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THE EVOLUTION OF IDEAS ABOUT THE SOUL: FROM ETHNIC TO WORLD RELIGIONS

Introduction. For two and a half millennia, the idea of Gods, Universe and Man have been gradually changing, and now have reached such a level of transformation that can be considered as artificial. Due to global (international) religions people gradually turned from “the children of God” to “the servants of God”. The notion of the world and man's place in it were also changing, and therefore the God itself changed from God-nature to God-slave-holder and so did man’s relations with God. The analysis of the evolution of ideas about life in ethnic religions enables to trace the patterns (or distinctions), i.e. revolutionism of the change of the society worldview. The relevance of the topic is caused by the appearance of the ethnoreligious phenomenon in the 20th century – the burst of curiosity in society to their ancient cultural codes that caused the revival of native religions in Europe.

Objective. To learn the ancient ideas of the soul, and its evolution in different ethnic religions; its radical changes in the world and reformed doctrines; to identify the content of ideas about the soul; determine the causes of return of the modern European nations to their own philosophical systems.

1. The idea of a soul in Paleolithic beliefs. E. Taylor believed that the reason of the appearance of animism was the thinking of primitive man on the two most important biological questions. First, what distinguishes the living body from the dead one; second, what is the cause of sleep, ecstasy and illness [11, p. 205-253]. So people have concluded that there is *immaterial part* of man, which may temporarily or permanently be separated from the body in death, sleep etc. The reason of life is a *living spirit* (invisible fire, soul), which may leave the body. The tradition to rig the

dead with all the necessary for the “other world” things (food, dishes, tools, weapons, amulets, etc.) indicates the belief in life after death.

2. Egyptian doctrines about the soul and the body are known to us from works that are attributed to Hermes Trismegistus (mythical Thoth Atlant): the human body is a divine creation of the earth, water, fire, air; and the soul is a part that is nurtured by the Holy Spirit. Thoth Atlant in the “Emerald Tablet” says: “Sun is the Father of the world, the Moon is his mother. The Holy Spirit “nurtures” the developing souls, the Earth is feeding them. Father of all development in the Universe is present everywhere and always” [4, p. 236]. The idea of resurrection of the body has long existed in Egypt, but the Egyptian religion still remains a mystery to science, because currently available scientific and technological achievements of Egypt and written evidence “is not interpreted within the modern system of scientific knowledge” [9, p. 220].

3. Vedic ideas of soul are known from the Rig Veda - the oldest in the world doctrine that was recorded. Brahman - a universal soul, the highest spiritual (animate) substance. Atman is a “self”, a human “I”, the soul of the person that stays unchanged during the reincarnation, while remaining part of the universal soul of Brahman. It is claimed that the purpose of the Aryan man life is the realization of the unity of Atman and Brahman.

The doctrine of metempsychosis – the transmigration of the soul (the circulation of the souls through birth, death; transfer to another body) was characteristic for primordial Aryan Vedic faith as knowledge of the universal law of nature. The soul retains its identity in different reincarnations: the body - mortal comes to natural elements, self - immortal soul is eternal.

The concept of reincarnation and karma underlying the philosophy of Hinduism and its various directions; by Bhagavad-Gita, the reincarnation process of the soul is the following: as a man takes off old clothes, and puts on a new ones, the soul enters into new material bodies, leaving the old and exhausted.

4. The idea of the soul of the Scythians. The belief in metempsychosis coincide with Pythagoras doctrine about the properties of the elements along with Anacharsis

and Anaximander doctrines about Apeiron (Gr. Apeiron - infinite): “The four elements of nature have something in common – Apeiron that contains the secret of the Genus. Sooner or later everything earthly turns to dust. Remains only what is eternal, which never occurred, and has always been, and always is” (by Diogenes Laertsiya) [3].

Apeiron is infinite in space and time, material origin that is in perpetual motion, creating opposites: warmth and cold, light and darkness, as a result of fighting of which occur determined bodies [11, p. 52-53]. The ideas about eternal existence of the world were organic in the territory of Scythia, Russia, Ukraine for two and a half millennia, and have also inherited by pagan philosophy of H. Skovoroda.

5. The ancient ideas of the soul and metempsychosis in ancient Greece known from the works of Homer. Empedocles in his work “About Nature” identified *four elements* of which God created all creatures: “body that has a little bit of fire, something of the air, some of the water something of the earth; though not completely nor fire, nor air, nor water or earth; but this elements are not fiction in the bodies. The quality of earth concluded in the flesh, the quality of water – in the blood, the quality of air - in the spirit, the quality of fire – in the warmth” [4, p. 37]. Heraclitus made a natural opening about fire as substantial genetic principle of all existing: “Everything in the world except Fire conquered by the space circulation of elements (εθοος). The world is not created by the Gods, neither by any of men, but was, is, and will be a live Fire that regularly flares and naturally fades away.”

Philosopher Proclus in his work “Fundamental principles of theology” came to the conclusion that the whole world time can be viewed as a set of pieces (fragments) and the *world soul* (or universal soul) can be seen as a set of *partial* (individual) *souls*, which are the parts of world soul.

6. Slavic Soul doctrine distinguish spirit (life energy) from the soul (psyche, inner world), although they are always connected: “Spirit is the soul of the soul”, the mental part of the soul. The Slavs were convinced that the spirits of dead ancestors continue to participate in the life of the family, tribe, and city or state: they monitor all that happens in the lives of people and support them. Slavic ideas of the soul as a

substance of spirit, live (prana), blood, steam, fire, entirely consistent with Vedic and ancient doctrines and do not contradict them [2, v.3, p. 197-206; 5, p. 100-101, 255; 15, pp. 41-42, 61, 92, 103; 15, p. 107]. The existence of two words to describe spiritual substance (spirit and soul) allows to assume that in pagan theology the concept of *spirit* consistent with the Vedic concept of *Brahman*; and the concept of the *soul* with Vedic *Atman*.

7. Involution of the natural doctrines of the soul in the world religions. It is indicated by the term *entropy* – a dispersion of different types of energy, which leads to the destruction monotony of initially harmonic systems. The entropy of Vedic religion began in the 6th century BC simultaneously with the rise of reform movements (Jainism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, mozayizm, separate streams of Hinduism, which included Buddhist elements), which denied the truth of the Vedas and urged the believers to “willful suspension of the eternal cycle of souls.” These doctrines, according to some religious studies, can be considered as “profaned movements” [9]. The doctrine of *nirvana*, *moksha* in fact impose its believers’ indifference, passivity, forced death of soul and body, i.e. *the transition to nothing, instead of eternal struggle for life against death, laziness, and desolation*. Buddha was the first who artificially forced his followers to “terminate” live chain of reincarnation, which allowed the transition to Christianity in the future.

Christianity borrowed the idea of the soul from the Sadducees doctrine by which the soul dies with the body. In the Old Testament the soul (Heb. Nefesh) means any living being, i.e. a man is not divided into body and soul; therefore in Christianity the soul does not exist separately from the body, it dies with the body: “The soul that sins shall die” [Ezek. 18: 4]; also in the New Testament: “And every living soul have died” [Ob. 16: 3].

Polish philosopher Ian Stahnyuk believed that the attempt at natural understanding of the essence of soul very negatively affected the future of religion that says more of a degradation than of a progress (he introduced the term “vspakultura” - anticulture, culture inside out) [18]. So it is not about the evolution of

doctrines about the soul in world religions, but about some kind of *involution* - decay, entropy.

Conclusions. The contradictory of Muslim and Christian spirit interpretations, soul and body, ontological opposition of body and soul, the interpretation of the spirit as God, and the body as a sinful human component – demonstrate an ideological and theological helplessness of the world religions. Based on the surviving Europeans ideas about the soul we can recreate our natural doctrines that can be achieved through the synthesis of these spiritual beliefs to be harmonious and consistent, based on scientific methods of study. Restoration of the natural idea of the soul has essential axiological importance in the life of mankind.