

**BEATA WOJCIECHOWSKA\***

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## **SENILITY AND ITS INCONVENIENCES ACCORDING TO *SPECULUM NATURALE* BY VINCENT OF BEAUVAIS (AB. 1194-1264)**

The stages of human life associated with physiological changes have already been characterised in many ways since ancient times. The basic division distinguished four periods: *puer*, *adulescens*, *iuvenis*, *senex*. The transition into old age was most frequently determined to fall between the age of 50 and 60. Herodotus regarded the age of 70 as the end of human existence while Aristotle differentiated between the body maturity reached between the age of 30 and 35 and the mind maturity falling at the age of 49. He claimed that senility began at the age of 63 upon the weakening of physical strength<sup>1</sup>. He believed that elderly people sought benefits, became greedy and in addition more difficult to live with and less satisfied with the company of others<sup>2</sup>.

Although old age was featured by a weakening of physical and mental powers, it was depicted as the age of wisdom, contrasted with youth dominated by passion. In Roman times, *pater familias*, approaching old age, enjoyed respect in private and public life<sup>3</sup>. In the treaty *Cato Maior de senectute*, Cicero stated that every period of life displayed its natural characteristics and full maturity was reached in old age, which, according to popular belief, began at the age of 46<sup>4</sup>. The Roman scholar and writer, Marcus Terentius Varro (116-27) defined the period from 46 to 60 years of age as *senectus*, and the time from 60 years of age till death as *senium* – late old age associated with infirmity and senile powerlessness<sup>5</sup>. The indicated terminology was referred to by Isidore of Seville (560-636), who, in his encyclopaedic work, situated the *senectus* period between the age of 50 and 70 and the *senium* period after the age

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\* Translated by Spektra Sp. z o.o.

<sup>1</sup> J. Jurkiewicz, *Kiedy w starożytności rozpoczynała się starość?*, „Vox Patrum” 31, (2011), vol.56, pp. 185-197; S. Longosz, *Medyczna troska o ludzi starych w starożytnym grecko-rzymskim świecie*, „Vox Patrum” 31, (2011), vol. 56, pp. 199-230; T. Carp, „*Puer senex*” in Roman and Medieval Thought, „Latoms” 39,1980, pp. 736-739; J.A. Burrow, *The Ages of Man. A Study in Medieval Writing and Thought*, Oxford 1986; M. Goodich, *From Birth to Old Age. The Human Life Cycle in Medieval Thought*, Lanham 1989; P. Johnson, *Historical Readings of Old Age and Ageing*, in: *Old Age from Antiquity to Past Modernity*, eds. P. Johnson, P. Thane, London, New York 1998, pp.1-18.

<sup>2</sup> Arystoteles, *Etyka nikomachejska*, transl. D. Gromska, Warszawa 2012, 1121b, p.150; 1156a, p. 240; 1158a, p.244.

<sup>3</sup> G. Minois, *Historia starości. Od antyku do renesansu*, transl. K. Marczevska, Warszawa 1995, p. 94.

<sup>4</sup> Cynceron, *O starości*, transl. Z. Cierniakowa, w: *Cynceron, Rozmowy tuskulańskie i inne pisma*, Warszawa 2010, pp. 233, 245.

<sup>5</sup> J. Jurkiewicz, *Kiedy w starożytności*, p. 194.

of 70. The *senectus* stage was defined by him as the age of dignity and transition from youth to old age, whereas *senium* was associated with weakness and incapacity<sup>6</sup>.

Vincent of Beauvais, the author of the largest volumetric medieval encyclopaedia *Speculum maius*<sup>7</sup>, an outstanding scholar and Dominican, staying in close contact with the members of the Capetian dynasty during the reign of Saint Louis IX (1226-1270), referred to the statements contained in the work of Isidore of Seville. He was probably born between 1184 and 1194 in Burgundy. He studied in Paris where he joined the Dominican monastery of St James opened in 1218. From there, around 1230 he was transferred to the newly established monastery in Beauvais, where in 1246 he became a sub-prior. His work on the monumental encyclopaedia was started there. In the late 40s of the 13th century, he was sent to the Cistercian monastery Mons Regalis (Royamount), which he left in 1260. Then he returned to his native St. James Convention in Paris, where he died in 1264. The first part of the monumental work, *Speculum naturale*, consisting of 32 books, includes a great deal of material concerning the description of the universe according to the theme of seven days of creation, based on the Book of Genesis (Genesis 1:1-31). The Book XXXI is devoted to the human race, and in particular to the body build, conception, birth and particular stages of human life. The last stage of existence was dealt with in several extensive chapters in which the author referred to or quoted the works of, inter alia, Cicero, Aristotle, Horace, Virgil, St. Jerome, St. Ambrose, Avicenna, Isidore of Seville.

Referring to Isidore, the author of an early medieval compendium of knowledge, Vincent associated old age with a limitation of mental abilities resulting from old age which was featured by a physiological process of cooling blood (losing heat). In this respect, he searched for similarities between old people and children whose blood was not yet warmed up. Old people lose their minds due to their long lives, whereas boys do not know what they are doing because of their playfulness and childhood. He valued old age for moderation in pleasures, lower libido, wisdom, maturity of advice, common sense and reconciliation to death. The negative aspects of senility were diseases, discouragement and drowsiness. The physical weakness of the body affected the stability of mind<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> Sancti Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi, *Etymologiarum*, in: *Patrologia Latina* [furter PI], ed. J.P. Migne, vol. 82, lib.11, c.2, Paris 1850, col. 415-416: *Sexta aetas senectus, quac nullo annorum tempore finitur; sed post quinque illas aetates quantumcumque vitae est, senectuti deputatur. Senium autem pars est ultima senectutis, dicta quod sit terminus sextae aetatis. in his igitur sex spatiis philosophi vitam discipserunt humanam, in quibus mutatur et currit et ad mortis terminum pervenit*

<sup>7</sup> On Vincent of Beauvais see: L. Lieser, *Vinzenz von Beauvais als Kompilator und Philosoph, Lipsiae 1928*; R. Weigand, *Vinzenz von Beauvais. Scholastische Universalchronistik als Quelle volkssprachiger Geschichtsschreibung*, Hildesheim, Olms 1991 (Germanistische texte und Studien 36); A. Fijałkowski, *Ocena wartości i przydatności pracy intelektualnej w połowie XIII wieku – na podstawie pism wincentego z Beauvais OP. (†1264)*, „*Studia Warmińskie*” 37, 2000, pp. 27-47; A. Fijałkowski, *Puer eruditus. idee edukacyjne wincentego z Beauvais (ab. 1194-1264)*, Warszawa 2001, pp. 25-27; S. Zonenberg, *Funkcja historii w zakonie dominikańskim oraz cyniki kształtujące pamięć historyczną dominikanina w średniowieczu*, „*Sensus Historiae*” 9, 2012/4, pp.119-142.

<sup>8</sup> Vincentius Bellovacensis, *Speculum maius*, t.1: *Speculum naturale*, “*Bibliotheca mundi (...) opera et studio Benedictinorum Collegii Vestastini in alma Academia Duacensi*”, Douaci ex officinal Baltazaris Belleri 1624 (re-print Graz 1964-1965), [further cit. Vincentius Bellovacensis, *Speculum naturale*], ks. 31, c.87, kol. 2360: *Senes a sensus diminutione quidam dictos esse putant: eo quod iam per vetustatem desipiant. nam phisici stultos esse dicunt frigidioris sanguinis homines: calidi vero prudentes. Unde et senes in quibus iam friget: et pueris in quibus necdum calet minus sapiunt. hinc est quod sibi conuenit infantium etas et senum. senes enim propter nimiam etatem delirant: pueri vero per infantiam et lasciuam ignorant quid agant: senex vero tantum generis est masculini: sicut anus femini. nam anus dicitur mulier sola quasi annosa: Senectus quidem multa secum et bona affert et mala.*

Referring to the work of Cicero 'On Old Age', the author pointed out that after a peaceful and well-spent life, serene and gentle old age, which might gain respect, could come if it preserved its rights. Quoting Cicero, he underlined that old age brought happiness of belonging to oneself, after years spent on sensual pleasures, satisfying ambitions, being involved in competition, conflicts and passions. He rhetorically asked what might be nicer from the duties of senility, accompanied by a love of learning and knowledge. He regarded respect as being the crowning achievement of old age which should be the fruit of life spent honestly and not only the result of grey hair and wrinkles<sup>9</sup>. For many people, hoariness, apart from the loss of parents, belongs to one of the most unpleasant experiences. Old age is sad, devoid of the desire to love, associated with inactivity, diseases and waiting for death<sup>10</sup>. Senility is connected with meanness, doubts, recollecting the past, stubbornness, tendency to complain, scolding children and edifying the young<sup>11</sup>. Old age overcomes everything. One should think before querying an old person because what was once understood as appropriate could now turn out to be an accusation because of age. A wobbly and shaky old man is inclined to believe in all misfortunes and being naïve, he himself is afraid of what he has done. By praising the past he shows contempt for the present time, regarding himself as the only wise and experienced person, thinking that the right things are only the ones that he himself understands. There is no man who is old enough not to believe (s)he will live through a year.

The author observed that old age appeared unnoticed. Just as with a disease one should fight against senility and pay attention to health. Thus, one should take moderate exercises and eat and drink in order to become stronger. Although old people are called stupid, gullible, numb and drowsy, the indicated characteristics are drawbacks of indolent senility, devoid of energy. Senile stupidity, referred to as driveling, is the feature of old people who are weak-minded and not the characteristics of all elderly people similarly to playfulness and debauchery which feature young people but only those who do not enjoy a good reputation.

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*Bona scilicet quia nos a potentissimis dominis liberat. Uoluptatibus enim modum imponit: libidinis impetus frangit: sapientiam auget: maturiora consilia prebet. Mala vero: quia senium miserrimum est debilitate ac tedio. nam subeunt morbi tristisque senectus duo nempe sunt: quibus vires corporis minuuntur: senectus videlicet ac morbus. Senectus nimirum est in bonis moribus dulcior: in consilijs vtilior: ad constantiam subeunde mortis paratior: ad reprimendas libidines fortior: ipsaque infirmitas corporis sobrietas est mentis. Por. Sancti Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi, Etymologiarum, PL, vol.82, lib.11, c. 27-29, col.418.*

<sup>9</sup> Vincentius Bellovacensis, *Speculum naturale*, book 31, c.87, col. 2360: *Tullius in libro de senectute. Quiete quidem ac pure et eleganter acte etatis est placida senectus ac lenis. nam ipsa bene acte vite ac beneficiorum multorum recordatio iocundissima est. Temeritas quoque florentis est etatis: prudentia vero senectutis. Unde qui legere vel audire antiqua voluerit: maximas res ab adolescentibus labefactas sed a senibus sustentatas ac restitutas reperit. Ceterum decorus est sermo senis: quietus et tremulus: facitque sepe ipsa sibi audientiam deserti senis compta et mitis oratio. Senectus honesta est: si ius suum retinet. O preclarum munus etatis: siquidem aufert nobis quod est in adolescentia vitiosissimum scilicet libidinem corporis. Cupidis rerum odiosum et molestum est carere. Satiatis vero et expletis iocundius est carere quam frui. Quanti illa sunt que affert senectus animum tanquam emeritis stipendijs libidinis. ambitionis: et contentionis: et amicitiarum et cupiditatum omnium secum esse: secumque. vt dicitur viuere. Si vero habet aliquod tanquam pabulum studij atque doctrine nihil ociosa senectute iocundius. Apex autem senectutis est auctoritas. Unde in senatu vt quisque etate antecedit: eius sententia principatum tenet. non tamen cani nec ruge auctoritatem repente afferre possunt: sed honeste acta superior etas fructus prebet auctoritatis extremos. Mors autem senibus sponte veniens est leuis: quod non iuuenibus sicut videlicet dictum est superius. Por. M. Tulli Ciceronis, *Cato Maior de senectute*, 5,13; 3,9; 6,20; 11,38; 12,39; 14,47; 14,49; 17,60; 18,62.*

<sup>10</sup> Vincentius Bellovacensis, *Speculum naturale*, book 31, c.88, col. 2361; Cf. Vergilius, *Georgicon*, lib.III, 66-68,97

<sup>11</sup> Vincentius Bellovacensis, *Speculum naturale*, book 31, c.88, col. 2361; Cf. Kwintus Horacjusz Flakkus, *De arte poetica*, 169-174, in: Idem, *Dziela wszystkie*, Vol. II, transl. J. Sękowski Wrocław, Warszawa, Kraków 1988, pp. 437, 439.

A young man with some features of an old man and an old man with some traits of a young man should be highly valued. Whoever follows the indicated example will be old in body but young in spirit<sup>12</sup>.

The following chapter dealt with the body structure of old people which was, in the author's opinion, warm and humid. Old people were therefore advised to move towards the things which provided warmth and moisture. The elderly persons were encouraged to stay in a place dominated by spring air and not dry air. Old people were suggested to ride on horseback and limit walking in order to keep fit. Stronger people might go for walks; however, the walking shouldn't be exhausting. They were advised to bathe in sweet and warm water, but it shouldn't last longer than an hour, after which they were recommended to rest. As far as food was concerned, Vincent advised the consumption of warm and moist, easily digestible food which was quickly eliminated from the stomach. He ordered to avoid eating tangy food, which might cause, as well as food that facilitated the appearance of melancholy or phlegm. The author argued that older people should eat several times a day for a gradual strength improvement. It was suggested that breakfast should be consumed between 8a.m. and 9a.m. until 11-12. It was preferable to take baths in the afternoon, and then eat food that softened and relaxed the belly. Elderly people were advised to rest, avoid sexual intercourses and unhappy random events.

Due to large amounts of phlegm accumulating in the bodies of old people they were advised to consume agents facilitating the reduction and elimination of phlegm. Referring to Hippocrates, the author maintained that the stomachs of many people were soft and delicate but when they grew older the organ dried out<sup>13</sup>. Vincent referred to the concept of Hippocrates based on the theory of warmth and moisture, which when mixed with coldness and dryness defined health and disease. The indicated elements were responsible for birth, growth and the process of getting old of living creatures. On the day of birth, everybody received the maximum amount of heat and moisture which impacted the metabolic processes of growth and disappeared with age. Senility resulted from the natural process of cooling down and drying out of the body. Older people having little inborn heat and moisture, needed less food and tolerated hunger more easily<sup>14</sup>.

Recalling Avicenna, Vincent suggested that elderly people should apply agents that warm and at the same time moisturise. In addition to proper food, he suggested taking baths and drinks, having enough of sleep and staying in bed longer, excreting urine and mucus from the stomach every day to keep the stomach smooth. Beside horse riding and walking, he advised elderly people to use perfume with strong warming flavour, and also

<sup>12</sup> Vincentius Bellovacensis, *Speculum naturale*, book 31, c. 88, col.2361; Cf. M.Tulli Ciceronis, *Cato Maior de senectute*, 7,24; 11,38; 11,35; 11,36; 11,34; 11,38.

<sup>13</sup> Vincentius Bellovacensis, *Speculum naturale*, book 31, c.89, col. 2361-2362: *Senum vero complexio quia calida et humida est hac regimine calefacienti et humectanti regi oportet. Habitat ergo in loco aere non sicco: sed simili verno. Et si debilis est virtus eius equitet: et ambulationem minuat. Qui vero fortior est vtatur deambulatione que non fatiget. Balneetur aqua dulci et calida et post vna hora quiescat. Deinde vero escas calidas et humiditas digestibiles citoque a stomacho descendentes comedat: cibos autem pungitios et coleram generantes caueat: eos quoque qui melancholiam generant aut flegma. Pluries in die reficiatur: et hoc paulatim: quoniam eius natura non patitur nec sufficit ad digestionem multorum ciborum semel sumptorum. Prandeat hora tertia. Post meridiem balneetur: et dentur ei cibaria quedam ventrem emollientia: postea reficiatur. Coitum omnino fugiat. Et anime accidentia. Quia vero colligitur in corporibus senum flegma plurimum: oportet eos nonnunquam regi subtiliantibus et inscidentibus flegma: nec in hoc est assidue commorandum. Plurimorum quidem hominum ventres vt ait Hypocras: in iuuentute sunt molles: qui cum senuerint desiccantur eorum ventres. Et quibusdam sit econtrario.*

<sup>14</sup> S. Longosz, *Medyczna troska o ludzi starych*, pp. 202-204.

rubbing themselves with oil, especially before bedtime, because the indicated treatments were intended to stimulate masculinity<sup>15</sup>.

The bodies of old people should be cared for with the use of remedies facilitating the elimination of excess of moods. He claimed that diminishing the amount of work and reducing anxiety prevent rapid aging. Those who descended into senility should stop working and be provided with a possibility to live peacefully. They should be strengthened by light meals, baths and a lot of sleep. They should sprinkle their face and head with aromas. Vincent indicated that such old people should drink in a moderate way only wine of mild quality, noble and exquisite, slightly mixed with water. The indicated care treatments and nutritional tips were addressed at delaying leucoderma and consumption as well as preventing body aging. The author of 'Speculum naturale' stated that one should not praise the hoariness of age but the hoariness of customs. He suggested that it was never too late for learning, and paraphrasing the considerations of Seneca, he pointed out that old age blamed itself for the years wasted on learning and a badly spent life. The allegations should be rewarded with work as well as the benefits coming from the present life. One should not complain about old age but rather try hard to make amends for the wasted time by taking advantage of life<sup>16</sup>.

Old age is accompanied by grey hair and baldness. Vincent used Aristotle's findings in his deliberations on the indicated subject. He maintained that greying in old age was an individual matter, characteristic for people, even though it could be observed among horses as well. Hoariness may appear as a result of a disease which manifests itself not only by grey hair but also by white skin. When a person recovers, grey hair falls out and grows back as it was before. When a person's hair gets grey because of old age the skin does not get white. Natural frostiness appears because of the reduction (lack) of heat which is released from the body and because of the excess of coldness. Senility is cool and dry<sup>17</sup>. Grey hair appears as a result of heat and not digested food because of warm air. Any process of decay is generated by heat, not natural but random. The cause of grey hair is the property of dense air coming from earthly fumes. If the fumes freeze, ice and frostiness appear. Thereby, when the fumes

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, col.2362: *Summa regiminis senum est operari quod calefaciat et humectet: simul ex nutrimentis et balneis et potibus ac somno prolixo et mora multa in lecto: ex assidua quoque vrine eorum prouocatione et expulsionione flegmatis ex eorum stomachis per viam intestinorum ac vesice: et vt materia lenitatis eius duret. Ex his preterea multum confert fricatio temperata in quantitate et qualitate cum oleo: deinde equitatio aut incesso. Ex aromatibus preterea aliquod bene redolens odorare debent: et proprie quod calidum temperate existit. Et oportet vt post dormitionem cum oleo inungantur: quoniam hoc virtutem excitat animalem. Por. Libellus Avicene de viribus cordis translatus ab Arnaldo de villa nova, Venice Dionysius Bertochus 1489-1490, p. 99, [online] findit.library.yale.edu/bookreader/BookRedaerDemo/index.html?oid=10943680#page/98/mode/1up [access 4.08.2015]*

<sup>16</sup> Vincentius Bellovacensis, *Speculum naturale*, book 31, c. 89, col. 2362: *Seneca de naturalibus questionibus liber VII. Objiciat ergo sibi senectus annos inter studia vana consumptos: et damna etatis male exempte sarciat labor. Occupationes rescindantur patrimonij longe cura soluat: nam si totus animus vacet et ad contemplationem sui saltem in ipso fine respiciat: faciet ac sibimet instabit: et quotidie breuitatem temporis metiens quicquid amissum est diligenti vite presentis vsu recolliget. Faciamus igitur et quod in itinere fieri solet. Qui tardius eximus velocitate moram compensantes festinemus: magnumque opus absque etatis excusatione tractemus. Por. L. Annaei Senecae, *Quaestiones naturales*, I, III, De aquis, Praefatio, 2,3,4. Vincent erroneously refers to Book VII, whereas the indicated fragment is found in Book III.*

<sup>17</sup> Aristotle shared the views of hypocrites and disseminated the theory of inborn warmth and moisture. Life expectancy depended on the quantity and quality of heat and moisture. See: Aristotle, *O młodości i starości*, transl. P. Siwek, in: Arystoteles, *Krótkie rozprawy psychologiczno-biologiczne*, Warszawa 1971, 467b-470b, pp.114-123; Arystoteles, *O rodzeniu się zwierząt*, transl. P. Siwek, Warszawa 1979, 745a, p.103; Arystoteles, *O długości i krótkości życia*, transl. P. Siwek, in: *Krótkie rozprawy*, 466a-b, pp.107-108; M. Wilejczyk, *Filozofia przyrody Arystotelesesa – wokół koncepcji czterech elementów*, Wrocław 2008, pp. 130-140.

decay and rotten wrinkling appears. That's why skin wrinkling and grey hair may also be observed in case of a human body. When it comes to diseases, frostiness is generated by the weakening of colour caused by heat. Upon the returning of health, fitness comes back and hair darkens. Therefore, it is right to refer to this type of weakness as random senility to old age as natural weakness. Temple hair gets grey earlier. Then greying affects the rest of the head which becomes empty because of moisture as it lacks brain. There is a lot of humidity in the forehead part of the head and decay processes are slow. The temples lack moisture which might cause decay, thus hair gets grey here faster than in other places. Animals lack grey hair due to their small, damp brain, so there is no colour weakening due to heat<sup>18</sup>.

When it comes to baldness, this process affects male individuals; however, not all of them are affected just like not all trees lose leaves. However, the leaves of trees and birds' feathers grow back while the hair of the bald does not. The change of age results in the lack of hair and the process is irreversible. The processes of defoliation and losing feathers happen cyclically because of the change of seasons. The reason why animals and people do not get bald is small and wet brain and therefore, the colour is not affected during its gradual loss caused by heat. In humans, baldness occurs because of the fact that the amount of wet and juicy moisture is reduced. Hair becomes thinner where the heat is higher than normal and falls out because of abstinence from eating or due to the infection of moisture as in the case of lepers. The indicated phenomena are typical for men but never happen to women, natural impotents and people who have not started their sexual relationships as a result of the coldness of nature<sup>19</sup>.

Either matter or circumstances in which hair grows cause the damage of hair or its falling out. It is the result of the use of nature. Medicines that keep hair unchanged include those that contain delicate warmth and stypticin, such as: myrtle seeds, balsam and bile. Greying is delayed by the excretion of mucus liquid, the application of strengthening oils and the use of appropriate agents. It is advisable to refrain from drinking milk and eating food containing breadcrumbs, thick pulpy meals, boiled cereals and honey-based dishes. Old and clear wine or mead should be drunk. The basic diet should include cooked and roasted meals<sup>20</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> Aristotle believed that hair grew particularly intensively during illness or old age, and that grey hair was caused by a lack of boiling of moisture and decay. See: Arystoteles, zoologia, transl. P. Siwek, Warszawa 1982, p. 99; Aristotel, *O rodzeniu się zwierząt*, pp.228, 231.

<sup>19</sup> Vincentius Bellovacensis, *Speculum naturale*, book 31, c.90, col.2362-2363: *In senectute canescere proprium est hominis: sed accidit et equis: non autem animalibus ceteris. Sed nec homini tantum accidit in senectute: immo etiam in infirmitate. Et tunc albescunt capilli cum albedine corij. ipsoque homine conualescente: capilli cani cadunt ac redeunt quales prius fuerunt. Cum autem propter senectutem albescunt non albescit cum eis corium. Et huius causa est: quoniam ista infirmitas est in cute: et cum albescit cutis necessario albescunt et pili. Canicies autem naturalis est propter debilitatem caloris qui exit a corpore: et abundantiam frigoris. nam senectus infrigidat: et corpus desiccatur. Vapor autem vel cibus terrestris qui est causa et origo vilis naturaliter non bene digeritur: putrefit ex calore aeris continentis: et ex illo generantur cani. Omnis enim putrefactio est ex calore non naturali sed accidentali. Et hec accidit aque et terre et omnibus corporibus similibus. Causa vero albedinis canorum est: quia in omni vapore terrestri est virtus aeris crassi. Et si congeletur vapor erit ex eo glacies et canicies. Si vero putrefiat erit corrugatio. Propter hoc erunt illa duo accidentia in manifesto corporis: corrugatio scilicet et canicies. in infirmitatibus autem est canicies: quia calor debilitatur in decoctione cibi. Cumque redit sanitas: reuertitur virtus: et pili nigrescunt. Unde recte appellari potest talis infirmitas senectus accidentalis et senectus infirmitas naturalis. Pili temporum prius canescunt: posterius enim capitis vacuum est ob humiditatem: quia non est in eo cerebrum. in parte vero sincipitis est multus humor nec cito putrescit.* Cf. Arystoteles, *Zoologia*, pp. 99-100.

<sup>20</sup> Vincentius Bellovacensis, *Speculum naturale*, book 31, c.90, col. 2363: (...) *Capilli destruuntur et minorantur aut propter causam in materia aut propter causam in re in qua nascuntur. Causa quidem in materia est aut causa eius quod eam submergit vel alterat. Aut causa paruitatis substantie prime. Paruitas quoque radicitus substantie aut est propter accidens: aut quia natura consumit eam. Medicine vero conseruantes capillos ille sunt: in quibus est*

Vincent regarded old age as a natural period in human life and described it from the philosophical and medical point of view. In the subsequent chapters he combined the opinions of the selected antique, Arabic and Christian authorities, inscribing himself in the intellectual tradition of his epoch. He chose the fragments of works and texts regarded by him as important, which illustrated various aspects of senility. He tried to balance the advantages and disadvantages of old age in his deliberations, explaining many issues and giving specific pieces of advice. He maintained that weaknesses and ailments accompanying elderly people are balanced by the value of wisdom, prudence and experience. Referring to the findings of Greek medicine, he associated senility with the loss of inborn warmth and drying out of organism. Therefore, he gave advice on nutrition, increasing physical and mental strength. He underlined that old age should be accepted as a twist of fate. One should not despair and immerse in hopelessness for this reason, but should prepare for death through wise life.

### **Senility and its inconveniences according to *Speculum Naturale* by Vincent of Beauvais Summary**

The stages of human life and the corresponding physiological changes have been described in many ways since ancient times. Although old age was characterized by physical and mental weakening (senility), it was portrayed as an age of wisdom which contrasted youth dominated by passions. Vincent of Beauvais devoted a few extensive chapters of *Speculum Naturale* to the last stage of life and cited works of Cicero, Aristotle, Horace, Virgil, St. Jerome, St. Ambrose, Avicenna, Isidore of Seville, which gave him a place in the intellectual tradition of his era. According to him, the advantages of old age were moderation in pleasures, lower libido, wisdom, maturity of advice, common sense and reconciliation to death. The negative aspects of senility were diseases, discouragement and drowsiness. The physical weakness of the body affected the stability of mind. Vincent recognized old age as a natural period in human life and characterized it from the philosophical and medical points of view. He chose those pieces of writings which he considered important and representing different aspects of old age. He advised on nutrition, strengthening of the body and mental energy. Vincent emphasized that old age should be considered as fate. Therefore, there is no reason to fall in despair and wallow in hopelessness, but prepare for death through a wise life.

**Keywords:** senility, physiological changes, human life

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*caliditas subtilis attractiua: et virtus stiptica: vt grana myrti et myrrha et galla: et similia. Caniciem vero retardat euacuatio flegmatici humoris. Deinde administratio medicinarum ex quibus generatur sanguis spissus laudabilis. (...).Quibusdam hominibus intempestiue cani solent nasci: ceteris autem tardari complexionis sue causa. De his quidem que caniciem tardari faciunt est: vt de trifera minori frequenter in mane sumatur. Abstinere enim conuenit a lacte et a cibis habentibus micas panis admixtas: et a pultibus que multum sunt spisse: et a frumento cocto: et ab his que conficiuntur ex melle et a potu aque multe. Unumque vetus ac purum modice bibendum est: vel hydromel. Maior autem pars eorum quibus nutrimentum sit Kalaie sint et assature. Cf. Libellus Avicene de viribus cordis translatus ab Arnaldo de villa nova, Venice Dionysius Bertochus 1489-1490, pp.711-712,[online] findit.library.yale.edu/bookreader/BookRedaerDemo/index.html?oid=10943680#page/98/mode/1up, [access 4.08.2015]*