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EROS AND THANATOS – DESIRES AND FEARS

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Summary
Love and death – these two opposite and seemingly separate poles are interwoven though unequally acknowledged in different societies - from predominance to expulsion and marginalization. The paper reviews their unequal roles in psychology, art, modern culture and consumer society, beginning with Epicurian philosophy, through Darwinian theory of evolution, Freudian drives and fundamental principles, holistic conceptions of Antoni Kępinski to postmodernistic ephemeral and fragmented life, atomization of society, turnover of medical, funeral and sexual services, as presented by Zygmunt Bauman, Jean Baudillard, and Rollo May. Paintings by M.K.Ciurlionis and J.Malczewski on birth and death are commented.

The overpowering presence of the two dominant forces shaping our existence has been felt, acknowledged, disputed, or rejected. People accept one, the other, or both in various stages of their lives. There are several differences between the two notions concerning their placement in time. Eros comes comparatively early in human lives; people begin to think about death much later. Of course, one must bear in mind anticipatory situations when we are confronted with premature death of someone young or very young. Or to give a literary example, Hamlet considers suicide when disappointed with the situation in Denmark, his father's unexpected death and mother's marriage to his uncle, and extremely disturbed with the story of his father's ghost who tells him his brother murdered him, which is the same uncle, and now his mother's husband.

Paradoxically enough, the overpowering presence of death in human lives does not change the fact that Thanatos is the greatest 'absentee' in our world. Contemporary culture has been making various attempts at marginalizing death. The present paper tries to show how (un)successful such attempts have been.

Psychology has influenced modern thinking of death in the highest degree. Ironically so, because the problem of death is ancient and has always been with man, while psychology is one of the newest disciplines among sciences. Psychoanalytic approach has been thoroughly exploring the significance of the problem of death in man's life. This trend has influenced not only psychologists but also psychologising poets and novelists, also painters and composers. Yet, historically, the problem belongs to the remote past, to ancient philosophers and various philosophical schools that have been trying to explain the undoubted mystery of death.

The present paper aims at analyzing the nature of these two, Eros and Thanatos as highly specific theoretical constructs of far-reaching practical consequences, especially the two mentioned in the title – desires and fears and how they translate into psychological, philosophical, and (to a degree) medical realities. Only trying to understand the essence and consequences of the two can make our professional and private lives more satisfying.

Psychology as an branch of science clashes with the so called 'popular psychology' (romances, popular fiction, tabloids and TV serials) where happy endings are obligatory, love reciprocated, marriages always happy or restored, good health guaranteed, big money and success just round the corner. Death is usually diminished to death threats or murders successfully resolved, and the murderer caught by a clever detective. Love and death seem to go separate ways in modern culture.

But if we want to go beyond the simplistic version of human life, we will soon notice that the two are closely interwoven. For centuries, philosophers, cultural theorists, historians, anthropologists, representatives of various religions, psychologists and medical doctors have been trying to offer some guidelines how to deal with these problems, especially death, and the problems related.

To begin at the beginning; it was probably the Greek philosopher, Epicurus (341-270 B.C.) whose ideas still operate in various forms in our lives. Epicurus rejected the idea of the soul surviving death and because of this; he was able to reject any kind of punishment in life-after-life. He pointed that because of the unacknowledged fear of death and punishment men worry and, in consequence, desire for irrational things. If one gets rid of fears than those irrational

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desires will disappear and men will be able to lead pleasant lives, full of intellectual and physical pleasures. Besides, men are made in such a way as to enjoy life. Thus, the main goal in life is to be happy, free from mental anxiety and physical pain. Epicurus is best remembered for his 'carpe diem' philosophy – enjoy the day that means enjoy the moment while it lasts (15, 16).

But the theory is not as simple as this summary may indicate. Epicurus also believed that there is no death as long as we exist, when death occurs we cease to exist. Through he knew very well that death existed he declared for others that it did not. Was Epicurus suffering from an obsession with death? It looks as if he were trying to drive away death, concentrate on life so much to forget everything else. Modern psychology would easily identify it with the well known mechanism of expulsion.

At least two important consequences follow from the idea of expulsion. One is practical; there is a necessity to get help from a comforter or counselor. There is a growing need to have professional therapists for the soldiers coming from the war (i.e. Iraq), parents who lost their children, women suffering from abortion syndrome, bereaved families, etc. All in all, psychological and psychiatric assistance is very much in demand.

Fear of death and the problems of psychological and medical help emerge in several other situations. Patients want doctors to relieve them from pain, physical or mental. From medication to therapeutic activities (pursuing arts or developing a hobby), self-help groups, talking to a counselor, psychologist, moderator, social worker, clergyman or a nun, a trusted family member, professional help is sought for; also psychoanalysis, hospitalization or even compulsory treatment - all, at least in theory, aim at restoring physical and mental balance, alleviate pain and anxiety, phobias and traumas already lived through (concentration camp survivors, kidnapping victims, survivors of 9/11) or imagined dangers and catastrophes. Common interest in reading horoscopes, visiting fortunetellers or alternative medicine practitioners only shows that people look for instant relief from whatever pain and are ready to pay for it and even risk their health.

The other consequence is a philosophical paradox – as we stop to exist, we cannot directly experience death because death is the end of existence, so we cannot experience it because we already do not exist. What we cannot experience qualifies as mystery.

As methods of dealing with various kinds of pain, be it physical or mental were changing over centuries, also philosophers varied in their attitudes toward death, life after life, and offered various solutions how to make one's life happy and useful. Moving closer to our times, the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, we come across certain events and discoveries that largely modified former theories on man's position in the world. The consequences of Darwinian Theory of Evolution and the principle of the survival of the fittest, the crisis in established religions, and the aftermath of the World War I, all made Sigmund Freud think about the drive toward self-destruction, which he observed in some psychoanalyzed patients, and as a more general tendency of his contemporaries. It seemed illogical that human beings would act against their best interests and undertake actions leading to self-destruction. In 1920, so the theory is young as far as theories go, he came up with the study called Beyond the Pleasure Principle (4, 16).

The most important innovation was the idea that man experiences a death wish, which is an instinct, a drive, or impulse. Freud based his assumption on biological or biochemical foundations. Even the smallest cell has two functions: anabolic (constructive) and catabolic (destructive). Analogously, Eros and Thanatos balance each other. They are complementary and oppositional but not hostile. They influence human relations. We look for new experiences, for doing things, meeting people, entering into various relations, building relationships, advancing in our profession, occupation, etc. All these belong to Eros. But there are situations in which man has to act aggressively, to defend his interest, or do something hazardous. Sometimes man also needs peace and quiet. According to Freud, Thanatos is responsible for such states (4).

In general, man feels best when he/she has these two drives satisfactorily balanced. Freud objectivised natural forces, gave them anchoring in man's unconscious (Id and Ego) and provided instances from his clinical experience. Freudian theory came to be criticized by various scholars, soon after it appeared. Through it seemed to be helpful to explain suicide and self- destructive activities (Karl Menninger, 1938), its scientific basis was questioned.

Concluding, neither Epicurus nor Freud managed to create a general theory. Old and new ideas seem to work for individual cases, and personal experiences. The feedback of Eros and Thanatos and what they stand for (vitality/sexuality against self- destruction and annihilation) seems most mysterious, scientifically inexplicable, escaping generalizations, with no norms, and possible risky conclusions concerning pathology.

To give an example, what we consider socially accepted behavior, norms of social conduct and morality, are not universal but culturally specific. That is, in the modern world there are several communities, cultures, and groups that do not think it necessary to observe these norms. Psychol-

ogy has already defined a-social and anti-social behaviors.

Antoni Kepiński's study "Lęk"[Fear] categorizes and problematizes various kinds of fears, discussing their origins, forms, and therapeutic methods; finally, devoting some space to fear of death. He begins saying:

"Death is one of the most frightening voids that man sees before him. The reason is, perhaps that through death is too real, it cannot be imagined or tested in individual experience. Human fantasy was trying to fill this void. The oldest traces of it [filling the void] are Paleolithic graves, testifying to the presence of some kind of belief in life after death, even in the remote past. Death mythology and what happens afterward is an attempt to shield oneself from fear by replacing the unknown with illusory certainty. Mythologized death stops being a road to nothingness, becoming a door to various realms, depending on one's beliefs. If one deserved it, it would lead to eternal happiness or to damnation for disrespecting the given faith's canons. Death could be a mere moment leading to perfection. Thus, death fantasy bore the fantasy of the beyond. In depicting death, philosophical and religious aspects coexist with sadomasochistic release of taking pleasure in someone else's anguish (8).

Kępiński's holistic approach goes beyond limited concerns of various scholars. He explains how fear of death entered our reality and shows how humanity was trying to domesticate death on several planes. They are religion, and arts. Supplementing Kępinski, we can say that he probably had in mind various everyday objects that had been put into graves (and archeologists can find them now) meant a belief that the dead person will be using them in the other world. Of course, they are priceless for research. But they also provide a touching instance of the mixture of practical and philosophical concerns of our ancestors.

Depending on religious beliefs, philosophical and ideological viewpoints, fantasizing over death appeared. For centuries, visual arts have been dealing with philosophical and religious aspects of death but often they also depicted macabre, sadomasochistic images of death and dying, as if defying death or minimizing its impact by making it ridiculous, or on the contrary, showing that one cannot fool death. Museums and art galleries are full of terrible scenes of death, but also very peaceful and almost idyllic representations. Death can be shown as a beautiful woman or as a landscape full of light, or it can visualize the traditional order of the world.

In this respect, one must find Čiurlionis's mastery overpowering. The two of his pictures chosen here to illustrate the point made, possess extraordinary philosophical dimension. One of them is an Indian ink drawing on the birth of his daughter that shows a disturbing anticipation of death from the moment of birth. The figure of a girl with wings is seen running along a winding path that has a cemetery with mournful cypresses and graves in the background. Near the path, there is also a withering flower. It would be hard to find more chilling and beautiful unity of the two – life /love (for his daughter and wife) with a premonition of death. Neither norm nor pathology apply here. Only the words of an English Noble Prize winner in literature, T.S. Eliot, seem to match Čiurlionis's vision: "In my beginning is my end". The words come from his famous poem entitled "The Waste Land".

Another picture, from Čiurlionis's rich collection of paintings dealing with death, shows a traditional hierarchy of the world structure – the underworld from which a red demon-like creature lurks, a valley or a split of the earth crust, but also human figures shaking hands over this abyss against the sun and the sky. Probably, the picture can be interpreted in a variety of ways. Whatever the official explanation of the painting, it beautifully encompasses both the tragic split in the world, but also the sun and fraternity of men trying to reach over this treacherous (?) abyss. These human figures lined up symbolize the living and the dead, or just humanity. The beast lurking at the bottom of the rift could belong to the painter's private fears, or the fears of every human being. The philosophical depth of the picture lies in the reference to the hierarchy of the world formation. Human world is and has always been situated in the middle. Down there, there is traditional hell (or just some hostile underworld) but also for human fears. But human figures are shown against blue sky and yellow sun. And although it is a common knowledge that yellow color stands for death in Freudian reading of colors, here it should not be considered as valid. The color of the sun and the blue sky carry hope and bliss, thr ough dangers and ambushes are also present.

Other pictures belonging to the so-called Funeral Symphony mix traditional images of death with fresh colors, abstract shapes, and prevailing atmosphere of peace and tranquility. Čiurlionis makes death part of our human experience, in stillness and tranquility, in fear and despair; he offers deeply philosophical/religious consolation. The problem of norm and pathology comes to those, mainly professional, who look at his pictures. Does it really matter that the painter was diagnosed schizophrenic? Can medicine, psychology, or any other branch of science prevent us from understanding and appreciating the depth of the message his pictures carry?

Another painter, from roughly the same period, Jacek Malczewski combined beautiful figures of women repre-

senting death with the beauty of the world that men do not want to leave when Thanatos comes for them (the series called Thanatos). Death as a beautiful and imposing woman, the world in full bloom clash with the figure of man holding to the window frame, obviously trying to resist his fate.

In visual arts, universal themes transgress national borders appealing to our cultural, philosophical, and religious convictions, successfully merging what our present day world finds difficult to accept, namely the co-existence of Eros and Thanatos.

In the study entitled " Eros i Człowiek" [Eros and Man], Strojnowski stated "First of all, I want to deal with eroticism that is a psychological phenomenon and an expression of that specific human drive, which is one of the most essential elements of multicolored cultures. Social institutions aware of the dangerous pressure coming from sexual drive, always aspired to control it, by absolutizing and sa cralizing permissible forms of realizing the drive. Social changes we witness to and take part in make us alert and induce to 'demythologizing' seeming absolutes" (14).

In view of the above, another aspect of Eros and Thanatos should be addressed. It is not only individual experience or a 'case' but also an issue concerning large groups, tribes, communities, etc. Individual love and death are personalized; mass instances are mere statistical data. It poignantly shows when talking about victims of wars or mass disasters. Then, the issues of Eros and Thanatos become a domain of various power structures, of governments that feel they have to be or want to be in control.

Two trends can be discerned there. One is the problem of fear. Nowadays, besides the fear of death, we can observe other kinds of fear. There is growing fear of forming lasting relationships, or fears of commitment. Such fear may be related to the crisis of the institution of marriage, crisis in the family, loosening ties within generational families and also relations between peers. Postmodern attitude can be characterized after Baudillard (1) as "the state after an orgy". He explained that the so-called "orgy" was the most explosive moment of modernity. It meant liberation from everything man could be liberated from. But the practical result of it was that we are moving in a void. Here one feels like asking whether it is the same void Epicurus and Kępiński referred to.

Modernity rejected all coercion coming from outside. Death was taken to be the ultimate form of coercion and a challenge to a liberated human mind. Death was to be 'deconstructed'. It could be deceived when broken into small pieces, for instance into diseases we can cure, one by one. There are endless individual instances of death while natural death has been relegated. Almost all reported deaths are described as avoidable, if people drove more carefully, stopped smoking, changed their eating habits, etc. Even exaggerated beliefs in hygiene result of deconstructing death. Such attitudes make people prone to panicky reactions, fears of pandemia, etc. Hygiene is a new technology of marginalizing death and offering excuses why death must take place away from our eyes and homes, away from family care (2).

Postmodern tendencies to live fragmented lives (divided into small segments) requires immediate gratifications, constant moving from event to event, and escalating experiences. With the help of the Internet, various segments of the world can be repeated, reeled forward and backward, fast or slow. We live in the present, which is always there, moving from one present to another. Bauman (2) points out two related phenomena, nomadic living in the present, and atrophy instead of death. Nomads do not plan; postmodern men do not plan, either. The new professional category of "immortality brokers" (public relations specialists, etc.) keep up the distribution of contemporary goods, especially fame (2). These people set goals of what is 'cool', desired and fashionable. Instead of death, celebrities fear oblivion, and dread deletion from the media. Public relations specialists can create 'stars', pop-culture icons or downgrade them into anonymity. In the present day 'vanity fair', publicity as opposed to anonymity replaces mortality/immortality.

Fear of death has also reached monstrous proportions. On the level of social relations, it is the refusal to care for the old and the dying, creating another class of professionals – hospices staff, and palliative medicine specialists. They are absolutely necessary, however, the danger lies in the present financial misery of geriatric wards and hospices, and social acceptance for marginalizing the old and the dying. Death must be conducted behind the screen, so to speak, so that the living are not bothered with it. Even wearing mourning has been disappearing as a cultural norm. New customs replace traditional ones. In Poland, people did not used to wear black for the funeral. Unless of course, you belonged to the family of the dead person. Nowadays, those who come to the funeral look like actors from American films – almost all in black… but after the funeral, nobody wears black. Traditional family get-together after the funeral is now organized in restaurants as subdued banquets – but still banquets.

Several psychologist, institutions, and support groups are engaged in helping people to live through loss and pain. Yet, the real problem is the social climate that opposes all forms of remembering the dead or withdrawing to recuperate. Officially, nobody questions the process of coming to

terms with death and loss as psychologically sound, yet it is often considered morbid. Contemporary nomads do not think about the past, neither do they think about the future. They live in the constant now, but this now is changeable and exceptionally unstable, as everything in this world. So, the conclusion seems to be that one must not lose time for mourning or for caring for someone ill or old – it is the past, it does not exist.

Fear of death also extends to the aesthetic view of the dead person and 'showy' funerals. The dead person must obligatorily 'look nice' to be displayed to the mourners. Displaying the body in an open casket may be considered as returning to pagan rites. Representatives of the so called Funeral Industry often accused of overdoing the ceremonies (5) reply that families do not want to prepare their dead ones for burial (so they are indispensible), and saying farewell to a nice looking body has a soothing psychological effect (no tubes, no hospital paraphernalia). Anonymous and depersonalized death has been accepted as a norm.

But fear of death has its macro social aspect. This is a tendency and legal actions to introduce assisted suicide, sell various suicide kits, advertize the services of such companies as "Exit" or "Dignitas" that 'help' people glide into oblivion - in solitude but in a 'hygienic' and 'respectful' manner, or so they say. Psychological help for the person intending to take his/her life and for the family has been included in the overall cost[1]. Certainly, there is a more dangerous possibility that of putting to death people in the vegetative state, basing on the testimony of relatives (?), and medical conviction that the patient had expressed a wish to die, or medicine cannot effectively help the person recover. Here, areas for abuse of power/ authority/ honesty seem enormous.

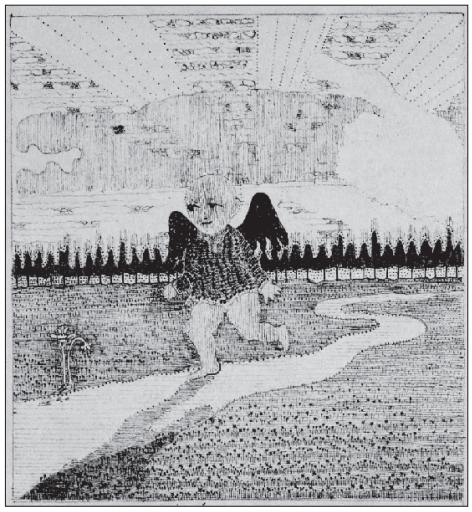
Bauman rounds up his chapter on deconstructing death with the comment that seems fitting for our discussion. He maintains that medical treatment is a substitute of the existential problem that cannot be solved because of its nature. Instead of tackling serious issues, those in power deal with smaller and manageable ones. 'Neurotic fear of death' (2) is compensated with blown up panics such as mad cow disease, salmonella, etc. Such actions only intensify fear of death and various survival tactics. To maintain 'moral comfort and political peace' (2), the wish to put death to death (=get rid of death) becomes the practice of putting men to death. This is conducted by the societies that reveal propensity to genocide, which is kept hidden under modern façade of tribalism. It would show even more acutely had not governments been trying to curb them. Still it helps cure the symptoms and not the causes.

On August 17, 2011 Sidi's Internet report appeared, entitled "A Perfect Suicide?", describing suicide of an Israeli journalist suffering from incurable cancer. He went to Dignitas (a clinic in Switzerland), and drank a glass of poisonous solution for 10 000 Euros (11). He left letters, funeral rites he wanted, even newspaper obituaries. However, the most interesting postulate was his insistence that his deed should be called "suicide" and not "leaving this world", "cancer" and not "a serious incurable disease". He also described how he learned about his illness and decided to take his life. He stated that he wished to publically address the problem of euthanasia, which is absent from public debate in Israel. Besides the controversial issue of assisted suicide, the problem seems to be in calling things by their names, instead of finding nice substitutes for most serious and basic facts of life.

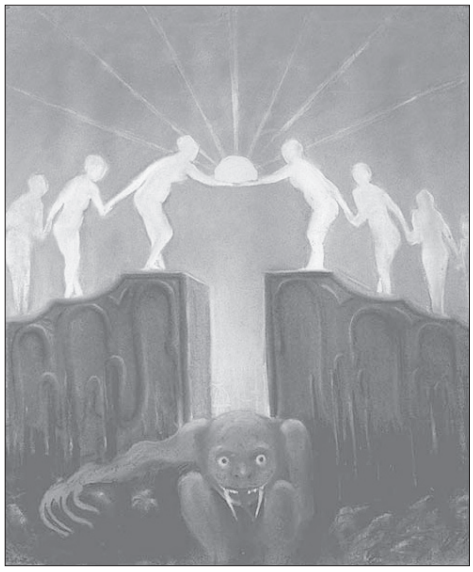
Moving to a more cheerful topic, it becomes evident that though people like to believe that love remains the same from the beginning of the world, significant changes in approach have also occurred, thus questioning former norms and pathologies. Nowadays, Eros has slipped from coercive regulations imposed by families, ethnic groups, and cultural enclaves to strikingly show off as eroticism all over the Internet, but also as a direct result of the sexual revolution of the sixties and seventies of the previous century. It was then that the majority of present day problems began to show. The (contraceptive) pill appeared in USA in 1960 and was due to revolutionize sexual relations. Feminism brought forward the issue of equal work and equal pay, equal rights for women, but also openly addressed the issues of contraception, abortion, sexual education, rape and other forms of victimization of women in patriarchal societies. However, feminism was not very successful in overcoming various negative behavior styles in a number of societies. Controversial issues, such as abortion on demand, or in vitro are far from resolved. Instances of mobbing, treating women as sex objects, unequal penalty for infidelity, and several other issues show that the idea of equal rights for men and women must be addressed.

Like funeral industry and 'tourism -for -death' there is sex industry and sex tourism. These problems go beyond individual choices, drives, or impulses, and concern any society as a whole. The HIV/AIDS transmission, migration, poverty, drug addiction, criminalization or decriminalization of the so-called 'sexual workers' (and drug addicts) will have to be tackled. Like funeral industry, sex industry also means big money and influence. It also means depersonalization and automation of sexual relations.

[1]Both institutions feature prominently on the Internet with filmed assisted suicide procedures on YouTube.



Works and details | M. K. Čiurlionis
http://ciurlionis.eu/en/graphics/info/ (acc.12.10.2011)



M. K. Čiurlionis - W hołdzie wielkim - Salon Internetowy mareckiego Ośrodka Kultury
http://www.mokmarki.pl/salon/hold/ciurlionis/obrazy
(acc.12.10.2011)

There is a certain balance in the imbalance between Thanatos and Eros in our postmodern world. In popular culture, very often, unrestrained sexual drive replaces other issues, political, economic, and philosophical. The seventh husband or partner of a mediocre starlet seems to cover pages and pages of popular tabloids, and paparazzi get fortunes for lascivious or compromising photos. But, the problem is that there are no compromising photos any more. On the contrary, it has become a kind of sport to

Jacek Malczewski, Thanatos 1898-99.
Olej na płótnie. 45 x 57,5 cm. Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie.
http://www.pinakoteka.zascianek.pl/Malczewski_J/Malczewski_J_4.htm (acc. 21.09.2011)

make and publish pornographic pictures, or pictures of horrifying violence.

Besides, if what Baudillard (1) says is true that is we are living in the state "after an orgy", all constraints are gone, freedom is total and we are living in a void. Life styles of present day nomads belong to the present and only in the present. The world has been considered unstable, threatening, and transient, so every opportunity to do what one wants to do must be taken. For the first time in human history, there is such an abundance of various commodities to be got. Also, human relations have been suffering from commodification. Like goods, people can be bought and sold, fulfilling sexual drive can be satisfied in a variety of ways, and there are practically no forbidden ways.

Modern media are usually criticized for poor quality, bad taste, dullness, and repetitiveness. Often they are also criticized for treating adults as if they were children, promoting unproductive life style, unlimited and egoistic indulgence, and intellectual passivity. Several cultural theorists (3,6,7) warn that these observable facts are dangerous in other aspects, too, by disabling people to solve real-life difficulties, and by constantly accelerating excitement. Needless to say that the media largely create manners, morals, and tastes nowadays.

Recent crises in the world finances only confirm the uncertainty about the present and the future. This fear not confined exclusively to our times. In 1918-1922 Oswald Spengler (1880-1936), a German historian and philosopher published a very influential book called "The Decline of the West "(12). Unlike postmodern theories, he was trying to predict the history of the future, prophesying a decline of the Western and American culture and civilization (13). Quick surfing on the Web shows that the idea is still debated and arguments for and against exchanged. Paliwoda (10) singles our several correspondences between Spen-

gler' prophesies and the present state of affairs. The German scholar criticized liberalism, atomization, and denationalization of societies, ludic (carnivalesque) attitudes replacing patriotic feelings, honour, strictness, and diligence. Such popular notions as uprootedness, nationalism (always taken as pejorative) deconstruction, multiculturalism have been served to people by the so-called liberals (socialists and Marxists according to Spengler). People are deprived of various rights, overloaded with new duties, and offered 'sexual freedom', instead (12).

The list of rapid and substantial changes in manners and morals is far from complete, thus making norms very shaky. However, there is a direct link with the topic of this paper. As presented in Rollo May's influential and controversial book Love and Will (1969), modern Eros suffers from explosion of sex, which seems a fundamental motive of human communication. May concludes that there is so much sex but so little sense and joy in it. He criticized his fellow therapists accusing them of depersonalizing sexual relations and of linguistic crudeness, for which he held Freud partly responsible. One should remember that May was an existential psychologist and therapist who was writing his book at the beginning of the countercultural sexual revolution. Paliwoda (10) singles out May's message to popularize the idea of a new beginning, a new sexual revolution "that would restore emotional character of intimate human relations". However, reading Paliwoda'a paper and looking round, one may conclude that the May/Paliwoda postulate will probably take some time to find its way to the public, the media, and power structures. At the moment, the real world seems to have taken the opposite direction. Thus, 21 December and 9 August have been declared World Orgasm Day, the idea is US originated (10).

So much for Eros and Thanatos in our times. Modern Eros and Thanatos seem to be impoverished, depersonalized and fear driven, because, to use Freudian terminology again, Superego is gone and only Id and Ego are in power.

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Note 1: all quotations from Kępiński, Paliwoda and Strojnowski - translated by the present author.

Note 2: Ciurlionis's and Malczewski's pictures come from the accessible Internet sources (addresses given below).

EROSAS IR TANATAS – POTRAUKIAI IR BAIMĖS

Raktažodžiai: meilė, mirtis, socialinė kontrolė, autodestrukcija, menas, postmodernistinė visuomenė.

Santrauka

Meilė ir mirtis – šie poliariniai ir atrodytų tolimi fenomenai yra persipynę, tačiau skirtingose visuomenėse nevienodai pripažįstami – nuo dominavimo iki išstūmimo ir marginalizacijos. Straipsnyje apžvelgiama jų svarba psichologijoje, mene, modernioje kultūroje ir vartotojiškoje visuomenėje, pradedant Epikūro filosofija, per Darvino evoliucijos teoriją ir Froido instinktų ir fundamentalių principų hierarchiją, iki ekzistencializmo - holistinių A. Kempinskio koncepcijų, postmodernistinių laikinumo ir gyvenimo fragmentacijos tendencijų, visuomenės atomizacijos, gydomųjų, laidojimo ir seksualinių paslaugų apyvartos Zygmunto Baumano, Jean Baudillard ir Rollo May veikaluose. Komentuojami M. K. Čiurlionio ir J. Malčevskio piešiniai gimimo ir mirties tema.

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