

Tanatophobia: systemic analysis

Yulia Victorovna Gavrilova,
Maria Vladimirovna Privalova

Transbaikal State University, Chita, Russia

ABSTRACT

At the same time, tanatophobia represents the fundamental power element of behavior that predetermines the contents of the personality and its destiny. Tanatophobia is perceived as the “key problem” not only in the context of investigating and curing emotional and behavioral disturbances, but also as a “leverage” to exert pressure on the society. It is the fear of death that makes the basis for the information clips posted on the Internet by the representatives of terrorist organizations. Therefore, it is very important that tanatophobia should be studied from the perspectives of different sciences; its prerequisites and the opportunities to prevent this phenomenon should be analyzed. Method: The principal method of the investigation of tanatophobia is represented by systemic approach that makes it possible, first, to consider the fear of death from the perspectives of the junction of several branches of science, such as, in the first place, psychology, philosophy, medicine; and, second, to reveal the specifics of tanatophobia through the prism of different aspects: ontological, epistemological, axiological, praxeological and anthropological. While analyzing tanatophobia, special attention is paid to the methodological principle of the correlation that exists between the natural and the social. The application of this methodological principle makes it possible to prove that tanatophobia can represent a biosocial mechanism of the formation of social events and phenomena; i.e. it simultaneously possesses both biological and social nature which explains the power of its effects on the processes of human and social life. Findings: The study reveals the specifics of tanatophobia from different perspectives of its perception and shows the role of tanatophobia in life of man and society in general. The emphasis is laid on the fact that the fear of death is not just a destructive factor that destabilizes the normal functions of consciousness and body of man and that generates the destructive processes in social groups, but also that it is the mechanism that facilitates the development of the community.

KEYWORDS

Tanatophobia, Man, Society, Death, Religion, Biosocial Mechanisms

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Introduction

Modern man lives in the environment where his consciousness is everyday assaulted with quite an aggressive flow of information, a part of which consists of the news blocks telling about death: war in Syria, conflicts in Ukraine, information of catastrophes (either natural or technogenic) and terrorism. As odd as it may seem, death has become a part of everyday life; availability of the information at the disposal of the modern society moves the fear of death or tanatophobia into the category of real social threats. The life of man, quite literary, is seething with different kinds of fear. We are afraid of very many things starting with the

CORRESPONDENCE Yulia Victorovna Gavrilova

✉ Julia.voitsuk@yandex.ru

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elementary anxiety of being late for work and up to the fear of death that haunts us throughout our lives. The fear of losing one's life is so strong that for the sake of it a man is ready to step across any material and spiritual values.

Represented by different modes of existence, fear affects the life of man and society in some definite manner. Fear excites unpleasant sensations and neuroses; it leads to the experiences of horror and anxiety, but, simultaneously, it also predetermines the sense and the specifics of being, it is the factor and the mechanism for the formation of different social events and phenomena, it facilitates the development of community. Here a special role is played by such mode of fear as the fear of death. Its significance for the life of man and society has been described in the most vivid manner by famous psychiatrist I. Yalom. He writes as follows: "The fear of death plays a major role in our internal experience; it haunts as nothing else does; it rumbles continuously under the surface; it is a dark, unsettling presence at the rim of consciousness" (Yalom, 1980). Thus, death anxiety accompanies man throughout his life representing, on the one hand, a powerful destructive factor that affects consciousness and psyche, and, on the other hand, representing a factor that activates the instinct of self-preservation and mobilizes all powers of man and society focused on the support of life energy.

The phenomenon of death anxiety is studied by completely different branches of science: medicine, philosophy, literature, etc. Indeed, according E. Cassirer, it was the fear of death that established the foundations that made people united as community, ritualized their lives, taught them to take care of their lives and created religion (Cassirer, 2011).

The area of knowledge under consideration is sufficiently wide and well studied. Thus, in psychology, this problem was studied in specifically dedicated works of I. Yalom, S. Grof, S.A. Abdulgalimova, A.A. Nakanova, S.V. Kovalenko, N.G. Kormushina, L.V. Shutova. In philosophy, the subject matter of the fear of death has been touched upon many times by Russian religious philosophers: N.A. Berdyaev, S.N. Bulgakov, K.N. Leontyev, E.N. Trubetsky, etc.

Concept headings

However, notwithstanding the positive dynamics of studies of the abovementioned problem, there have almost never been works developed at the so-called "junction" of sciences; i.e. the fear of death is either considered from the perspectives of medical science or is perceived as philosophical category or in its literary sense. The authors of this study believe that considering this phenomenon from the perspectives of several scientific standings simultaneously will enable more comprehensive investigation of such a multifaceted idea as tanatophobia and also will make it possible to outline the prospective areas of investigations of this phenomenon. As is well known, systemic approach is one of the universal methodological principles in modern science. The authors think that it represents a well-justified choice among other different scientific approaches, as it helps consider the object under investigation from different perspectives, inasmuch as the systemic study of the object does not analyze the elements as such, but it does so in a systemic-elemental fashion, i.e. taking into account their position within the overall structure of the object.

D.N. Barinov in his work "Social anxiety as phenomenon of social life: Social and philosophical analysis" (Barinov, 2011) distinguishes a number of aspects that characterize the understanding of fear and anxiety. He suggests that the fear of death should be considered from the perspectives of the complex scientific approach, namely:

ontological (revealing the spiritual nature of fear), epistemological (the role of cognitive activities in the formation of fear), anthropological (fear as the indicator of human development from biological origins up to the social ones), axiological (the fear as the emotion that reflects the attitudes of man toward nature, society, other people and

oneself) and praxiological (significance of fear for the regulations of practical activities). These aspects, in the authors' point of view, will help study the phenomenon of tanatophobia from all possible perspectives.

The second method that has been selected for the purposes of this investigation is represented by dialectics. The fear of death going along with the man during the entire history develops in the same way as man does. It evolves, it takes different new shapes; thus, it has to be studied not as a static object but rather as a dynamically developing phenomenon.

The investigation of the fear of death as biosocial mechanism of human development from biological up to social origins should be carried out based on the theory of the interactions between the social and the natural that represent the methodological foundations for the social and philosophical study of the effects produced by tanatophobia on social events and processes.

Result

1. Ontological aspect of tanatophobia

Tanatophobia, the fear of death or phobia (awe, terror) of death is a phenomenon associated with the attitude of man toward the fact of the finiteness of life: toward death and dying, and also toward everything that is related to "life after death". Generally speaking, the intermittent reflections on death, soul, and sense of life are normal for every healthy man; however, the uncontrollable state of horror, the everyday recurrence of these thoughts can result in diseases. Tanatophobia reveals itself through some certain symptoms: the understanding of the inevitable demise is expressed as the feeling of despair; continuous fear and constant anxious thoughts when there is no real threat for life; obsession with some definite and imagined scenario of dying: death in a plane crash, painful death from a disease past cure which is often accompanied by the intention to lead a secluded life, i.e. a person does not want to travel because it is dangerous, he/she avoids doctors, large crowds of people, etc. The physical signs of tanatophobia are as follows: sleep disorder, loss of appetite, fast changing body weight (weight loss or obesity); decreased or no sexual activity; painful neurotic sensations; manifestations of the accentuated traits of character (a man becomes hypochondriac, reveals anxiety, self-distrust and affectability); obsession with the theories about healthy life; decreased social and professional activity.

What is the reason for such acute interest in tanatophobia in the modern world? The current importance of the subject matter of the investigation has been predetermined by the great attention that is paid presently to different aspects of the problem of finalism: the so-called "end of the history", transition to the new stage of social development, the possibility of termination of the physical existence of species of "man", or even of the planet Earth because of environmental, military or other global reasons. This interest has a psychological background, inasmuch as it is, probably, for the first time in the history that the life of an individual is so closely related to death. Everyday television screens tell us about deaths in that or another country. We watch films where men are tortured or abused. Thus, the word "death" becomes an everyday attribute of the information flow that is consumed by each and everyone of us, imperceptibly bringing about stresses, psychoses and serious psychical diseases. Here the contribution is also made by scientific and technical progress, as, according to the statistics, circa 1,200,000 people die in car accidents, and more natural ingredients become substituted by chemicals in the contents of the food products, in medicines, in

the products used for hygiene, cosmetic and household purposes. And there are also such objective social reasons as the developing integration of different cultures, as the political opposition that is characteristic for the cold war and that is usually interpreted as the beginning of the new stage of human history. Special roles in exciting this interest are played by the global problems. All the above can easily explain the

attention paid to the problem of the end of history that can take very different shapes: from theoretical investigations of F. Fukuyama up to religious practices of different apocalyptic sects and postmodern discussions about the destiny of literature.

Thus, death is an inseparable part of ontological paradigm. Over the whole period of one's existence on Earth man not only failed to get rid of the fear of death, but he increased the quantitative contents of reflections, theories, ideas about death in philosophical, medical and other types of literature.

2. Epistemological aspect of tanatophobia

Being the objective reality of the material world, death is a very complicated object of study for the subjective human perception. Obviously, that is exactly why we shift it to the metaphysical area endowing it with divine, esoteric and often with magic attributes.

The fear of death makes man move ahead in both physical and spiritual aspects. In the first case we go in for sports, prevent diseases, create families and want our children live after us. In the second case, we search for the sense of life, try to establish our spiritual "Me". Creation of such social finalism concepts as, for example, Eschatological projects on the one hand helps society reduce the stress of an individual in terms of fear, and, on the other hand, they make it possible to manipulate people to achieve some certain objectives. What is it that man is afraid of? And he is afraid because he cannot understand and explain.

Each of us feels the fear of the very act of death, insofar as we do not know what follows after that. The uncertainties, the impossibility to perceive are the things that scare us most. Besides, we see the deceased (no matter whether one of our kin or a stranger): just yesterday he talked, joked, loved and then suddenly he is just an absolutely immovable cold body that soon starts decaying. Then the questions come to torture us: do we have souls? Is it true that our physical body is the only thing we possess? Is there life after death? What is the sense of our existence?

According to the opinions of Russian religious philosopher N. Berdyaev, there are two social finalism perspectives: individual-personal and universal-personal, "on the one hand, there is an assertion of the individual resolution of personal destiny of man after death. On the other hand, the resolution of the destiny of the whole world and mankind is expected to come in the end of time, in the end of history" (Berdyaev, 1995). Every man is afraid of one's personal death, but he believes that he will be living on this Earth in his children. The demise of the mankind means complete annihilation of everyone. We will not remain even in human memory as there will be no one to remember us.

Eschatological literature that took its origins in Ancient Judaea used not only to explain what would become of an individual man after death, but it also used to describe the prospective demise or, under some certain conditions, of the survival of the human race. Founded on the fear of death Eschatology formulated the ethical bases of the community in line with the relevant stage of historical development. Later, the ten commandments of the Bible came well into Eschatological literature. Observe them, and your soul will live forever; and thus, death goes into the background.

In the modern world it becomes ever more difficult to calm man down, because the determinants and the manifestations of the fear of death have changed. Poorer health, worse material standing, bad working conditions and lesser opportunities can become the provoking factors. Disturbances in the spiritual development of personality and age crises provoke reevaluation of personal priorities and approaches to the existence. Frustration of plans and hopes, failure to realize the objectives and the principles of self-fulfillment, consequences of religious beliefs and despair manifest themselves in the fear of making a mistake or doing something unseemly. The feeling of being unsatisfied with life: the more it shows itself, the more powerful is the manifestation of tanatophobia. Pathological fear of everything new (neophobia), of new job, relations, even the change of the shop where the man buys his things everyday can

provoke the deterioration of health. This peculiarity of a person makes man limit oneself within the framework of his routine at any price. The possibility of death does not fit in these frames and this fact leads to the distorted irrational apprehension of death, to anxious behavior.

Notwithstanding the difficulties of the solutions to the problems in this area, the scientists study this phenomenon and try to develop different methodologies that would cure or alleviate the symptoms of tanatophobia. Thus, American psychiatrist and psychologist H. Feifel (Feifel and Branscomb, 1973) has identified three problematic aspects of death perception: 1) conscious (it is estimated based on the analysis of the answers to the question: "Are you afraid of your own death?"), 2) fantasy-based (estimated according to the scale of positivity of the answers to the question: "What thoughts or images come upon you when you think about death?"); 3) subliminal perception of death (estimated based on the average time of the reactions during word association tests and during word-color interference tests). A.B. Kholmogorova, Doctor of Psychology, the Head of the Department of Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy, Professor, a Member of Academic Board at the Department at Moscow State University of Psychology and Education, considers five sources of the fear experienced by modern man: narcissism of modern culture, cultivation of the obsessive-compulsive traits of personality, existential vacuum, social isolation and alienation of people and also the unprocessed and poorly integrated experience of the encounters with death (Kholmogorova, 2003).

Thus, at the modern stage of development of tanatopsychology the scientists arrange the systemic patterns of the accumulated theoretical tools and formulate the bases for further work on this phenomenon.

3. Axiological aspect of tanatophobia

Discussing the value connotations of the idea of "death", the authors of this study would like to refer to Russian religious philosophy. Many philosophers highlight that Eschatology of the world outlook is intrinsic to Russians. E.H. Trubetskoy noted that the world of human is dualistic. "The expression *corpus permixtum* (mixed body) used by Latin Fathers of the Church to characterize the mundane churches can be applied to everything earthy, – writes the philosopher, – our human culture including, inasmuch as it represents the motley mixture of good and evil, of things both mortal and immortal" (Trubetskoy, 1995), of the absolute and of the relative. Given this mixed contents, not everything in our life is to be immortalized. The process of the division will start with many deaths, world cataclysms, moments of aggravation of internal and external antagonisms. These moments of growing world contradictions that are the signs of the approaching Apocalypse will become the very things that would help the humanity draw the line where "on the one side there is gross darkness over the world, and on the other side there is the religious search wherein the origins of the positive revelation are already perceived. On the one hand, there is mass brutality; on the other hand, there is spiritual elevation" (Trubetskoy, 1995). The fear of death and the attempt to understand this phenomenon help us arrange clearly the relative and the absolute values in our lives.

Modern social finalism concepts founded on the fear of death formulate axiological system of the society. Thus, ecological finalism concepts that promise death from technogenic catastrophes put the environment in one of the first places within the system of common human values. The same can be said about political, technocratic, theocratic and other social finalist concepts.

Thus, the fear of death, being one of the most ancient and one of the strongest human fears, represents the bases for formulating the axiological system of society.

4. Praxeological aspect of tanatophobia

Praxeological aspect proceeds logically from all the above-mentioned aspects, because the understanding of the finality of personal existence and the reflections on

the fear of death inevitably make a man face the problems of how he should cope with them, how he should protect himself and overcome these problems. Therefore, praxeological context of studying the fear of death is associated with the search for the answers to the question: is there any possibility to eliminate the fear of death? The methods of coping with the death anxiety have been described in scientific literature, and they are mostly represented by the protective methodologies based on hypnosis, denial, shift, displacement or rationalization; however, neither experimental nor empirical contents of these fields of investigations have been sufficient so far. There is a very famous study of stress as precondition for fear belonging to J. Greenberg (2013) where he develops the whole methodology of stress management and fear prevention. Also, co-authored by S. Solomon and T. Pyszczynski, he published a complex investigation about the role of death in life of man. The authors of that investigation believe that the major part of human behavior is an attempt to achieve psychological tranquility in face of understing mortality of one's nature. Man attains this peace of mind through the culture that is represented as the means for mass protection against death anxiety (Greenberg et al., 2015). There is also another methodology developed by R. Kastenbaum who thinks that the fear of death is a result of the process of cognition, and thus he considers it in the context of the general strategy of human ability to cope with threats of different kinds (Kastenbaum, 1993). The works of political journalism dedicated to the investigations and explanations of the reasons of tanatophobia are gaining much popularity. For example, there is a study belonging to anthropologist Ernest Becker who believes that the major part of the activities of man is focused on overcoming the fears and phobias that are often absolutely unperceived (Becker, 1997), or there is a book of Franco Arminio called "Cartoline dai morti" that is written as short sketches about death told in first person and supposed, according to the author's design, to persuade everyone living that there is nothing scaring about death indeed (Franco, 2010).

As a positive trend the authors of this study would like to note that in these latter days quite a decent number of studies dedicated to this issue have been developed by such Russian authors as A.A. Bakanova (2013) or T.A. Gavrilova (2004); and this fact is very reassuring.

Going back to Russian philosophy, here the most effective way to counteract tanatophobia is represented by Faith. Religion was exactly the thing that over the whole history of mankind helped us alleviate and sometimes even overcome completely the symptoms of the fear of death.

Thus, today praxeological aspect of studying tanatophobia is an insufficiently investigated area.

5. Anthropological aspect of tanatophobia: fear of death as biosocial mechanism of the formation of religion

One of the most vivid manifestations of the functions of the fear of death is represented by religion that is originated by this fear and that simultaneously helps overcome it. In the modern world the problem of death anxiety is still of paramount importance notwithstanding the high level of development of science and technology which makes it possible, in some cases, to successfully fight against death and against the fear thereof. Modern researchers highlight the most significant role of religion in inciting and in overcoming the fear of death. The study belonging to famous investigator P. Stanford called "How to Read a Graveyard" makes a point that all religious rituals and practices help man eliminate the fear of death but they also

produce reverse effects, they can make the life of man carefree and sometimes even make man lose the sense of one's existence (Stanford, 2013). The investigator suggests that the problems of sustainability and propagation of religious ideas in modern world should be studied comprehensively. He notes that nowadays under the conditions of crisis, religion did not lose its significance, and, on the contrary, it reinforced its

standing, helping man find balance of his existence. This explains the tenacity and stability of religious ideas and beliefs (Stanford, 2010).

Being a social phenomenon, religion is founded on the factors and mechanisms of primarily social nature. However, according to the theory of correlations between the natural and the social, developed by N.D. Subbotina, social phenomena can be based on the preconditions of physical, natural character.

The “natural” is interpreted by the author of the theory as something that belongs to nature, to natural systems, as something that is expressed in their properties and regularities; while the “social” describes material and ideal social systems, as “...something that belongs to society and is generated by it...” (Subbotina, 2001). Thereat, according to N.D. Subbotina, the natural, upon being affected by the social, partially loses one’s natural contents and becomes subjugated by the social, becomes a part of its structure. Such understanding of the categories of “natural” and “social” makes it necessary to consider them in their dialectic unity and to recognize them as equal origins of some certain processes and phenomena that occur in some particular social system. Therefore, the availability, the mutual influence and the interrelations that exist between the natural and the social are to be equally regarded in the course of the establishment of social systems and their structural elements.

Consequently, the bases of such social phenomenon as religion are represented, among other things, by the factors and mechanisms of both social and biosocial nature, i.e. by the factors that belong to the sphere of the correlation between the natural and the social. Modern investigator E. Zuckerkandl confirms the availability of and the interrelations between natural and social preconditions in the process of genesis and evolution of religion. For instance, describing the process of the formation of religious ethics he writes as follows: “ethics is the thoughts and rules of behavior that follow from the reception of some definite natural aggregate of perceptions and emotions, namely, from empathy, this inevitable guide of our lives. The sets of informational macromolecules that take part in the process of generation of our thoughts and emotions have not been defined yet; however, there is little doubt that the substructure of such molecules will be discovered as a part of some kind of genetic interactive program...” (Zuckerkandl, 2006).

One of the biosocial mechanisms of the formation of religion is represented by the fear of death.

The specifics of the “operations” of this death anxiety mechanism in the process of the formation of religion manifests itself through the correlations between the biological (natural) and social; and, as a result thereof, this mechanism acquires biosocial features. The specific characteristic of tanatophobia as biosocial mechanism of the formation of religion is that the fear of death is represented by bio-psychic form that is filled with social content.

Bio-psychic form of the fear of death is expressed through some certain types of psychic reactions in the body of man in response to the effects of the factors of different kind. Death anxiety is generated “inside” man; it is produced by his psyche and primarily manifests itself through the so-called “biological emotion of fear” which is different from the “feeling of fear” (Bakshutov, 1996). However, the most vivid manifestation of the bio-psychic form of tanatophobia as the mechanism of the formation of religion is represented by the functioning of the instinct of self-preservation which undoubtedly belongs to biological origins of man.

The “functioning” of the most powerful instinct, of the instinct of self-preservation brings the psyche of man to the active state associated with a complex of psychical reactions in the body which trigger the unconscious search for all possible means of survival. As a result, without comprehending in full the motives and the objectives of one’s own behavior, man turns his attention to religious teachings, and his

consciousness, under these conditions, becomes more prepared to perceive and to digest the ideas, the images and the notions of specific, “supernatural” character. In this regard C.G. Jung used to write as follows: “The instinctive action seems to be more or less sporadic psychological phenomenon, a kind of interruption of the continuous process of consciousness” (Jung, 1997). However, to “activate” this instinct, some critical natural or social conditions that are external to man have to be present. The availability of such conditions and their perception by man, i.e. the understanding of the inevitability of the fact of death, the understanding of a number of the circumstances that directly lead to death, make the social content of the fear of death. Thus, the specific characteristic of the fear of death as mechanism of the formation of religion is represented by the fact that it possesses bio-psychic form and social content, and, consequently, it is of biosocial nature.

The most significant role in the process of the formation of religion is played by the factors and mechanisms of primarily social character. They include the specifics of social, political and economic conditions of the existence of an individual and of social groups, and, of course, reflection, etc.

The social content of the fear of death is that the images and ideas that emerge in the consciousness of man can acquire specific religious coloring exactly under the conditions of the vitally important circumstances that are usually associated with the feelings of anxiety or fear. The social phenomena and processes that are the most dangerous for the existence of an individual and social group supposedly include wars, revolutions, insurgency, economic crises, etc. These social conditions create chaos, the lack of order, the “the dark abyss of the void” that incites the fear of death. Thus, it would seem to be logical to agree with C. Geertz who wrote that: “Man can accommodate to everything his imagination is able to cope with, but it cannot come to terms with chaos. Inasmuch as the bases of his functions and his basic advantage are represented by the ability to understand, he is most afraid of encountering the things he cannot interpret, i.e. the so-called “supernatural.” (Geertz, 2004). Thus, the phenomena and processes that pose threat to the existence of an individual or those that can disturb the vital functions of his body cause psychosomatic conditions – anxieties of the fear of death and activate the instinct of self-preservation. Therefore, without the social content the fear of death cannot become the mechanism that would promote the establishment of religion.

However, it has to be noticed that during the primeval period of social development the fear of death and the instinct of self-preservation used to be predominantly triggered by the conditions of natural, not of social origin. The influence of the natural conditions on the formation of specific images, feelings and ideas of religious nature can be found in all forms and types of religion in different historical periods. Nevertheless, the genesis of religion was mostly affected by natural conditions during the pre-civilization period. This is predominantly explained by the fact that under primitive communal system the human community and the natural conditions were inseparable. As a result, the efforts to protect oneself, especially at the stage of primitive communal system when man was trying to accommodate himself to the conditions of his living environment, lead to the emergence of the specific religious form of cognition and of the relevant type of behavior based on the faith in supernatural properties of the inexplicable.

Thus, feeling the fear and trying to save himself from danger, man turns to religion. He seeks for salvation in religion that since the moment of its origination has been solving the issues of overcoming the fear in most successful way. The fear of death

and of losing everything at once brings the masses of people to religious communities that actively preach the eternal life in the form of spiritual and sometimes in the form of physical immortality, or the reemergence of the soul, its reincarnation, but never death as the final destination of the existence. In this regard the necessity of religion is recognized even by atheists. Modern research writer Alain de Botton in his work called

“Religion for Atheists: A Non-believer's Guide to the Uses of Religion” notes that religious ideas and beliefs are very important for man and for social groups. Religion is needed to feel some kind of unity and support, to overcome fears of different kind, including the fear of death (de Botton, 2012).

Thus, the conditions of the existence that present danger for man and social groups affect the body of individuals and their psyches, and, consequently, influence the formation of religious images and ideas. The processes and reactions that occur in the body of man and that incite death anxiety and activate the instinct of self-preservation, as well as the instinct proper, are covered by the area of the biological and the biopsychical; however, the circumstances that activate them are of social nature which makes it possible to associate the activities of the mechanism of the fear of death with the area of the correlation between the biological and the social.

Conclusion

1. Systemic approach to the description of the fear of death helps consider this phenomenon from the perspectives of five different aspects, and thus it provides more comprehensive picture of the position and of the significance of tanatophobia in life of man and society.
2. All aspects of tanatophobia (ontological, epistemological, axiological, praxeological, anthropological) should be studied as a whole in order to investigate the phenomenon of the fear of death in the course of its development: from genesis to transformations to overcoming.
3. Tanatophobia is founded on social and biological factors; therefore, the nature of tanatophobia is represented by the unity of social and natural aspects.
4. Producing especially powerful effects on psyche of man, on his consciousness and his body, tanatophobia possesses two vectors: the destructive and the creative ones. Special role of tanatophobia is manifested through the fact that it can represent one of the mechanisms of the formation of such social phenomena and processes as, for example, religion, art, literature, etc.
5. Representing one of the forms of the correlations between man and the phenomenon of death, tanatophobia can, on the one hand, destroy basic life values, and, on the other hand, it makes it possible to consider them from the perspectives of “the relative - the absolute” in our life.

The study results in the conclusion that over the long period of one's existence a man not only proved to be incapable of eliminating the fear of death, but he developed a huge number of theories and teachings on death together with the multiple means and methods to overcome tanatophobia. It has been noted that tanatophobia goes along with man for over the whole period of historical development; it emerged at the moment when the mankind was born; the reason for its origination is represented by “epistemic vacuum”, and its nature belongs to the area of the correlation between the natural and the social. The materials and the conclusions of the investigation can be useful for the researchers in different areas of knowledge, especially for those who study the problems of existence and development of man and society. The obtained theoretical guidelines can make the foundations for the development and implementation of the programs to instill and to regulate the attitudes toward death from childhood. Besides, the results of the investigation are of practical value for developing the recommendations on rendering psychological aid to the people who are placed in critical living environment that is characterized by the emerging trends for suicidal syndrome.



Notes on contributors

Yulia Victorovna Gavrilova, PhD in Philosophy, Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy, Transbaikal State University, Chita, Russia.

Maria Vladimirovna Privalova, PhD in Philosophy, Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy, Transbaikal State University, Chita, Russia.

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