wydaje się nieodzowna, jeśli przekonanie o możliwości przetrwania śmierci przez osobę ludzką ma być sensowne, to znaczy posiadające jakieś uchwytne znaczenie. Brak takich elementów równałby się przyznaniu, że afirmując możliwość egzystencji pośmiertnej istot ludzkich nie potrafimy powiedzieć, jak miałyby się dokonywać weryfikacja takiego przekonania, to znaczy skąd będzie wiadomo, że ten byt, który rzekomo będzie istniał po śmierci, istotnie jest tą samą osobą ludzką, której ciało uległo rozkładowi. Co ważniejsze, jeśli przyjmiemy, że nieposiadanie ciała (mózgu), a nawet jego uszkodzenie czy degeneracja (jak pokazuje choroba Alzheimera) oznacza dla osoby ludzkiej niemożność poznawania otoczenia i oddziaływania na otoczenie, a nawet niemożność samoświadomości, pamięci i innych działań umysłowych, wówczas pojawia się kłopotliwe pytanie, czy istota, która przetrwałaby śmierć w stanie bezcielesnym, byłaby w dalszym ciągu osobą ludzką.

Kluczową sugestią poczynioną w niniejszym artykule jest ta, że opowiedzenie się za ucieleśnioną, raczej niż bezcielesną egzystencją pośmiertną osób ludzkich, w żadnej mierze nie utrudnia filozofowi teistycznemu argumentacji za tym, że Bóg (a także być może inne byty duchowe, nie będące osobami ludzkimi) istnieje w postaci bezcielesnej. Zatem teista może jednocześnie bronić racjonalności obydwu tych poglądów, które w kręgu religii teistycznych uchodzą zazwyczaj za ortodoksyjne: Bóg nie ma ciała, a egzystencja pośmiertna człowieka jest egzystencją istoty ucieleśnionej, a nie bezcielesnej.

Argumentacja, którą proponuję, odwołuje się do możliwości zróżnicowania pojęcia tożsamości osobowej, gdy jest ona odniesiona do osoby ludzkiej z jednej strony, a do Boga z drugiej strony. Spójna jawi się bowiem sugestia, że tożsamość osoby ludzkiej wiąże się z cielesnością w sposób tak nierozzerwalny, że istnienie bezcielesne osoby ludzkiej jest niemożliwie. Jednocześnie tożsamość osobowa w odniesieniu do Boga może nie być oparta w żadnej mierze na związku z wymiarem cielesnym. Zważywszy, że najbardziej fundamentalna dla osoby jako takiej wydaje się być możliwość samoświadomości, myślenia, poznawania świata zewnętrznego względem własnego umysłu i oddziaływania na swoje otoczenie, to wydaje się zasadnym, że Bóg ze swej natury może myśleć, poznawać i działać, będąc istotą bezcielesną, a osoba ludzka jest być może tak stworzona (zaprojektowana) przez Boga, że te kluczowe dla tożsamości osobowej czynności są dla niejostęp-

ne jedynie w stanie cielesnym. Takie rozumienie „osobowości” Boga byłoby zresztą w pełni zgodne z klasyczną teorią analogicznego rozumienia terminów orzekanych o Bogu.

Zatem z teistycznego punktu widzenia, biorąc pod uwagę zarówno argumenty współczesnej filozofii umysłu, jak i sugestie współczesnej neurofizjologii, bardziej zasadne wydaje się postulowanie pośmiertnej egzystencji osób ludzkich jako posiadających ciało, nawet jeśli w jakiejś mierze jest to ciało odmienne od tego, które znamy z egzystencji ziemskiej (być może „ciało przemienione” lub „ciało duchowe”, jak sugerują autorzy biblijni). Musiałoby to być jednak ciało wystarczająco podobne do naszego obecnego ciała, w przeciwnym bowiem razie teista musiałby się opowiedzieć za całkowitym agnostycyzmem w sprawie sposobu egzystencji pośmiertnej. Jeśli jednak filozof teistyczny decyduje się na powiedzenie czegoś sensownego o istnieniu pośmiertnym osób ludzkich, musi wypowiedzieć się spójnie w kwestiach związanych z tożsamością osoby, relacją umysłu i ciała, a ponadto jeszcze musi uzgodnić to ze swoimi wierzeniami o sposobie istnienia Boga. W tym kontekście stanowisko ściśle dualistyczne, bronione przez Platona czy Kartezjusza, wydaje się być trudne do utrzymania.

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