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MEANING OF LIFE, DEATH AND IMMORTALITY IN HUMAN EXISTENCE

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Abstract. The article considers the problem of the meaning of life in ordinary, frontier and metafrontier dimensions of human being. The meaning of life in the ordinary life is biological and soulful one. The meaning of human life in the frontier being is the realization of the will to power, the will to cognition and creativity. In the harmony of the physical, mental and spiritual dimensions is the true meaning of life and its realization in the metafrontier dimension of human existence.

A person with a materialistic worldview perceives his/ her immortality in children and work. A person with an idealistic worldview insists on the immortality of the individual soul, which exists after death outside and independently of memory in it. A worldview that resolves the contradiction of materialism and idealism is personalism, where the immortality of the individual is posed.

Keywords: meaning; death; immortality; personality; worldview; ordinary; frontier; metafrontier being; metaanthropology

Each person sooner or later asks himself a question about the meaning of life. This question is more often generated by tragic events – the loss of loved ones, betrayal, the experience of inner loneliness. On the other hand, a person can approach this issue when he is not satisfied with the everyday routine and its monotony, and boredom. As a result, he begins to think about his mission and his role.

The question of the meaning of life in the history of philosophy *is a question of the significance of a person's presence in the world, taking account the finiteness of human existence*. Moreover, in the East, the problem of the meaning of life has never been as tense as in the West. An oriental person perceives his life and its meaning in the context of universal life – nature, gender, society. Only in Western culture, starting from Antiquity, the question is posed about the life of a *unique* person, who may conflict with society, and about the meaning of this person's life. Therefore, Western philosophy pays attention to the problem of the meaning of life.

The question arises: is it really in the East, for example, in Daoism, the achievement of Dao as a deep inner harmony and harmony with the world is not

the meaning of life for every person? It can be assumed that the achievement of Dao is the meaning of the life of every person in the East precisely because this is the meaning of *human life in general*. In the West, the question is raised about the unique meaning of life, which everyone chooses individually. Most likely, this is due to the patriarchal nature of both Daoism and Confucianism. And it is rooted in the specifics of the Eastern family, in which father controls each member.

Patriarchalism and parental control in the Western family is not manifested less. Another thing is that, despite a number of exceptions, in the East, a person is appreciated much less than in the West. Differences in understanding the meaning of life in the East and the West are rooted in worldviews born by the mental-religious and cultural identity of these regions.

At the same time, one cannot affirm that Western philosophy pays more attention to the issue of the meaning of life than Eastern. Attention is the same, but understanding is different. The question of the meaning of life is a question of the meaning of individual life, a question of the meaning of the life of an individual one. In the East, the problem of the meaning of human life is dissolved in the problem of the meaning of human life, *moreover, in the problem of the meaning of the world being*. This precisely leads to the fact that in the philosophy of the West the posing the question of the meaning of life sounds more often .

The problem of the meaning of life in the history of European philosophy is solved in different ways - depending on the difference in understanding of man and the world. For Socrates, the meaning of life is in continuous knowledge, not so much of the outside world as of himself. In the philosophy of Plato, the meaning of life is interpreted as comprehension of one's true ideal nature, the ability to make a breakthrough from the world of perishable things to the world of immortal ideas. Medieval Christian philosophy interprets the meaning of a person's life as overcoming his sinful nature. For the philosophy of the Roman Renaissance, the meaning of life is in creativity, which gives immortality in works, and for the German Renaissance, is in an active faith in the Absolute and own salvation, which actualizes all human capacities. The philosophy of the New Age revives understanding of the meaning of life through knowledge, and in particular theoretical knowledge. This understanding of the meaning of life reaches its maximum and completeness in German classical philosophy. We encounter the idea of the meaning of life in the process of overcoming the limits of one's own limitations and achieving universalization of the individual in J. W. Goethe philosophical reflection.

The meaning of life for S. Kierkegaard is the ability to go from the aesthetic, and ethical to the religious level of comprehension of God and the world in human being. S. Kierkegaard believes that it is necessary to realize both the constructive and destructive meaning of fear and despair to achieve this. And the role of these states is in gaining faith.

F. Nietzsche sees the meaning of human life in overcoming himself on the path to gaining the qualities of the Superman. This means that a person, who lives a meaningful life, must cut off all other intentions, except for the will to power himself and the world.

The meaning of life for Z. Freud is to gain fullness of life on the basis of liberation from psychological trauma and sublimation of repressed sexuality, which means getting rid of deep complexes in the sphere of unconscious.

Atheistic existentialism describes the meaning of life as going beyond the limits of everyday life and the courage *to be*, despite the absurdity of the world. In religious existentialism, the meaning of life is acquired as the unity of existence (human) and transcendence (Divine) at the level of experience. In personalism, this understanding of the meaning of life is supplemented by the idea of an ontological fusion of the Divine and the human, expressed in the idea of the God-man and God-mankind - realities born by the co-creation of man and God.

There are ideas of personalism that have developed most fully in the work of Slavic thinkers. First of all, it is N. Berdiaev – the world famous Slavic philosopher of the first half of XX century. He connects the search for truth with the search for the meaning of life and states that here the process and the result coincide. The philosopher writes: “The search for truth is in a certain sense and the finding of truth, this kind of appeal to the meaning of life is the penetration of meaning” (Berdyaev, 1991: 86). The thinker finds his unique meaning of life in creativity, saying that man was created in the image and likeness of God and is called to give a creative answer to his Creator. He defends the idea that a person who denies the possibility of being a creator sins because he does not fulfill his destiny. His purpose is his own creative act as a response to the act of his creation by the Divine.

We see a particularly deeply developed concept of the meaning of life in the work of another Slavic thinker of the twentieth century - S. Frank. Speaking about the meaning of life, S. Frank states that for the majority “the question of the meaning of life is always relative, it implies “meaning” for something, expediency in achieving a certain goal” (Frank, 2004: 41). For a person in everyday life, “life as a whole has no purpose, and therefore one cannot raise the question of meaning” (Frank, 2004: 41).

The meaning of human life for S. Frank is not realized in time, but in Eternity. The philosopher writes: “The meaning of life lies in its affirmation in the eternal ... Only since our life and our work comes into contact with the eternal, lives in it, penetrates it, we can count on achieving the meaning of life” (Frank, 2004: 135).

You can sometimes hear that the meaning of life is *in life itself*. We occasionally protest against such an understanding of the meaning of life, but this saying is partly true. Another thing is that it concerns only ordinary life, because for such a person the main values are preservation of health and propagation, and here we are talking about biological life. Perhaps, it is worth realizing that the meaning of life

is spiritual development. When it comes to everyday life, it is not necessary to say that it is fixated exclusively on the biological dimension of life, because *spiritual life* also manifests there. So, the meaning of everyday life is both biological, and spiritual life.

It is important to realize that spiritual life cannot be the meaning of life in *general*. This is the meaning of a person's life in the frontier dimension of human existence, into which he rushes under the influence of the will to power, and the will to knowledge and creativity, which become the highest values for him. The will to power also gives rise to an anti-spiritual life, as well as the will to knowledge and creativity. Some writers, artists, directors create spiritually destructive works, and scientists often do research, realizing that they will be dangerous to humanity. Alienation from soulfulness turns spiritual life into anti-spiritual, distorting its meaning.

The harmony of the physical, soulful and spiritual dimensions constitutes the true meaning of life, and this is more than life - this is Being. It can be called the metafrontier being of man, born by the will to freedom and love. "The most natural and obvious manifestation of the metafrontier being of man, that is not in doubt by anyone and experienced by almost everyone, is love" (Khamitov, 2020: 191). The meaning of life for each of us is the ability to go from ordinary life to metafrontier being.

Contemplating further, we can assume that the meaning of life is always connected with the meaning of death. Most people do not think about this connection, but it is obvious: depending on whether a person sees the meaning of death or not, his idea of the meaning of life changes, up to the experience of the absurdity of life. The question of the meaning of death is a question of what will happen after death, in fact, it is a question of personal immortality.

Deepening the topic of the meaning of life, and the meaning of death, I would like to understand what is the reason for the fear of death in a person? It can be assumed that the instinct of self-preservation works here, which turns on in extreme situations and makes you survive at all costs. This characteristic is of both man and an animal, but unlike an animal, a person may experience a fear of death when there is no immediate threat to his life. It is possible that such a fear of death was born for two reasons: on the one hand, it may be the result of a materialistic worldview, and on the other, a fear of not realizing the meaning of his/ her life and not fulfilling a life mission.

In that context the scene from Jack London's novel "The Sea Wolf" is demonstrative. Humphrey Van Weyden, a refined intellectual, a writer and philosopher, after a shipwreck gets on a ship embarking on a fur seal business. The tyrant captain decides to give Humphrey a "life lesson" and appoints him as a sailor boy on his ship. At the same time, they have long philosophical conversations, in which the sailor boy has the idealistic worldview, and the captain – materialistic.

There was a conflict between the ship cook and the sailor boy on the ship, which reached such a tense that they sat, and in the literal sense of the word started sharpening knives on each other. The whole team was watching them grinningly. And the captain mockingly asked Humphrey: "You believe in the immortality of your soul, why are you so worried about your life?" (London, 1984). And he responded with all his behavior that he was not afraid of death, but that he would not have time to fulfill the mission.

A logical question arises: what is *the meaning of the fear of death*? The main meaning of the fear of death is that it can make more profound our Self, making us think about the meaning of life and death, about immortality. But there is also a senseless fear of death – the experience of own finiteness, which drains the soul. In the second case, one must always strive to overcome the fear of death, in the first – one can let it into your soul, so that fear engenders faith.

Thus, even in its constructive forms, the fear of death should not remain in the soul, it must be transformed; it makes sense only when it engenders faith in immortality and faith in creativity as the meaning of immortality.

Developing the idea of immortality, we can assume that faith in it can lead a person away from life in its concrete saturation and fullness. Believing in immortality, some people waste their life, and the whole problem is that a person with such faith does not live in the present, but in the future.

If a person believes in immortality, he *lives forever*. That very fills the past, present and future with meaning and fullness. But, living forever, he often forgets about loved ones and about himself, he loses a sense of reality, and his life becomes only a ghost of life. You can talk about different manifestations of faith in immortality. If a person believes that after death he will dissolve inside of an authoritarian deity, and his earthly life is only following the prohibitions, then such a faith really turns life into a ghost of life. However, if faith in immortality means faith in the being of a person beyond death in the fullness of his creative originality, then this only strengthens the taste for life and saturates it with new colors.

Another question often arises: is it possible to prove that there is some real foundation behind the belief in immortality? Probably, any evidence based on empirical experience will be powerless and the foundation of our belief in immortality will be our existential experience - an experience from the depths of the soul that engenders any faith.

I would like to quote a fragment from the above-mentioned Jack London novel "The Sea Wolf", which convincingly shows that the materialist and idealist are not able to act on each other with rational arguments:

" – By the way, do you believe in the immortality of the soul?

With this question, his eyelids lifted lazily, and it seemed to me that some kind of veil pulled back, and I looked into his soul for a moment.

– I read immortality in your eyes, – I answered.

– You, I believe, want to say that you see something alive in them. But this living things will not live forever.

– I read much more in them, – I continued bodily.

– Well, yes – consciousness. Consciousness, comprehension of life. But no more, not infinity of life.

He thought clearly and expressed his thoughts well. Not without curiosity looking at me, he turned away and fixed his gaze on the lead sea. His eyes darkened, and sharp, harsh lines appeared at his mouth. He was clearly gloomy.

– And what's the point? – He asked abruptly, turning back to me.

– If I am endowed with immortality, then why?”

I was silent. How could I explain my idealism to this person? How to convey in words something vague, similar to the music you hear in a dream? Something quite convincing for me, but not definable ... ” (London, 1984: 23).

In this dialogue, people come across two different ways of experiencing the world and themselves in the world. For one person, the immortality of the soul is meaningless, for another it is the highest meaning. In order for a dialogue between a materialist and an idealist to be productive, *a community of experience* is necessary, and this, in its turn, is possible only if there is *a third way of experiencing, and learning the World, as well as oneself in a world* that is able to rise above materialism and idealism.

Each materialist unconsciously perceives his immortality in children and works, in other words in the memory of descendants. For many materialists, this is the meaning of life and the meaning of death. Whereas, idealists insist on the immortality of the individual soul, which exists after death outside, and independently of memory in it. The salvation of this soul for posthumous existence, its development – is the main value of the idealist and the highest good for him.

These two extreme points of view can be combined in the third, synthesizing them. In this connection, the words of A. Schopenhauer are very indicative: “... in Europe, the opinions of a person – and often even of the same person – continue to fluctuate between understanding death as absolute destruction, and confidence in our complete immortality from head to toe. Both the one and the other views are equally wrong; but for us it is important not so much to find the right middle between them, but to reach the higher point of view from which such views would collapse by themselves.” (Schopenhauer, 1992: 20).

The point of view, that resolves the contradiction of materialism and idealism, is personalism. The personalist accepts both very conditional immortality in the memory of others, and the immortality of the soul and spirit of man in all their originality and fullness, regardless of memory. It is also important, that in personalism we are not talking about the immortality of the soul, but about the immortality of the person – the immortality of the creative and spiritual originality of man, which makes him one whole with the Absolute.

Does this not mean that for a personalist, a person after his /her death even so dissolves in the Absolute, losing its originality? And if so, then human life is only a threshold to such a dissolution, and therefore – something meaningless and unnecessary. Personality and the Absolute in their unity does not imply the dissolution of personality in the Absolute. For the personalist, the personality itself is a full-fledged part of the Absolute. Therefore, the personality creatively develops, enriching the Absolute both within the limits of life in this world, and beyond. Moreover, the most important ethical imperative of personalism is the recognition of the presence of the Absolute in any other person, and therefore, its right to a creative life and creative immortality. We have clarified above that the foundation of the belief in immortality is our existential experience – the deepest experience of the soul. But what is the difference between such an experience? Why are some people materialists, others idealists, and still others personalists?

Defining people with a materialistic worldview - materialists, we can assume that these are people who need facts and evidence of the existence of the soul and its immortality. If there are no facts, they are not able to accept the reality of such phenomena. On the other hand, materialists *believe that* matter is immortal. How can this be explained?

Existential experience, giving rise to a materialist's denial of individual immortality, can develop under the influence of the social environment – primarily the family of materialist's parents, or as a result of deep psychological trauma. For example, this experience may result from unrequited love and loneliness, which leads a person to an unconscious denial of *loneliness in Eternity*.

The experience that forms the idealist with faith in individual immortality can also arise as a result of the influence of the social environment and specific psychological trauma – most likely due to insufficient attention of parents giving rise to a feeling of fundamental insecurity. The image of the Absolute Father is created, as supercompensation

Idealism is based on the fact that man is not alone, created in the image and likeness of God, and after death man has a chance to unite with his Creator. A person with an idealistic worldview in his dogmatic religious forms subconsciously wriggles out responsibility, obeying the Divine, and dissolves in him. Some obey not even the Divine, but the Church or the community, becoming fanatics. On this basis, they can be very effectively manipulated, especially using the fear of the posthumous punishment of the Deity, who is perceived as a punishing Authoritarian Father.

A personalistic worldview allows you to get rid of this fear, and the fear of non-existence. Such a worldview is generated by existential experience, based on the creative development of the personality, leading to mutual love and co-creation. On this basis, the faith in the immortality of the personal principle in all its spiritual, and soulful originality, and fullness is developed, and the Absolute is perceived not

only as the Absolute Personality, but also as the unity of *all* personalities in love, not denying the freedom of *each of them*. Such unity can be called both the meaning of life, and the meaning of immortality.

Thus, the question of the meaning of life, death and immortality is a question of *the significance of a person's presence* in the world, with the respect to the finiteness of his existence. Understanding of the meaning of life, death and immortality should come from a person who realizes on the path of freedom, love and inner integrity, and social life is only a means for such realization.

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