

Preempting Moral Death and the Personal and Social Meaning of Mortality (Part II)

*Cătălin Mamali*¹

Abstract. The study explores if major moral concerns and internalized moral principles might influence the ways in which we cope with mortality, fear and death threats. Does minding of one's own moral capitulation or resistance to evil influence one's own ways to cope with death threats and fear of mortality? The paper assumes that throughout history, while confronting major societal evils, a powerful concern for moral survival might have emerged, sometimes at the cost of death. The study advances the idea that the fear of mortality cannot be reduced to physical (biological death, because humans are facing many kinds of mortality such as: cultural death, social death, political death and above all moral death, or as Havel called it, in honor of Jan Palach's self-sacrifice, "moral suicide". Moral death is understood as capitulation to various threats (including physical death). In the case of moral exemplars, it is observed that the capacity and willingness to preempt moral death are associated with a free acceptance of great losses such as property, family wellbeing, liberty and even one's own life.

Keywords: biological/physical death, moral death, political death, societal mortality, collective care for immortality

Resistance to moral death as a specific humane way to cope with the fear of death

There is historical evidence that many humans of all ethnic, racial, cultural, political, religious, age, gender and social class backgrounds and orientations oppose some outrageous societal evils exposing themselves to tremendous sufferings including death while some of their fellows or most of their contemporaries accepted such evils. Fear of death, commonly understood as biological death, has been overpassed during history due to high moral and spiritual principles and motives such as: love for the other, love for individual and societal freedom, truth, freedom of expression practiced against dominant dogma, rejection of injustice, opposition to violence and other similar forces.

During the lifespan development, individuals might face hard decision, which in some cases imply moral choices with deep and long term-consequences regarding one's core identity, the well-being of others, and the meaning of personal and societal life. At stake might be

1. Independent scholar – POROI, SUA; catalinmamali.loras@gmail.com.

one's bio-physical survival and other basic values. Such situations are sometimes captured in life stories. McAdams (1985, 2006), developing Erikson's (1950) concept of generativity, carried out a series of in-depth interviews that revealed a set of specific features of "generative adults". McAdams advances a model of "redemptive self" that includes the following six themes organized from distant past (childhood) to near future later adulthood (should we say oldhood?): early advantage, suffering of others, moral death-steadfastness, power versus love, redemption, and future growth (p. 93). A generative life increases the chances, despite many hardships and setbacks one may live through, increases the chances of conceiving his/her "own life in redemptive terms" (p. 95). In this journey, existential decisions and commitments play a major function. McAdams posits that the redemptive story is a specific feature developed within the American culture, while generativity is universal (pp. 96-97). McAdams and Bowman (2001), in a study on African American, suggest that redemption and contamination are helping the person to make sense of life transitions. The present is concerned in those situations and personal and collective life-trajectories when after significant moral defeats, such as committing violence against innocent people, joining brutal organization, offering false witness with horrific consequences on the victims or accepting essential changes imposed by outside forces on one's core identity that might be followed by efforts of redemption and moral repair.

Moral death is understood as a systematic disregard toward obvious individual and societal evils (mass violence and oppression, abuse of children, rape, interdiction of free thinking and responsible free expression, denial of truth) that could viciously grow till they become direct support and participation to such evils. Moral death could be associated with a wide range of motives such as protecting one's own status quo, gaining advantages of any type, enjoying the suffering of others and many other motives. The essential traits of moral death and dying are: awareness of an unjust undeserved pain and refusal to oppose and/or to nonparticipate to its enactment. The concept of moral death implies a minimal moral understanding of some basic moral rules by the person whose moral development takes a wrong turn. The moral death is not the end of the evil road. It might start with indifference to the unjust pains induced in others and end with a strong immoral development when immoral rules (for instance the inferiority of others, the cynicism of violent acts against other) become guiding and justifying principles of a mal-morality (see Figure 1). The model that is attempting to integrate moral development with immoral development leaves open the possibility of moral redemption, which can be interpreted as a moral resurrection, or rebirth.

Explanation: The positive levels are those identified by Kohlberg (Kohlberg, 1976; Lind et al., 1985). The levels of immoral development introduced here are: (-1) Pre-conventional immoral level: one generates undeserved pain in others and blocks others' attempts to obtain pleasure and achieve personal pleasure and benefits; (-2) Conventional immoral norms; one obeys to existing immoral norms such as ethnocentric superiority, racism, class discrimination, religious exclusion development. The mutual expectations are construed in an exclusivist mode ("If we/I do not terminate them, then they will not let us live."); the respected norms are clearly unjust and legislation is dehumanizing; (-3) At post-conventional level individuals and/or groups conceive auto-centric moral principles that promote their perceived well-being at the expenses, including cultural, financial, physical, religious annihilation of specific others. A major question invited by Kohlberg's well-established model of moral development is: where on Kohlberg's model could be placed mass killers such as Hitler, Stalin, Pol Pot?? Obviously, they have no place at levels 1, 2, 3, we needed a space for immoral development, a negative space of moral development it is to say for immoral development – not just for the sake of a dialectical perspective.

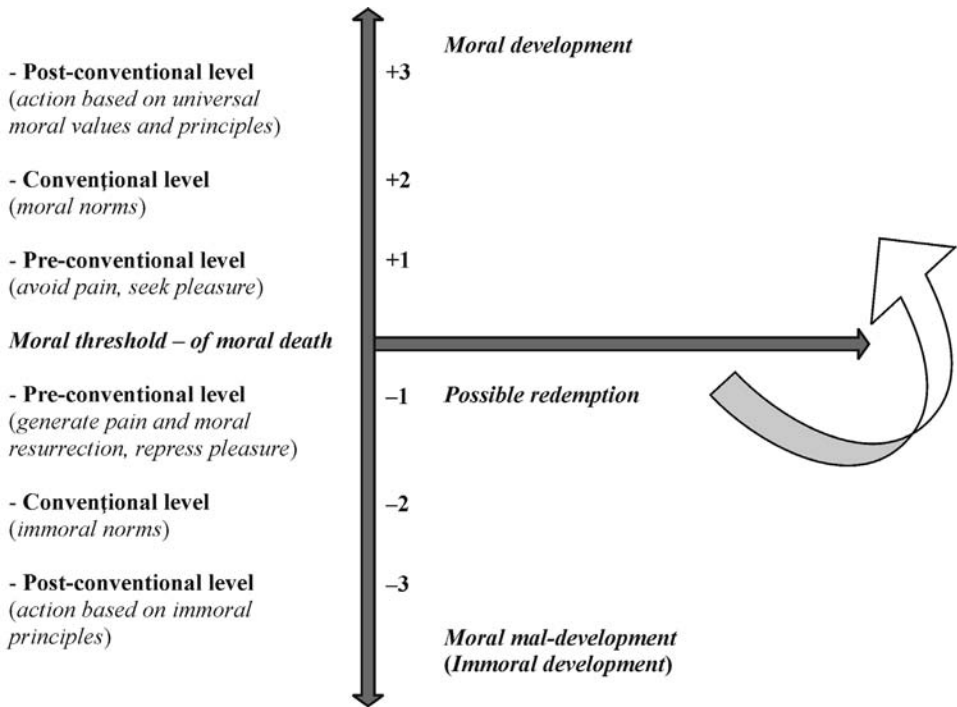


Figure 1. Representation of the moral levels from being guided by moral principles to being guided by immoral principles (Mamali, 2017)

The concept of *preempting the moral death* opens the possibility to explore the wider theoretical and empirical field of the real-life dynamics of moral development and immoral development. This concept deals basically with two basic real life phenomena: (a) *moral resistance* – resisting even with the price of one’s own life and those close to the horrific pressures designed to force the person to engage in grave immoral acts, from changing his own religious beliefs, identity to becoming an instrument of torture used against innocent others; this is a form of moral resistance triggered mainly by direct pressures on the individual to engage in evil acts, to become an obedient instrument of evil while one is aware of this. I assume that this might be in many cases a form of moral reactance against immoral force that might not have happened if these forces would not press a person to participate in evil action; (b) *the pro-active moral opposition* of a human entity against structural violence, genocide and many forms of horrific injustice as it is paradigmatically represented by Thoreauvian civil disobedience oriented against slavery; this proactive moral engagement, besides the fact that it implies a previous attachment to high moral principles, implies a longterm preparation, deliberation and mediation on the best way to fight evil without turning oneself into an evil-doer. In addition to this there is a concern for societal pains, by evil structures, laws and procedures that inflict great suffering in others. The others might or might not be connected through social, kinship, religious, racial or ethnic ties to the one who seize the danger of moral death and takes direct action against the evil by assuming all the consequences, including freedom deprivation and bio-physical death. Those engaged in acts that promote moral survival even with the price of one’s own bio-physical death are freely and integrative witnesses within an environment that is overwhelmed by denial. Such dedicated witnesses achieve a

coherent relation between “speaker” – “speech” and “witness” (Peters, 2005, pp. 249-250). Thoreau (1848; 1906) who has been horrified by moral death (“everlasting death”) observing that many of his contemporaries were not only aware of slavery but of the “opinion” that slavery is an evil situation created by humans that must be terminated, nonetheless doing nothing against it, as he makes clear in his Civil Disobedience stated in his *Journal*: “*Truth and a true man is something essentially public, not private*” (vol. 5, August 8, 1852, p. 289). The Thoreauvian orientation toward the danger of moral death, and its determination to preempt moral death is deeply intertwined with Thoreau’s will and readiness to publicly confront the evil, to state what seems to him to be true about a horrific situation generated by humans. If we accept the Thoreauvian perspective on moral death, then it is reasonable to assume that the moral function of any whistleblower who witnesses and discloses evil acts depends on the responsible and complete transparency of the whistleblower and one’s observations. It seems that the practice that supports the secret identity of a whistleblower signalizes at the same time a deep erosion of the societal morality, trust and feeds the conspiratory acts and paranoia.

The moral resistance that is of reactive type can take a shorter period to be generated and might turn or not into a pro-active moral resistance. During history there are numerous cases of apostasy, as in the case of St. Paul. At the same time, during recent history, especially during the long and violent darkness created by the totalitarian systems there have been cases of apostasy when even with such systems, which might have had small periods of relaxation, some “dark angels” turned into saviors of some good causes, such as the computer scientists in former Soviet Union (Peters, 2016). These events and biographical trajectories that include moral conversions need a much deeper scrutiny. There are good reasons to believe that such transformations help one to climb back from the abyss of immoral developments, to crawl out of the immoral hole. Such a re-constructive chance is vital and related to the shared humanness. At the same time, the motives of such reversals might not be always of intrinsic type and might include a variety of extrinsic motives, some nurtured by the desire of bio-physical survival and wellbeing at all costs. For instance, after some 25 years of post-communism in all former communist countries there are well known cases of former communists who have been directly involved in violent actions but turned against previous forms of personal dictatorship and aligned themselves with the uprising, revolutionary wave and with the forces implied in various coup d’etats. Such transformation is useful and could bring great fruits. However, many of these personalities remained engaged, even decades after 1989, in evil acts and structures, while these sides of their societal actions are less visible and less violent than prior to 1989. Such historic situations show how difficult is the moral recovery, redemption and re-birth. It does not mean the separation from the previously committed immoral actions, but reveal that restoration of the previous existential situation is not ever perfect and that the moral-reconstruction has high chances to be flawed.

Terror of possible moral death emerges only after certain internal and external conditions are met despite the fact that negative feelings of immoral acts, including the universal feelings of shame and guilt are emerging in the first years of lifespan development. I assume that the disgust, discontent and even the terror generated by a possible moral death are dependent on the level of moral development of the individual and of the meaning of the lived experience. Not all experiences are equal, some of them are crucial experiences that trigger essential personal changes (Mamali, 1979, 1980; Mamali & Dunn, 2011). Such changes might re-orient the person from axiological and motivational perspectives, for instance switching from extrinsic to intrinsic motives and from treating others and relationships as means to treating them as goals (Mamali, 1980).

The terror of moral death is many times conditioned by the personal engagement in “causes bigger than one’s life” that are internalized on moral grounds as personal goals, such as the independence of the group (tribe, community, nation) to which one belongs, the rejection of slavery, the freedom of each and every person within the society one lives, the zero tolerance toward genocides, racism, class-hatred, ethnic and religious fanaticism, human trafficking, abuse of children, denial of the natural search and construction of the individual and collective identities and so on. History provides numerous such examples that cannot be represented with justice in my study. Nonetheless, Thoreau will provide a few such examples, which might not be the most important, but, on one side are relevant for the discussion, and on the other side are accessible to my limited knowledge and epistemic biases. For instance, referring to the “everlasting death”, Thoreau expressed his rejection of moral capitulation when he suggested that within a society that practices slavery the only one place for an honest person is the jail (Thoreau, 1906). Thoreau warned anyone who might try to avoid moral capitulation, and therefore to avoid the moral death, that one must be ready to pay for this with his property, well-being of one’s family, with one’s freedom and even life. He asked for action based on high moral principles. Tolstoy renounced to this wealth and attempted to live a modest life that could bring justice to his former serfs (“mujiks” on his land). Gandhi set himself on the same moral journey as Thoreau did, and – tragically – he has been assassinated, and before it denied the Nobel Prize for Peace for unconceivable reasons. Gandhi went to prison, earned the Nobel Prize but did NOT receive it, and later on, tragically, he has been murdered. Havel accepted to do unskilled heavy works instead to cooperate with the communist system. Jan Palach set himself on fire in an ultimate sign of opposition to the invasion of his country by most of the Warsaw Pact armies (with the exception of Romania and GDR from different reasons) under the leadership of the Red/Soviet Army). Palach raised against the danger of the “moral suicide” of his co-nationals as Havel expressed it. Jan Palach, by his moral courage, saved Prague, saved Czechoslovakia and Europe and gave hope to the world – for a while. Nelson Mandela, Desmond Tutu and many others as their much younger fellows as Sath Cooper opposed moral death and, as society changed radical they did not resort to or supported acts of revenge against their former tormentors.

There are many cases of moral resistance during the WWII, when people who rejected moral defeat and even death helped Jews and people of other nationalities to escape death as it is, for instance the case of the priest from Chambon (Modigliani). There are many dissidents from former communist countries who rejected the moral capitulation in the face of communist brutality. There are countless unknown moral heroes from all over the world who rejected moral death by creative and courageous actions that preempted moral death. It is interesting that acts have been sometimes during history visible being exposed on a public stage even by cynical perpetrators.

The Islamization, and the relentless tentative to accomplish it used and induced a climate of terror on all those who had different beliefs than Islam. This policy lead to many victims. For instance, this is the case of the public decapitation (beheading) after a long torture of the king Constantin Brâncoveanu, his four sons and his major advisor on 15 of August (Feast of Dormition and his 60th birthday) 1714 because all of them refused to convert to Islam. The executions took place publicly and have been witnessed by Sultan Ahmed III (who ordered the decapitations) and the Ambassadors of the major Powers (Austria, England, France and Russia) at Sublime Porte. *“Behold, all my fortunes and all I had, I have lost! Let us not lose our souls. Be brave and manly, my beloved! Ignore death. Look at how much Christ, our Savior, has endured for us and with what shameful death he died. Firmly believe in this and do not move, nor leave your faith for this life and this world.”* (Șincai, 1978, vol. II, p. 36)

Brâncoveanu has been officially accused by the Sublime Porte for being disloyal because he had parallel negotiations with Austria, Russia and Venice as it has been revealed by his correspondence that has been secretly forward to *the Sublime Porte*. By the way, it is amazing how the physical place and the political center where such horrors have been conceived and executed could be called “sublime” (awfully sublime, or brutally sublime might fit better, if we would follow the gifted writer, Caragiale, who used such expressions as “dirty clean” that reveals the messy character of a distorted vision). There are historians, such as Xenopol (1929) and Iorga (1914), who argued that the historical context marked by conflicts of interests among the Great Powers that also had territorial claims, forced Brâncoveanu to navigate on these dangerous political waters by making secret agreements with each power. Sultan Ahmed III, in consonance with the violent repression used by the Sublime Porte before and after him, resorted to this exemplar execution hoping to convert Constantin Brâncoveanu, or at least one of his sons, to Islam or, in the last resort, to spread fear on all people from the Ottoman Empire who had a different faith than Islam. The intention to induce as much fear as possible in those of other religious beliefs, especially on Christians has been expressed by exposing the head of the decapitated in the city. At the same time, the presence of the Ambassadors of the Great Powers at the execution sent a clear message: either these powers are powerless in relation with the power of the Ottoman Empire or are indifferent. Both signals served the interests of the Sublime Porte. As it is well documented, this terror pattern survived even the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and reached a magnitude beyond imagination during the Armenian Genocide. The problem of the nationalities of the Ottoman Empire which, in some cases, have been a majority in many places (Armenians, Greeks, for instance), is tremendously exacerbated by the fact that the Ottoman Empire did have terrible statistics for most of these nationalities.

This is just one example from a long and diverse series of similar cases across cultures and religions. It has to be stressed that such a moral resistance, in this case motivated by the religious dimension of one’s identity, do not imply a rejection of the other’s culture and religion, or an attitude of superiority of one’s culture over the other’s culture. Its basic meaning seems to be according to my interpretation of the refusal of forced detachment, disaffiliation from one’s essential feature of one’s identity. The moral resistance is triggered by the non-acceptance of a forced separation from one’s own faith, or as Maimonides (1963) repeatedly warned about the danger of the denial of or departure from one’s ancestral Law.

The relation between the fear of bio-physical death and other forms of dying is not included into the inquiring field of TMT. There is no return from and nor reversal of, at least up to 21st century AD. The awareness of a way without return together with the awareness of the inevitable coming of death feed the fear of mortality. However, it is a cultural fact that people from various areas believed in various forms of resurrection. The present model assumes that such beliefs might have been nurtured by the need to cope with mortality fear. The belief in the bio-physical resurrection seems to play a defensive function in relation to the unavoidable nature of mortality. There are even folk narratives that deals with this traumatic fear especially when the dead is a young person and they are enacted through specific rituals in order appease the suffering of the survivors. This is the case of Miorița (Densușianu, 1922; Eliade, 1972; Stahl, 1938), a Romanian folk narrative and ritual enacted mainly in the case of the violent death of a young person. As a form of therapy for the survivors it is a way to appease their suffering by a transfiguration of the death into a cosmic wedding that would make meaningless any revenge against the perpetrators of crime. It is important to notice that the narrative of this ritual is marked by a deep interrogative orientation.

In contrast with the bio-physical death, the moral death, which is explored in this study, might be reversed through redemptive acts as long as the individual (or the collective entity) survives bio-physically. The possibility of moral resurrection through a redemptive process is never a complete restoration of the existence, including of those injured (physically, morally, religiously, culturally) and of the injuring entity. For instance, moral resurrection implies a recovery of those who killed innocent people, abused children, committed rape, participated in genocidal actions, unjustly deprived others of freedom, destroyed cultural capital, practiced slavery, human trafficking and of many other evil acts. Even if moral resurrection cannot restore the prior existence of the injured reality, it is a way toward healing and renewed hopes.

Preempting moral death seems to depend on mature form of attachment that provides not only a safe basis for new explorations (physical, cognitive, moral and so on) but that allows the individual to attain positive forms of pro-active detachment, i.e. exerting one's free will while acting based on high moral principles and assuming all the personal costs for one's actions. It should be reminded that detachment is a way of being recommended by Hinduism and Buddhism. In modern times Thoreau imagined and practiced the method of civil disobedience that has at its core the separation from evil acts, habits, practices, laws and institutions as it has been the case with slavery. Non-participation to evil is a device of preempting what he called "everlasting death", i.e. moral death.

It seems that the process of generative and positive becoming requires the capacity of detachment, even of close relationships if such relationships might force or just enhance immoral actions. Identity, including the ethnolinguistic identity, turned over time into a major target of ideological controversies and battles. Because identity has been socially constructed mainly on the basis of group membership that might be self-assumed or at least publicly claimed through self-categorization its expression is considered to be a clear answer to a hard forced choice: *Are you with Us or with Them, are you one of Us or one of Them?* This forced choice has a drastically simplified and violent character and at the same time denies an essential potential of the identity core. Kateb, who explored personalities such as Emerson, Whitman, Thoreau (and we may add Socrates, Confucius, Gandhi, Mandela, Martin Luther King...), suggests that "democratic individuality" represents such a potential. Kateb concludes that the exemplar cases of "impersonal individuality" one is able and willing to liberate oneself from self-interest and conceives and treats all other individuals as worthwhile, as being intrinsically worthy (Kateb, 1992, pp. 94-95). The personal side of the identity core is thus not enough by itself to avoid exclusionist orientations. The personal side of the identity core, if nurtured by higher laws, by impersonal individuality transcends its own self-interests and the social ties that impose biases against other social categories and individuals. I think that Kateb's view on democratic individuality shows a major way to escape auto-centrism at all levels of social complexity (from individual, to national, and human). This is to say that a democratic individuality that is in a self-conscious way embedded in the core identity increases the chances of a good identity.

The individual, the democratic individual, is the first force that might be able to oppose the biases that are rooted within exclusionist policies toward identity. The individual, based on "higher laws", as Thoreau did suggest, can refuse to cooperate with any larger social unit (group, organization, nation) that is demanding unjust, and violent actions against others. Thoreau envisioned the way of civil disobedience, of non-participation to evil structures and actions. Buell (2016) reaches the well-grounded conclusion that "disaffiliation" is a necessary condition that opens the gate toward Thoreauvian engagement. Disaffiliation from any evil structure is a pragmatic solution that reveals "the civil disobedience ethic" (pp. 203-205). This seems to be the case especially after the humankind experienced the totalitarian brutalities

(communist and fascist) that have been also enhanced by the obligatory and submissive regimentation of individuals and groups to their goals. This inner rooted disaffiliation that is based on high moral principles must existentially opposed to forced dis-identification that resorted to brutal punishments in order to make the inmates of communist prisons to deny their core identity (family, moral, religious, ethnic ties and values) and for converting them to communism. The method has been designed by Makarenko (1929, 1963) and has been used in many communist prisons as it is the case with “Pitești experiment” for Romania (Bacu, 1971; Ierunca, 1990) – the method has been designed and used in a violent way to achieve profound changes in one’s identity that were opposite to one’s initial identity.

Oedipus according to the legend and play, succeeded to separate oneself from evil acts carried out without having the knowledge about his relationship with his victims. He reached this level of detachment from his own errors “untaught by birds”. It is important to notice that “untaught by birds” means, from an epistemological perspective, using a different way of knowing than that used by Oracle, i.e., it is a knowledge which is not based on the expertise of an external authority but is based on his own cognitive skills, interest to search and experience. This type of knowledge is at the same time rooted in epistemic abilities, holistic experiential resources due to many hurdles overpassed by Oedipus and in the moral strength, especially within respect to justice beyond personal and narrow group interests. This is supported by the fact that Oedipus, after a carefully conducted inquiry on the killing of Laius, punishes himself. Oedipus represents an extremely rare holistic ability of humans despite the fact that it seems even to be very rare. Confucius expressed this: “In vain I have looked for a single man capable of seeing his own faults and bringing the charge home against himself” (Confucius, 2005, Book 5, 26, p. 56). Oedipus searches for truth and not only finds out his own errors but has the power to acknowledge them publicly and to punish himself. Let us remember that at that time he has been a leader, The King. How many politicians nowadays do bring charges against their own honest and intentional errors? It seems that Confucius’ observation might be more realistic than ever.

The story of Oedipus reveals the lethal tensions between individual and societal epistemic arrogance on one side and the responsibility to search, identify, recognize, punish and correct our errors, individual or societal. Oedipus shows again and again that he is able to assume epistemic challenges, personal challenges and social and political challenges. He assumed personal responsibility avoiding the trap of accusing oneself of wrongdoings he did not commit but were craftily imagined by others to undo him. His actions, way of becoming belonged to a type that seemed to Confucius to be humanly impossible. I repeat the warning of Confucius: “In vain I have looked for a single man capable of seeing his own faults and bringing the charge home against himself (Confucius, 2005, Book, 5, 26, p. 56).” Within the framework of the Oracle-Sphinx model this means that Oedipus searched for truth with love, even while his search has been clearly against his own interests, and had the will power to recognize his tragic findings, to share them publicly and to punish oneself. It seems to me that this is possible due to a symbiosis between the need for truth and the moral principles. By going this way, Oedipus accepted physical injury (pulling out his own eyes), becoming a social outcast after being a king and he even contemplated physical death. This seems possible mainly because *he had the will and wisdom of preempting his moral death*. He was ready for accepting physical punishment (self-punishment included) even physically death but strived with all his resources to preempt his moral death, to avoid becoming a morally degenerated person as his beloved sons became.

The moral survival is both individual and collective. It is part of the wider cultural processes identified by Bourdieu in his studies on cultural reproduction and cultural capital.

Without going into details here I think that the existential concerns for preempting moral death is directly connected with that accumulation of moral capital. Human entities with a great moral capital usually have a powerful social influence. The decisions of such exemplars are closely scrutinized by societies. This has been the case with Gandhi, Mandela and Havel in the recent past. Today the moral capital of San A. S. Kyi is the object of huge debates generating questions that are not yet completely answered. It seems that the assessment of moral capital and of its use depends on crucial existential choices, that might have higher chances of being wisely solved if the person enjoys what Gardner (2006, 2013) called “existential intelligence” that helps to solve challenging existential issues that have both individual and societal consequences, as well as on a relatively long time-frame.

The problem of moral survival comes into sharp contrast with the “suicide bombers” and their motivation for the “quest of personal significance” as defined by Kruglanski et al. (2004). They identified major forces that contribute to the emergence of suicidal terrorism that imply an “ideological” orientation and “social pressures” that are associated with attempts “at *significance restoration, significance gain, and prevention of significance loss*” (Kruglanski et al., 2004). The suicidal terrorism, because it has an intrinsic violent nature, comes in opposition with the non-violent acts through which individuals and groups strive to avoid moral death. In the later case, if one resorts to suicide (some Buddhist monks, Jan Palach and many others), this is first of all self-directed act that does not harm physically the enemies being conceived as a reminder moral survival that is oriented against moral death because it orients toward high moral and spiritual values without which the mere physical survival appears meaningless. On a scale, “suicidal terrorism” is placed on one extreme end while the self-sacrifice that is totally non-violent toward others (including the perpetrators of evil) is located to the other extreme. The suicidal terrorism is an extreme form of immoral development while actions explicitly designed for avoiding moral capitulation (such as those of Franklin, Gandhi, King, Palach, Mother Teresa, Havel...) are expressions of high levels of moral development.

Mortality in its various forms possesses learning questions for the entire life-span development. As such it underscores the “dialogal side” of knowledge (Perret-Clermont & Nicolet, 1988, p. 273) for all human field including the field of mortality. The dialogue on mortality, especially when there is a confrontation with the evil, and the individual and collective actors face choice between moral survival and everlasting death has a pragmatic moral character with high costs that must be accepted.

Table 1. *Basic areas of confrontation between moral and immoral development for a few moral exemplars*

<i>Areas of confrontation with immoral tendencies</i>	<i>B. Franklin</i>	<i>H.D. Thoreau</i>	<i>M.K. Gandhi</i>	<i>V. Havel</i>
<i>Universal moral principles used for action</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>Humans as goals, not as tools</i>	Yes, in general, but the use of manipulation is acceptable for good causes	Yes, unconditionally	Yes, unconditionally	Yes, but mainly in politics
<i>Recognition of obvious societal pains</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>Truth: searched and promoted in all situations</i>	Yes, but deception is acceptable to unmask immoral behaviors	Yes, unconditionally	Yes	Yes, mainly while opposing political evil

<i>Confronting the powerful and supporting the powerless</i>	Yes, consistently	Yes, consistently	Yes, consistently	Yes, consistently and principled
<i>Volunteer acceptance of all personal costs of one's opposition to evil to avoid moral suicide</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, after being tricked, while jailed, by the oppressors
<i>Non-violent orientation toward the adversaries</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>Openness to change, heuristic approach</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Discussions and conclusions

The question of human mortality is part of an old and never-ending issue for searching the meaning of life. Is the living journey with all its joys, pains, sorrows, constructive and destructive actions, feelings and thoughts meaningless? Is it in the nature of this living journey to end in nothingness? Humans, aware of the unavoidable nature of physical death, consciously and unconsciously are searching for the meaning of the living. Is physical mortality, this expected and terrifying reality, the only one answer?

Thoreau's conception on the separation from evil (slavery, genocides, injustices) based on high moral principles and by non-violent means, and by willingly accepting all the costs (including one's own jailing, death, harassment of the family, and loss of property) introduces one more fear of mortality: fear of moral death. So, those who remain close to evil (slavery, genocides, injustices) must accept the face the "everlasting death", to be included with the category of those with a negative immortality.

The fear of moral death or "everlasting death" is the humane reaction to physical mortality while confronting brutal and powerful evil forces. So, according to Thoreau's conception the fear of physical death may coexist within multidimensional space that includes other types of fear of mortality and death. A major fear is that of moral death, it might be associated with other fears such as fear of political, cultural or social death. To avoid moral death in such condition the individual must separate (disaffiliate, disidentify) oneself from the actions of evil power.

At the individual level, the fear of physical death might be regulated by the terrifying possibility of moral death. The choice belongs to the individual who must accept all its costs, and must be carried based on high moral principles. At the societal level the fear of mortality regards the loss of cultural identity dignity and freedom, among others. Usually such a societal fear is generated by the hostile and violent actions of various oppressors. It is, as discussed previously, associated with a systematic action to destroy, erase even the traces of the previous nation, culture. Such a fear has historical roots.

Résumé. L'étude explore si des préoccupations morales majeures et des principes moraux intériorisés pourraient influencer la manière dont nous faisons face à la peur de la mort et aux menaces de mort. Le fait de penser à sa propre capitulation morale ou à sa résistance au mal influence-t-il sa propre façon de faire face aux menaces de mort et à la peur de la mort? Au cours de l'histoire l'humanité, face à des maux sociétaux majeurs, une forte préoccupation pour la survie morale avait pu émerger,

parfois même au prix de la mort. L'étude avance l'idée que la peur de la mortalité ne peut pas être réduite à la mort physique (mort biologique) car les humains sont confrontés à de nombreux types de mortalité tels que: la mort culturelle, la mort sociale, la mort politique et surtout la mort morale, ou comme l'a appelé Havel, en l'honneur du sacrifice de Jan Palach, «suicide moral». La mort morale est comprise comme la capitulation face à diverses menaces (y compris de la mort physique). Dans le cas des exemples moraux, on observe que la capacité et la volonté d'anticiper la mort morale sont associées à une libre acceptation de grandes pertes telles que la propriété, le bien-être familial, la liberté et même sa propre vie.

Mots-clés: mort biologique/physique, mort morale, mort politique, mortalité sociétale, souci collectif de l'immortalité

Rezumat. Studiul examinează condițiile în care preocupările morale majore și principiile morale interiorizate pot influența modurile în care facem față fricii de moarte și amenințărilor cu moartea. Faptul de a lua în considerare propria capitulare morală sau rezistența la rău influențează propriile moduri de a face față amenințărilor cu moartea și fricii de moarte? Lucrarea presupune că, de-a lungul istoriei omenirii, confruntându-se cu rele majore ale societății, a apărut o preocupare puternică pentru supraviețuirea morală, chiar și cu prețul morții. Moartea morală este înțeleasă ca o capitulare în fața diverselor amenințări (inclusiv cu moartea fizică). În cazul exemplelor morale, se observă cum capacitatea și dorința de a preveni moartea morală sunt asociate cu o acceptare liberă a unor mari pierderi precum proprietatea, bunăstarea familiei, libertatea și chiar propria viață.

Cuvinte-cheie: moarte biologică/fizică, moarte morală, moarte politică, mortalitate societală, grija colectivă pentru nemurire

References

- Bacu, D. (1971). *The anti-humans. The student re-education in Romanian prisons*. Engelwood, Colorado: Soldiers of the Cross.
- Buell, L. (2016). Disaffiliation as engagement. In K. Case & K.P. Van Anglen (Eds.), *Thoreau at two hundreds. Essays and reassessments*. Cambridge: Cambridge University, pp. 200-215.
- Confucius (2005). *The Analects of Confucius. Lao Tzu: Tao Te Ching*. Translated with notes by Arthur Waley. New York: Barnes and Noble.
- Densușianu, O. (1922/1966). *Viața păstorească în poezia noastră populară*. București: Editura pentru literatură.
- Eliade, M. (1972). *Zalmoxis. The vanishing God. Comparative studies in the religions and folklore of Dacia and Eastern Europe*. Translated by W. Trask. Chicago: The University Chicago Press.
- Erikson, E.H. (1950/1963). *Childhood and Society* (2nd ed.). New York, Norton.
- Gardner, H. (2006). *Multiple intelligences: New horizons*. New York: Basic Books.
- Gardner, H. (2013). Howard's answer to Seana Moran. In M.L. Kornhaber & E. Winner (Eds.), *Mind, work, and life. A Festschrift on the occasion of Howard Gardner 70th birthday*. Cambridge, MA: Published by the Offices of Howard Gardner, pp. 198-200.
- Ierunca, V. (1990). *Fenomenul Pitești (The Pitești phenomenon)*. București: Humanitas.
- Iorga, N. (1934/2005). *Bizanț după bizanț (Byzance après Byzance)*. București: Universitatea din București.
- Kateb, G. (1992). *The inner ocean: Individualism and democratic culture*. Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press.
- Kohlberg, L. (1976). Moral Stages and Moralization: The Cognitive-Development Approach. In T. Lickona (Ed.), *Moral Development and Behavior: Theory and Research and Social Issues* (pp. 31-53). New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Kruglanski, A.W., Stein, C.H., & Pierro, A. (2004). The quest for significance: The motivational foundations of fundamentalism. In P. Befani & A.E. Pierro (Eds.), *The quest for significance: The motivational foundations of fundamentalism* (pp. 95-111).

- Lind, G., Hartmann, H.A., & Wakenhut, R. (eds). (1985). *Moral Development and The Social Environment, Studies in the Philosophy and Psychology of Moral Judgment and Education*. General Editor and Translator: Thomas E. Wren. Precedent Inc. Chicago, Illinois.
- Maimonides, M. (1963). *The guide of the perplexed*. Translated with an introduction and notes by S. Pines, with an Introductory essay by L. Strauss. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Makarenko, A.S. (1929/1973). *The road to life. An epic in education*. Translation with an introduction by P. Lichtenberg. New York: Oriole Editions.
- Makarenko, A.S. (1963). *Opere pedagogice alese* [Pedagogical works], Vol. 1 & 2. București: Editura Didactică și Pedagogică.
- Mamali, C., & Dunn, R. (2011). The interpersonal and intrapersonal effects of crucial experiences. *Journal of Loss and Trauma*, 16(2), March, pp. 103-116.
- Mamali, C. (1979). Experiențe cruciale. (Crucial experiences). *Revista de Pedagogie*, 4.
- Mamali, C. (1980). *Crucial experiences and the quality of interpersonal motives*. Paper presented at the meeting of the European Association of Experimental Social Psychology, Bologna.
- Mamali, C. (2017). Accuracy of basic knowledge of traumatic historical events: The armenian genocide. *Journal of Loss and Trauma*, 22:2, pp. 99-109, DOI: 10.1080/15325024.2016.1187937.
- McAdams, D.P. (1985). *Power Intimacy and the Life Story: Personological Inquiries into Identity*. New York: Guilford Press.
- McAdams, P.D. (2006). The redemptive self: Generativity and the stories Americans live by. *Research in Human Development* 3(2&3), pp. 81-100.
- McAdams, D.P., & Bowman, P.J. (2001). Narrating life's turning points: Redemption and contamination. In D.P. McAdams, R. Josselson & A. Lieblich (Eds.), *Turns in the road: Narrative studies of lives in transition* (pp. 3-34). American Psychological Association.
- Perret-Clermont, A.N., & Nicolet, M. (1988). Vers un renouvellement de la réflexion épistémologique en psychologie. In A.N. Perret-Clermont, M. Nicolet (Eds.), *Interagir et connaître. Enjeux et régulations sociales dans le développement cognitif*. Cousset (Fribourg): Del Val.
- Peters, B. (2016). *How not to network a nation: The uneasy history of the Soviet Internet*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Peters, J.D. (2005). *Courting the abyss. Free speech and the liberal tradition*. Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Stahl, H. H. (1938). Filosofarea despre filosofia poporului român. *Sociologia Românească*, 3, 3-4, pp. 104-119.
- Șincai, G. (1978). *Cronica românilor și a mai multor neamuri*, I-III. Ediție îngrijită de F. Fugariu. București: Editura Minerva.
- Thoreau, H.D. (1848/1970). *Civil disobedience*. First presented as a public lecture with the title “*The Rights and Duties of the Individual in Relation to the State*” at Concord Lyceum on January 26, 1848. It was later published with the title *Resistance to Civil Government* by Elizabeth Peabody in *Aesthetic Papers* in May 14, 1849. It was published as *Civil Disobedience* for the first time in 1866 in *A Yankee in Canada*. See Philip Van Doren Stern *The annotated Walden. Or life in the woods*. Together with *Civil Disobedience*. New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc./ Publisher, 1970. See also W. Harding “*A Thoreau Handbook*”. New York: New York University Press, 1959.
- Thoreau, H.D. (1906/1949). *The Journal of Henry D. Thoreau*. Edited by B. Torrey and F. Allen. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Xenopol, A. (1929). *Istoria românilor din Dacia Traiană, Volumul VIII: Domnia lui C. Brâncovanu (1689-1714)*, Ediția a III-a, revăzută de autor, îngrijită și ținută la curent de I. Vlădescu, București: Editura “Cartea Românească”.