

Ida Ciesielska

The issue of the Bulgarian nation and "Bulgarian soul" in the light of Peter Deunov's teachings of evolution, race and human progress

The second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century for the so-called West was the period of great transformations of political, cultural and ideological characters. We observe an increase in the interest in the biological aspect of life of a person and a society. Such disciplines and trends as anthropology, Darwinism, evolutionism, organicism and racial anthropology in social sciences develop dynamically. They are accompanied by new research methods: craniometry¹ and phrenology². A lot of attention in the scientific discourse, involving both the biological and social issues, is dedicated to the categories of race, evolution and progress (Tyrła, 2005, pp. 13–23, 97–100; Gould, 1991, pp. 282–283, 299–306; Lentin, 1996, pp. 40–45).

At the same time, the end of the 19th century becomes for the West the period of disappointment at existing cultural patterns. Faith in the power of industrialisation, technologising and rationalism is broken. The negative side of the idea of progress is noticed (Koselleck, 2009, pp. 192–196), and the modern lifestyle seems to result in not only spiritual

¹ Craniometry – method of measurement of the skull and mapping the angles and segments between its individual parts. In the 19th and 20th centuries craniometry was used as the pillar of different theories of race.

² Phrenology – theory developed in the 19th century, according to which the individual personality traits and individual capacities are related to the development of certain areas of the cerebral cortex, and thus to the anatomical shape of the skull.

degeneration but also biological degeneration³ (Promitzer, 2010, pp. 65–68). In the face of the atmosphere of upcoming fall, which was reflected in the popular publication by Oswald Spengler, the West turns to the so-called Orient. It serves to the West as the seemingly new cultural paradigm and the distorting mirror, in which the West can look safely (Said, 1991, pp. 23–34, 49–52). In the centre of interest there are – adopted quite selectively – philosophical and religious systems of the Far East, in particular India. It causes the spiritual coup and forming esoteric systems on the Western grounds – such as theosophy, anthroposophy or Rosicrucians – inspired by the Hindu spirituality broadly understood.

When the Western elites were propagating the "twilight" of their civilisation, Bulgaria was seeking its own national identity and cultural paradigm. Suspended between the Western and Eastern models, it was under pressure of making a choice. The decision was not facilitated by the fact of the crisis of values, which affected the West at that time.

The Bulgarians studying at the western universities were the links between these two worlds, very distant from each other then. One of these students was Peter Deunov – the son of the orthodox clergyman, alumnus of the American Theological Seminary in Svishtov conducted by the Methodists, later the founder of the Universal White Brotherhood. In 1888 24-year-old Deunov leaves as a scholarship holder to the United States. He takes up the theological studies at Methodist University in Madison and then the theological and medical studies at Boston University. During the seven year stay in the USA Deunov encounters the above described phenomena of scientific, social and religious nature. The esoteric religious system created by him should be interpreted in the light of these great cultural transformations – which is noted by Grażyna Szwat-Gyłybowa and Violina Atanasova – (Szwat-Gyłybowa, 2004, pp. 90–93; Атанасова, 2006, pp. 141–148). For Deunov sets his own experience of the West in the native context, creating the teachings, which even today enjoys extraordinary popularity among the Bulgarians.

The aim of this article is to reflect on the categories of the Bulgarian nation as well as the "Bulgarian soul" in the teachings of Peter Deunov. The source texts here will be mainly two collections of homilies by Beinsa Douno⁴ – *The Bulgarian soul* (Българската душа) and *Bulgarians* (Българите). These texts are a synthesis of dispersed ideas and views that were espoused by Deunov over different periods of time, and which refer to the issues in question.

³ Supporters of eugenics in Bulgaria reiterated obsolete already theses of some Western European scholars about the modern immoral lifestyle, which was supposed to be the underlying reason for many mental disorders.

⁴ Beinsa Douno – spiritual name of Peter Deunov.

The problem of the Bulgarian nation and its "soul" will be presented in the perspective of such concepts as evolution, race and human progress. The paper is simultaneously an attempt to indicate the transfer of certain western ideas and the specificity of their Bulgarian reception.

The person as a microcosm

Violina Atanasova reads the 19th century's peak development of religious forms in the context of the mentioned already tiredness of such cultural paradigms as industrialisation or rationalism. The researcher believes that a turn towards the philosophical tradition of the East is an attempts to shift focus from the mechanised world on a human being, their spirituality and relationship with the Universe. One of the fundamental principles of new esoteric systems become the themes of microcosm and macrocosm – known from antiquity, and revitalised in the 19th century as a result of the fascination with the East (Атанасова, 2006, pp. 141–142). The analogy between a human being and the Universe according to Deunov takes the form of Adam Kadmon (Szwat-Gylybowa, 2005, p. 144). The figure of a cosmic man was taken from Lurianic Kabbalah, which interpretations of a mystical and theosophical character enjoyed great popularity in the 19th and 20th centuries⁵ (Scholem, 2013, p. 48). In Deunov's opinion, the first principle that created the Cosmos, the whole material world, and human bodies, is Love. All matter and space are alive, and their embodiment is the cosmic man – Adam Kadmon, a common organism in which the entire humankind unites. The cosmic man, as the entire Universe, is the dynamic creature. He is characterised by continuous movement and change that provide him with life-giving power and everlasting existence. According to Beinsa Douno, every person (microcosm) is "one small soul in large God's organism"⁶ (Дънов, 2000, p. 10). Deunov, like Helena Blavatsky, the co-founder and ideologist of the Theosophical Society, thinks that the fate of one person substantially

⁵ Gershom Scholem draws our attention to the popularisation of mystical Jewish ideas through the development of so-called Christian Kabbalah. The propagation of these teachings – assumed to be elite – led to the pauperisation of Kabbalah, which many people in the 16th century equated erroneously with numerology and magic. In subsequent centuries the ignorance of the Jewish and Christian sources led to false esoteric interpretations. The 19th and 20th centuries were a period of the occult "fashion for Kabbalah". Publications of theosophists and mystics – although they were mainly only unsubstantiated speculations of the authors – arouse enormous interest. See Scholem (2013, pp. 43–49). The teachings of Peter Deunov seems to be a part of these occult and speculative exegetical trends. Deunov in his teachings repeatedly refers to Kabbalah. However, he limits himself to using certain known motives and numerological interpretations.

⁶ If not stated otherwise, all the translations are done by the translator (Joanna Modzelewska-Jankowiak) from Polish versions, translated in turn by the author of the article from Bulgarian sources.

affects the condition of the whole organism. Using the metaphor of the self-regulating system, she argues that suffering of one cell (unit) causes changes and suffering of the whole system (mankind). The principle of altruism, universal love and brotherhood preached by Beinsa Douno is therefore not only the postulate of ethical nature but also the argument of common sense. The concern for others is in the interest of individual units and becomes a guarantor of the stability and "health" of the whole social organism.

Peter Deunov, aiming at giving his own religious system the scientific character, uses not only evocative metaphors, but he also adapts some then popular theories to his needs. In particular it concerns organicism and evolutionism that in Spencer's version were known also in Bulgaria (Трендафилов, 1996, pp. 234–248). The concept of society being an organism, which is basic for these trends, is extended by Deunov. By combining it with the figure of Adam Kadmon based on the relationship: a person – Universe, Beinsa Douno creates the holistic organic theory concerning the entire humankind. Apart from the basic concept of a cosmic human being, the organic theory becomes the basic category of description of individual spheres of human life. Deunov creates the germs of the organic pseudo-sociological concept. He links individual groups of people, having specific social functions, with relevant organs, recognising e.g. farmers as the digestive tract. According to Deunov, the structure of the nations is also biological because these nations, equipped with hearts and minds, become a part of the cosmic organism as they take the form and function of one of the organs.

The evolution and progress

Another category which the Teacher⁷ readily uses is evolution. Deunov uses this term following Blavatsky and mainly in relation to the sphere of spirituality. However, the spiritual evolution in the teachings of Beinsa Douno has got clear biological characteristics (which will be described afterwards). The theory of evolution both in the teachings of Deunov and theosophy, is a basic principle of the new hermetic historiosophy, describing historical processes in the context of the religious development of humanity (Атанасова, 2006, p. 143). Units, nations, races and finally the whole humankind, which is formed by these elements, are subject to evolution.

⁷ The students and followers of Peter Deunov called him the Teacher.

Deunov, like many evolutionists, equates evolution with change, development⁸ and progress. The 19th century apologists of the theory of social evolution recognised movement and variability as the basic principle of operation of the world. Changing in turn was always oriented at development and connected with it, and thus equated with the 18th-century concept of progress (Szacki, 1983, pp. 305–309). I have already mentioned the role of movement and variability which condition continuous living and surviving while describing Adam Kadmon. The movement and development are also distinctive features of culture, which is characterised by Deunov as follows: "Where (the White Brotherhood) appears, there appears culture, everything moves and develops" (Дѣнов, 2009, s. 53). Beinsa Douno often uses words "evolution", "change" and "development" as synonyms.

The adaptation of the modern category of progress in Deunov's teachings takes place in the moment when the West considers it to be exhausted: optimism linked with the possibility of continuous development is replaced with the pessimistic thought of the fall and degeneration (especially spiritual) as "by-products" of the progress (Koselleck, 2009, pp. 192–194). Deunov, quite the opposite, he thinks that the progress is the teleological category, which defines and explains the aim of human history. Although this concept becomes problematic in the 19th and 20th centuries, Deunov manages to avoid negative connotations associated with it. Beinsa Douno focuses on the spiritual progress, consistently escaping the material aspect, fiercely criticised by the West. When Deunov raises the subject of the category of the progress of civilisation, he brings up only the first stage, after which the appropriate development is to take place, namely the spiritual development. Beinsa Douno however does not criticise the progress understood as technologising or industrialisation. The reason is probably his totally different experience of civilisation. For the 19th-century Bulgaria the material progress becomes the real need and the West leading in it is an unattainable example. The views on the degenerative power of progress could not find a genuine understanding among the representatives of the nations which were not affected by the intense modernisation. Although the prognoses of fall and destruction coming from the West were reaching Bulgaria, they became in most cases a part of the fashionable intellectual discourse without any support in the native context (Promitzer, 2010, pp. 65–70). Therefore criticism of the material progress appearing occasionally in the teachings of Deunov should be interpreted only as a part of rhetoric adopted from the West. Beinsa Douno has a great

⁸ On the grounds of sociology only Herbert Spencer in the 1860s introduced a distinction between terms "evolution", "change" and "development". See Szacki (1983, p. 297).

respect for the achievements of the West. Even when he tries to prove the uniqueness of the Slavic world, he does not use the argument of degeneration. As in his deliberations he does not criticise the progress of civilisation, he – for obvious reasons – does not follow the path of evolutionists dividing societies into developed and backward. Choosing the spiritual form of progress which is beyond any objective verifications helps Deunov avoid classifications which are evaluative and inconvenient for him.

The spiritual version of progress promoted by the Teacher is different from the classical 18th-century linear model. The path of development has rather the form of a spiral. Through the realisation of the subsequent cycles the slow improvement and moving forward occur. The cyclical model of progress is based on the principles of reincarnation and karma borrowed from the Hindu religion. Reincarnation in the view of Deunov is a way to progress, and karma is destiny or a form of paying off debts (such understanding is adopted by Deunov most likely from Blavatsky (Bławatska, 1996, p. 61)). However, the cyclical nature of progress is not a new perspective. Similar models are found, for instance, in theosophy or the Rosicrucian system, which preceded the teachings of Deunov (Bławatska, 1996, p. 60). An example of the cyclical form of progress is the Pentagram created by Beinsa Douno, a diagram of the spiritual development of a person⁹. For example, the external cycle intended for lay persons consists of five phases, leading to enlightenment. At the end of one cycle other two have to be performed, symbolised by the middle and internal circles. A human being ends their spiritual evolution with experiencing all the phases and cycles. Therefore Deunov perceives evolution as a slow process of education. Progress and evolution are also understood by him in terms of determinism. In turn, the necessity of human development is linked to creationism. Any progress – according to Deunov – is steered by a divine creature and its emissaries in the form of members of the White Brotherhood. The evolution of the whole mankind is a must, and who will experience this is only the question of choice. Because the condition of the spiritual development is the realisation of the principles of Love, Truth and Brotherhood and absolute obedience in carrying out the missions entrusted by God. Those disobedient – in the spirit of the Apocalypse – will be exterminated. However, it will not stop the machine of progress which is set in motion.

Deunov's fascination with Hindu religiousness cannot, however, be interpreted in terms of the selection of the eastern cultural paradigm. Most of the oriental ideas were

⁹ The Pentagram, and embedded in it meanings and their relation to the concept of microcosm and macrocosm, and the concept of Adam Kadmona are described in detail by Grażyna Szwat-Gyłybowa. See Szwat-Gyłybowa (2005, p. 139–150).

reaching Deunov through the western systems, mainly theosophy. Deunov looked at the East (i.e. the Far East) with the eyes of the West. The Orient – understood in the categories of myth – became a part of the Western cultural pattern adopted by Deunov (Атанасова, 2006, p. 156). The very tradition of the West also became problematic for Beinsa Douno. Deunov, creating his own pseudo-scientific system, wanted to respond to the needs of the modernised humankind. He wanted to create the teachings combining faith and reason. Thus Deunov does not reject the idea of industrialisation, rationalism or progress. He looks back with nostalgia at some 18th-century ideas, already considered by the West to be relics.

The race

The category of race is closely linked to the described phenomena of evolution and progress. The very concept appeared in Deunov's teachings in connection with the scientific concepts of the 19th and 20th centuries described in the introduction, and also under the influence of theosophy. However, the theory of spiritual evolution of individual human races propagated by Blavatsky is not adopted by Beinsa Douno in the same form. Deunov is certainly an advocate of popular evaluative racial concepts. His approach to race is of typological character. Despite phrenological and craniometrical research conducted through years, the basis for the classification in this case are not morphological characteristics, but personality traits.

Beinsa Douno, similarly to Blavatsky or Rosicrucians, distinguishes seven human races. In compliance with the theory of progress, the last race is considered to be the perfect one. Deunov – like most of the 19th-century naturalists – treats race as an objective category and not only a tool for classification of differences between human beings. By ascribing the exclusive repertoire of features to individual races, Beinsa Douno perceives these human groups as isolated one from another, and gives them the status similar to the species of biological point of view. This in turn results in significant consequences. Races, regarded as separate units and not as parts of the human species, may – in line with the views of the 19th-century naturalists – be subject to different processes of evolution, which also explains the higher and lower level of development of individual populations and allows the treatment of certain races as worse. It is worth mentioning that even Darwin was opposed to such approach to human races, as he did not accept the objective existence of races, treating them only as a tool for classification (Strzałko, 2009, pp. 275–277).

According to Deunov's classification, today we live in the fifth race – white: thinking, which is to introduce good and true humanity into the world: "The white race has come to introduce good, give an impulse and become an advocate of genuine humanity" (Дѣнов, 2000, p. 137) and "[a person] that starts to think and makes every effort, belongs to the white race" (Дѣнов, 2000, p. 138). Other races are: the first perfect race to which the great teachers of the White Brotherhood belong; the Lemurians¹⁰ – the most dissolute race, which is the source of all human vices and egotism; the Atlantis race (black) – responsible for violence, enjoying only food and drink, and the Mongoloid race (yellow) – aggressive, conservative and unable to develop.

Deunov's classification should be recognised as an example of the seduction by racism which in the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century was not believed to be an inappropriate view, but only a scientific theory based on empirical knowledge. The high rank of the white race, identified by Deunov with the whole species *homo sapiens* (which is shown by the features of true humanity and ability to think ascribed to this race), gives it also a monopoly on the ability to have higher religious feelings. Deunov attributes certain senses to individual races, and by means of these senses the races perceive the world. In the case of the white race this sense is hearing, which allows us to receive words. A word is interpreted by Deunov in the quasi-biblical perspective and in this context it becomes the revealed word: "Every human who can accept Love by means of hearing comes from a new culture. It was said: *Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God*" (Дѣнов, 2000, pp. 137–138).

In the concept of Beinsa Douno it is no use searching how one race evolves into the other. The races – each of them being a self-contained whole – have no contact one with another. The only race existing nowadays on the Earth, which is capable of evolution, is the white race. Other races – although Deunov does not say it directly – can be interpreted as relics. They are a warning to the representatives of the white race and explain

¹⁰ Lemuria – ancient flooded continent located on the Indian Ocean, supposed to have linked Madagascar with India once. The remains of this continents were considered to be: Madagascar, Seychelles, the Mascarene Islands, and the Comoros. The hypothesis of the existence of Lemuria was coined in the 19th century among contemporary researchers. Its supporters were, inter alia, the botanist and traveller August, Saint-Hilaire, the zoologist Philip Lutley Sclater, the geographer and anthropologist Oscar Peschel, the geographer and anthropologist Alfred Wallace. The hypothesis of Lemuria was to explain the extraordinary similarity of flora and fauna of Madagascar and India. The belief about the great land existing once on that territory was also confirmed by the unusual diversity of the species of lemurs on such a small area as Madagascar. Lemuria played a vital role in the 19th-century disputes over the cradle of the mankind. According to some scholars this ancient continent was supposed to be the homeland of humans and anthropoid apes. See Kondratow (1983, pp. 55–76). Lemuria also appears in the teachings of Blavatsky, Steiner and Jinarajadasa, and is considered one of the continents, where the evolution of humankind takes place and the cradle of the Lemurian race. See Bator (1999, pp. 154–155).

its imperfections. All bad attributes such as violence – undeniable in the face of the First World War – as well as egoism and conservatism, are the remnants of previous stages of evolution. Moreover, in the case of rejection of main principles of love and brotherhood, a representative of the white race may regress in evolution (the opposite process is not possible) and – using the term of Deunov – may "turn yellow": "A person of the white race may turn yellow when becomes sick, but in the sixth race there will be no bile" (Дѣнов, 2000, p. 138). The return to the yellow race – because of the stated straight connotations with jaundice – is recognised by Beinsa Douno as pathological condition. In the future the black and yellow races – unnecessary from the point of view of spiritual evolution – will disappear.

The subjects of the spiritual progress are not races, but individual units, passing through the subsequent races and thus aiming at excellence. The theory of racial isolation invented by Deunov does not, however, relates to the white race. This is because new forms of the sixth race are born within it, and a future better human being is to be a synthesis of the American physical form (for Deunov it was clearly the aesthetic ideal) and Slavic spirituality. According to Deunov, a new human being will also be an advocate of new culture. In this sense the views of Beinsa Douno show similarity to the theories of anthroposociologists, who saw the relationship between the racial characteristics and the social and cultural forms being only a consequence of these characteristics. In the face of the racist views of Deunov we should also ask the question about the issue of racial hygiene which gained considerable popularity – also in Bulgaria – thanks to eugenics (Promitzer, 2010, pp. 65–73). So in the teachings of Beinsa Douno it is passed over in silence. It seems that the problem of racial purity was not justified under the concept of isolation which did not assume the possibility of mixing, cross-breeding or evolving of one race into the other.

The nation

The category of nation appearing in the teachings of Deunov is deep-rooted in the philosophy of German idealists and the concepts and organicism and evolutionism. The nation in the opinion of Deunov is a set of individual souls of its members but it also has its own spirit. The spirit of the nation – as in the concepts of Herder and Hegel – is, in the view of Beinsa Douno, revealed in exceptional units which build the greatness of a particular nation. Deunov recognises only conscious communities as a nation, and not a chaotic mass. He creates the concept of nation based on 'missionism'. Every nation – in his opinion –

is obliged to accomplish a specific mission given to him by God, and the nation will then be assessed by God. The nations that abandon their task will be left by the Creator and then – in the apocalyptic spirit – annihilated. The history of each nation is determined beforehand and conducted by the divine creature and the emissaries – representatives of the White Brotherhood. Any crowning historical moments result from the presence of great teachers in the nation. It is the White Brotherhood that is responsible for the historical ups and downs of nations, e.g. the peak development and the twilight of the Roman Empire.

Deunov's reflection focuses only on the nations of the white race, among which he distinguishes Anglo-Saxons, Slavs, Teutons, and Latin nations. They are not subject to the classifications of axiological character. In accordance with the programme idea of the brotherhood, they are equal one to another. Deunov – repeating almost literally the postulates of Herder – objects to the domination of one nations over the others, claiming that they were created so as to coexist together (Szymaniec, 2008, p. 23). Beinsa Douno depicts – quite surprising from the contemporary perspective – an idyllic vision of the federation of all the European nations, the world nations without mental and political borders, without passports and customs barriers.

Deunov, while describing individual nations, uses the category of national character¹¹. He formulates his conclusions on the basis of not only insightful observations, but also long-standing phrenological and craniometrical research. This method – not used during the classification of races, perhaps due to the lack of research material – now allows Deunov to establish different national and personal types, described by him with great accuracy. The shape of a skull, ears, a nose, thickness of hair and length of hands are in the opinion of the Teacher closely connected with the features of character. For Beinsa Douno the model – adopted from the 19th-century anthropologists – is a narrow and long skull, which is the domain of good and spiritual people. Wide heads in turn belong to people with criminal nature. Thieves are characterised by long arms, and murderers have got short arms. The development of a crown is responsible for the level of spirituality and a hard

¹¹ The concept of the national character was used to indicate the differences between individual nations. Generally speaking, a national character is a set of features specific to a given nation. Thus all the members of a particular nation are similar. In the 18th and 19th centuries the following concepts of national character were most popular: hereditary concepts (nation based on blood ties) and geographical concepts (features of a nation depend on the localisation and climate conditions). In the 19th century the specific characteristics of a certain nation began to be called "the spirit of the nation". The concept of the national character still has many supporters and opponents. Its contemporary promoters define the national character as the attitudes and behaviour patterns typical of a particular community. See Lewandowski (2008, pp. 15–27); Wierzbicki (2010, pp. 15–21).

top of a skull – for stubbornness. Deunov's teachings about a human being and nation cannot be, however, brought to simple biological determinism. Although, in fact, some inborn morphological features – according to Beinsa Douno – shape the human character, reverse relations are also encountered. The case of a thief will serve as an example. When planning the theft, he focuses on the pocket of a future victim. As a result of the thought processes he transfers blood to his arm which grows longer. Thanks to phrenological and craniometrical research it is also possible to embed the concept of spiritual evolution in the biological context. Together with the spiritual progress, the morphology of a very person also changes. Beinsa Douno believes, for example, that the skull of a Greek should be lengthen by further two millimetres so as such a person could reach the next level of development. Deunov does not limit his research method to a purely biological analysis. He tries to carry out cultural interpretation of national characteristics. While analysing the structure of a language, he comes to the conclusion that the frequent use of personal pronoun "I" by English people indicates a strong sense of individuality, and the Bulgarian fashion for thick furry hats is partly responsible for the stubbornness of this nation. The research conducted by Deunov enabled him to some extent to biologically justify the discrimination of not only certain types of personal types, but also the whole nations. Beinsa Douno mentions only two examined persons whose skulls had that far unusual width of 17 centimetres. It is not without significance that the researched men were Macedonians.

Deunov uses pseudo-scientific methods and establishes also national stereotypes. He believes that each nation has one exceptional feature. The English are honest, the French – polite, the Germans – hard-working, the Bulgarians – tough, and the Italians are vocally talented.

Beinsa Douno based largely his own theory of national evolution on earlier concepts of Herder. According to Deunov, nations experience the subsequent cycles of development, which are called epochs (in other words ages or eras). However, the entrance to the golden era is not the end of evolution. It is the time when a nation has to accomplish the mission entrusted to it by God. After finishing the task, the nation moves back to the iron age, and another nation enters the stage of history. Although Deunov does not say it straight, it can be assumed that the golden age is not an event of individual and unrepeatable nature. It seems that according to the historiosophical interpretation of Deunov, the Bulgarian nation entered the golden age at least twice. For the first time at the times of Orpheus, then – at Bogomilism. The appearance of Peter Deunov and the White Brotherhood is another

attempt to accomplish the historic mission. The nation – in the event of failure of the mission – may get another chance to fulfil it. After completing the mission by all the nations, their evolution ends. The death of nations – unlike the disappearance of the nations understood historically – is an ostensible phenomenon. As a result of the phrenological and craniometrical research Deunov discovers many similarities between the skulls of contemporary and ancient nations. On this basis he comes to the thesis that individual members of nations revive in other nations. Beinsa Douno recognises that no person is closely bound up with one nation, and in the course of evolution goes through all the nations because of reincarnation. The nations are successive but equal stages of human development. Deunov called the nations as schools, which convey their best qualities to individual units. Only the combination of them enables a person to achieve full development.

The Slavs and the Bulgarians

Deunov grants the unique position among the nations to the Slavs, and in particular the Bulgarians. The mission of the Slavs is to engrave the ideals of love, good and general brotherhood fundamental for the Teacher in the humankind. This idea resembles the postulate of Herder that the objective of progress of the whole mankind is the introduction of the principle of true humanity. This humanity was to be based, inter alia, on such "typically Slavic" characteristics as diligence, gentleness and love for peace (Szymaniec, 2008, p. 33). Deunov thinks that the Western nations have already reached the pick of their material development and the next step is to be the spiritual progress which will be led by the Slavs. Although these two stages of evolution are complementary to each other, Deunov however evaluates the religious development better. The uniqueness of the Slavs (supported with the popular interpretations of Herder's thought) is built through modifying the already known dichotomy: the rational West – the spiritual East. But this time the place of the East is occupied by the Slavs who are to become the heart and the content of a new human being of the sixth race. On the basis of the described above analyses Beinsa Douno considers the Slavs to be the nation whose religious feelings are developed in the highest degree. The rank of the Slavic nations is raised through the religious interpretation of the name of these people, made by Deunov and popular also in the Slavophile circles (Kurczak, 2000, pp. 13–15). The etymology of the name are thought to be "słowo" (En: word) and "sława" (En: fame). The "word" meant the word of God and the "fame" referred to the worship

of God. This is not the only attempt to embed the Slavs in the religious context. Because Deunov calls them "New Israel", "the altar of new culture" or "the mother who will give birth to the Kingdom of God on the Earth. Deunov, like Herder, considers all the Slavs as one nation and believes that differences between individual people are ostensible. Probably under the influence of the Slavophile ideas he regarded this nation to be the most suitable for the realisation of the idea of the brotherhood of the whole mankind.

It is characteristic that despite a fairly extensive reasoning on the very Slavs, Deunov mentions only two specific nations – the Russians and the Bulgarians. That is because the teachings of Beinsa Douno displays distinct Rusophile tendencies. Deunov is an advocate of the rapprochement of Bulgaria and Russia, as the latter, in his opinion, liberated Bulgaria from the "Turkish bondage" on God's order. The Teacher – inspired probably by the views of the Eurasians – considers the Russian mission to be a bridge between the East and the West. Deunov's views, however, are devoid of anti-occidental overtone, which was a permanent element of the Eurasian ideology.

The only nation that in the period of Deunov's activity is in its golden age, are the Bulgarians (this epoch is to end in the year 2000, when the Russians begin to perform their mission). Their golden age – according to the historiosophical concept of Deunov – is probably closely related to the presence of the White Brotherhood, represented by the Teacher himself in these territories. Therefore the teachings of Beinsa Douno should lead to the realisation of the mission, which in the case of the Bulgarians is promoting the idea of love, good and brotherhood and creating the foundations for the new sixth race. Deunov called the Bulgarians pioneers, who have to prepare the ground for other Slavic nations.

The described texts by Deunov are a comprehensive interpretation of the Bulgarian national character, or – as Beinsa Douno wishes – the analysis of the "Bulgarian soul". At the superficial reading of Deunov's homilies, they may give the impression of only sharp criticism directed against the Bulgarians. With great perception and sense of humour, Deunov stigmatises vices of the Bulgarian nation. Obstinacy, laziness, a lack of respect for time, unreliability, egoism, inconsistency, boorishness are just some of the charges brought against his fellow Bulgarians. In the fragments of texts there are however less or more hidden statements which ultimately make up the apologia for the Bulgarian nation.

The uniqueness of the Bulgarians starts already at the stage of the function they have in the cosmic organism. In accordance with the organic theory Bulgaria is the liver and the gall-bladder of Adam Kadmon. The liver – according to Deunov – is the most important

organ of the whole body. It is responsible for the proper work of other organs and systems. Thus the Bulgarians maintain the harmony and health of the entire humankind. According to the Teacher the work consisting in the processing and purifying blood (and therefore the entire world) from poison is the most difficult and requires the greatest responsibility. In the teachings of Beinsa Douno the very blood rises to the level of not only the substance of life, but the basis of national identity. Not genes but blood becomes a carrier of common features of an individual nation and thus affects the shape of this nation's soul. In addition, Beinsa Douno propagates the thesis about creating the world by the liver, so the liver gets the creative function.

The liver – according to Deunov – is linked to the lower creatures and to the emotions of the astral world which are under the influence of Saturn. The function of the Bulgarians is burdened with a huge danger. That is because Saturn has a negative impact on the Bulgarian nation. It is the source of all pessimism, egotism, emotional instability. A person being under the influence of this planet is prone to criticism, negation, apathy, has a predilection for the material world, and, finally, becomes a selfish philosopher¹². Indicating the relationship between the liver and Saturn, Deunov reinterprets the humoral theory and recognises the Bulgarians – though not says it directly – as melancholics. Moreover, Saturn becomes the cause of all the Bulgarian failures. It makes the accomplishment of the already started work impossible; as Beinsa Douno writes – it inhibits and delays everything: "The works carried out by the Bulgarians do not look good because they are guided by Saturn and this in turn means that the successes will be delayed, everything will be done with great difficulty" (Дънов, 2009, p. 136). Therefore we could state that Deunov explains that the Bulgarian feeling of backwardness is a result of cosmic determinism.

Another argument for the uniqueness of the Bulgarian nation is the specificity of the language which – in the view of Deunov – is perfect to convey the occult ideas¹³. The Teacher also recognises the Bulgarians as the oldest nation in the world. In his opinion they are the only nation in the Balkan Peninsula who have their representative in the Divine World.

¹² This pessimistic description made by Deunov shows many similarities with the analyses of the Bulgarian philosopher Naiden Sheitanov. In the 1930s he coined the category of "the spirit of negation" and it enjoys extraordinary popularity among the Bulgarians. "The spirit of negation", according to Sheitanov, had to be one of the elements of the Bulgarian national character. The philosopher connected the following Bulgarian features with "the spirit of negation": no interest in higher values such as beauty or good, a predilection for the material world, egoism, egocentrism, hatred, criticism. See Шейтанов (2006, pp. 439–454).

¹³ A similar compensatory strategy was used by the main activist of national rebirth, Georgi Sava Rakovski, who tried to prove that the Bulgarian language was ancient and he indicated its alleged connections with Sanskrit. See Rakowski (1985, pp. 19–25).

Although Deunov formally objects to the existence of one group of the chosen people, the numerous analogies which in his opinion relate to the Bulgarian nation and the Jewish nation contradict the proclaimed principle of equality. The chosenness of Bulgaria can also be proved by a huge number of clairvoyants and spiritual teachers acting in its territory.

Beinsa Douno considers the Bulgarian land to be unusual. He grants a special significance to the Rila Mountains and the highest hill of the range – the Musala Peak. Deunov evaluates these territories, using the category of centre. He recognises them as ancient centres of esoteric thought, to which even the wise men from the Himalayas arrived to learn. Deunov's view should also be considered as the polemic with the teachings of Helena Blavatsky, who treated the Himalayas as the world centre of hermetic sciences.

Deunov builds the Bulgarian uniqueness, basing on such national mythologemes as the Thracian and Bulgar traditions and Bogomilism. Using false etymology, Beinsa Douno shows a direct relationship between the ancient Thracian tribes and the contemporary Bulgarians. He believes that the Bulgarian nation created by the Bulgars, the Slavs and the Thracians became the bold and capable of self-sacrifice heir of the ancient hermetic sciences. While the Bogomils – interpreted as a part of this tradition – are considered by Deunov as advocates of progressive ideas that lay at the root of the Western Reformation and such movements as Quakerism and Hussitism.

Conclusions

Peter Deunov, embedding the individual experiences of the West in the native context, created an original, hermetic national mythology, based partly on the elements of the Bulgarian tradition and on the concepts popular in the Western world. Deunov referred to the categories of race, evolution and progress. He tried to grant the form of a scientific discourse to the deliberations on the Bulgarian uniqueness. He set himself a goal of transformation of the national mythology into the indisputable truth, deep-rooted in empiricism. The scientific theories themselves were considered by Beinsa Douno freely and selectively. He omitted genetic concepts – probably known to him as he had been a medical student – and in turn he used outdated humoral theories so as to create the appearance of the universal and scientific system, which was to become the proclaimed synthesis of faith and reason. Peter Deunov's teachings still enjoys unusual popularity among the Bulgarians (Митев, 1995, pp. 41–49). The White Brotherhood, although repressed by communist authorities, began to revive in the 1970s and now plays

an increasingly important missionary role (Szwat-Gylybowa, 2011, p. 90). The proof is the thriving activity of popularisation and publishing carried out by the members of the community. New publications on Deunov and the selections of his homilies are still appearing. The books are made widely available in the Internet by the members of the White Brotherhood, which substantially broadens their influence (Szwat-Gylybowa, 2004, pp. 92–93). In the SS. Cyril and Methodius National Library in Sofia we can find over a hundred of publications dedicated to Deunov, mainly of apologetic character. The memory of the Teacher is also treasured in the place of his interment. Deunov's grave attracts crowds of Teacher's supporters. In Sofia, in the Western park and on the hill with the television tower, the cyclical morning meetings of the members of the community take place, during which "paneurythmy" is practiced – the system of spiritual exercises and dance performed with the rhythm of the music composed by Deunov himself. Grażyna Szwat-Gylybowa interprets the popularity of Beinsa Douno in terms of the Bulgarian "demand for moral authority" (Szwat-Gylybowa, 2011, p. 91). The scale of interest in the figure of the Teacher is proved, as the researcher mentions, by the second place gained by Deunov in the TV opinion poll "The Great Bulgarians", organised in 2007 (Szwat-Gylybowa, 2011, p. 91). The popularity of Beinsa Douno is not limited only to the circle of his followers. The figure of Deunov also appears in the polemic discourse concerning his teachings. An example is the publication of 2011 written by the monk Vissarion Zografski who comes from the circle of the Holy Mount Athos, entitled *Петър Дънов и Ванга, пророци и предтечи на антихриста, ч. 1, П. Дънов – анализ на едно лъжеучение* (*Petyr Dynow and Vanga, Prophets and Predecessors of Antichrist, part 1, P. Deunov – Analysis of pseudo-science*). It is an example of the presentation of Deunov's teachings in the context of the real and current threat to the strict orthodox interpretation.

Translated by Joanna Modzelewska-Jankowiak

Bibliography

- Bator, W. (1999). Lemuria. In: M. Sacha-Piekło (Ed.), *Zaświaty i krainy mityczne* (pp. 154–155). Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak.
- Bławatska, H. (1996). *Klucz do teozofii* (Vol. 2). (W. Dynowska, Trans.). Warszawa: Interart Tedar.
- Gould, S. (1991). *Niewczesny pogrzeb Darwina*. (N. Kancewicz-Hoffman, Trans.). Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy.
- Kondratow, A. (1983). *Lemuria: Klucz do przeszłości?* (R. M. Sadowski, Trans.). Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo „Iskry”.

- Koselleck, R. (2009). *Dzieje pojęć: Studia z semantyki i pragmatyki języka społeczno-politycznego*. (J. Merecki & W. Kunicki, Trans.). Warszawa: Oficyna Naukowa.
- Kurczak, J. (2000). *Historiozofia nadziei: Romantyczne słowianofilstwo polskie*. Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego.
- Lentin, J. P. (1996). *Myślę, więc się mylę: Błędy i pomyłki w nauce od Pitagorasa do dziś*. (E. Mierzeja & A. Frygas, Trans.). Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy.
- Lewandowski, E. (2008). *Charakter narodowy Polaków i innych*. Warszawa: Warszawskie Wydawnictwo Literackie Muza.
- Promitzer, C. (2010). Zagadnienie degeneracji i początki eugeniki w Bułgarii (1900–1929). In: M. Gawin & K. Uzarczyk (Eds.), *Eugenika – biopolityka – państwo: Z historii europejskich ruchów eugenicznych w pierwszej połowie XX w.* (pp. 65–73). Warszawa: Neriton, Instytut Historii PAN.
- Rakowski, G. (1985). Przedmowa do „Klucza do języka bułgarskiego”. In: W. Gałazka (Ed.), *Naród i kultura: Antologia esejów i artykułów o narodzie i kulturze bułgarskiej* (pp. 19–25). Kraków: Uniwersytet Jagielloński.
- Said, E. (1991). *Orientalizm*. (W. Kalinowski, Trans.). Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy.
- Scholem, G. (2013). Kabała chrześcijańska. *Kronos – Kabała*, 1, 43–49.
- Strzałko, J. (2009). Darwin jako antropolog ewolucyjny: Problem ras ludzkich. *Kosmos. Problemy nauk biologicznych*, 58(3–4), 273–278.
- Szacki, J. (1983). *Historia myśli socjologicznej* (Pt. 1). Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe.
- Szwat-Gyłybowa, G. (2004). Inspiracje teozoficzne: Przypadek Petyra Dynowa i jego biografia Atanasa Sławowa. In: J. Goszczyńska (Ed.), *Problemy tożsamości kulturowej w krajach słowiańskich* (Vol. 2, *Jej formy i przemiany*, pp. 87–108). Warszawa: Instytut Sławistyki Zachodniej i Południowej.
- Szwat-Gyłybowa, G. (2005). Mnemotechnika Petyra Dynowa. *Południowosłowiańskie Zeszyty Naukowe*, 2, 139–150.
- Szwat-Gyłybowa, G. (2011). Dynow Petyr. In: G. Szwat-Gyłybowa (Ed.), *Leksykon tradycji bułgarskiej* (pp. 89–91). Warszawa: Sławistyczny Ośrodek Wydawniczy.
- Szymaniec, P. (2008). Pojęcie narodu w filozofii dziejów Johanna Gottfrieda Herdera. *Wrocławskie Studia Erazmiańskie. Zeszyty Studenckie*, 1, 18–36.
- Tyrała, R. (2005). *O jeden takson za dużo: Rasa jako kategoria społecznie problematyczna*. Warszawa: Oficyna Naukowa.
- Wierzbicki, A. (2010). *Spory o polską duszę: Z zagadnień charakterologii narodowej i historiografii polskiej XIX i XX wieku*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Trio.
- Атанасова, В. (2006). Религиозната вълна в България: Края на XIX – средата на XX век. W T. Стоилова, В. Атанасова, & П. Димитрова (Eds.), *Проблемът Изток-Запад: България и Балканите: Сб. док. материали и дискусия* (pp. 141–160). София.
- Дънов, П. (2000). *Българската душа*. София: Издателство „Астрала”.

Дънов, П. (2009). *Българите*. София: Издателство „Астрала“.

Зогравски, В. (2011). *Петър Дънов и Ванга, пророци и предтечи на антихриста* (Pt. 1, П. Дънов – анализ на едно лъжеучение). Света Гора Атон: Славянобългарски манастир „Св. Вмчк Георги Зограф“.

Митев, К. (1995). Ято бели птици. *Изток-Изток*, 16/17, 41–49.

Трендафилов, В. (1996). *Неизлечимият образ в огледалото: Актуалната българска рецепция на Англия, англичанина и английската мисъл през 19 и началото на 20 век*. София: Кралица Маб.

Шейтанов, Н. (2006). Духът на отрицане у българина. In: Н. Шейтанов (Ed.), *Балкано-българският титанизъм* (pp. 439–454). София: Издателство „Захарий Стоянов“.

Bibliography (Transliteration)

Atanasova, V. (2006). Religioznata vŭlna v Bŭlgariia: Kraia na XIX – sredata na XX vek. In: T. Stoilova, V. Atanasova, & P. Dimitrova (Eds.), *Problemŭt Iztok-Zapad: Bŭlgariia i Balkanite: Sb. dok. material i diskusiia* (pp. 141–160). Sofia.

Bator, W. (1999). Lemuria. In: M. Sacha-Piekło (Ed.), *Zaświaty i krainy mityczne* (pp. 154–155). Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak.

Bławatska, H. (1996). *Klucz do teozofii* (Vol. 2). (W. Dynowska, Trans.). Warszawa: Interart Tedar.

Dŭnov, P. (2000). *Bŭlgarskata dusha*. Sofia: Izdatelstvo „Astrala“.

Dŭnov, P. (2009). *Bŭlgarite*. Sofia: Izdatelstvo „Astrala“.

Gould, S. (1991). *Niewczesny pogrzeb Darwina*. (N. Kancewicz-Hoffman, Trans.). Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy.

Kondratow, A. (1983). *Lemuria: Klucz do przeszłości?* (R. M. Sadowski, Trans.). Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo „Iskry”.

Koselleck, R. (2009). *Dzieje pojęć: Studia z semantyki i pragmatyki języka społeczno-politycznego*. (J. Merecki & W. Kunicki, Trans.). Warszawa: Oficyna Naukowa.

Kurczak, J. (2000). *Historiozofia nadziei: Romantyczne słowianofilstwo polskie*. Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego.

Lentin, J. P. (1996). *Myślę, więc się mylę: Błędy i pomyłki w nauce od Pitagorasa do dziś*. (E. Mierzeja & A. Frygas, Trans.). Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy.

Mitev, K. (1995). IAto beli ptitsi. *Iztok-Iztok*, 16/17, 41–49.

Promitzer, C. (2010). Zagadnienie degeneracji i początki eugeniki w Bułgarii (1900–1929). In: M. Gawin & K. Uzarczyk (Eds.), *Eugenika – biopolityka – państwo: Z historii europejskich ruchów eugenicznych w pierwszej połowie XX w.* (pp. 65–73). Warszawa: Neriton, Instytut Historii PAN.

Rakowski, G. (1985). Przedmowa do „Klucza do języka bułgarskiego”. In: W. Gałązka (Ed.), *Naród i kultura: Antologia esejów i artykułów o narodzie i kulturze bułgarskiej* (pp. 19–25). Kraków: Uniwersytet Jagielloński.

- Said, E. (1991). *Orientalizm*. (W. Kalinowski, Trans.). Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy.
- Scholem, G. (2013). Kabała chrześcijańska. *Kronos – Kabała*, 1, 43–49.
- Sheitanov, N. (2006). Dukhŭt na otritsane u bŭlgarina. In: N. Sheitanov (Ed.), *Balkano-bŭlgarskiiat titanizŭm* (pp. 439–454). Sofia: Izdatelstvo „Zakharĭi Stoianov”.
- Strzałko, J. (2009). Darwin jako antropolog ewolucyjny: Problem ras ludzkich. *Kosmos. Problemy nauk biologicznych*, 58(3–4), 273–278.
- Szacki, J. (1983). *Historia myśli socjologicznej* (Pt. 1). Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe.
- Szwat-Gyłybowa, G. (2004). Inspiracje teozoficzne: Przypadek Petyra Dynowa i jego biografia Atanasa Sławowa. In: J. Goszczyńska (Ed.), *Problemy tożsamości kulturowej w krajach słowiańskich* (Vol. 2, *Jej formy i przemiany*, pp. 87–108). Warszawa: Instytut Sławistyki Zachodniej i Południowej.
- Szwat-Gyłybowa, G. (2005). Mnemotechnika Petyra Dynowa. *Południowosłowiańskie Zeszyty Naukowe*, 2, 139–150.
- Szwat-Gyłybowa, G. (2011). Dynow Petyr. In: G. Szwat-Gyłybowa (Ed.), *Leksykon tradycji bułgarskiej* (pp. 89–91). Warszawa: Sławistyczny Ośrodek Wydawniczy.
- Szymaniec, P. (2008). Pojęcie narodu w filozofii dziejów Johanna Gottfrieda Herdera. *Wrocławskie Studia Erazmiańskie. Zeszyty Studenckie*, 1, 18–36.
- Trendafilov, V. (1996). *Neizlechimiĭat obraz v ogledaloto: Aktualnata bŭlgarska retsepsiia na Angliia, anglichanina i angliĭskata misŭl prez 19 i nachaloto na 20 vek*. Sofia: Kralitsa Mab.
- Tyrała, R. (2005). *O jeden takson za dużo: Rasa jako kategoria społecznie problematyczna*. Warszawa: Oficyna Naukowa.
- Wierzbicki, A. (2010). *Spory o polską duszę: Z zagadnień charakterologii narodowej i historiografii polskiej XIX i XX wieku*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Trio.
- Zografski, V. (2011). *Petŭr Dŭnov i Vanga, prorotsi i predtechi na antikhrista* (Pt. 1, *P. Dŭnov – analiz na edno lŭzheuchenie*). Sveta Gora Aton: Slavianobŭlgarski manastir „Sv. Vmchk Georgi Zograf”.

The issue of the Bulgarian nation and "Bulgarian soul" in the light of Peter Deunov's teachings of evolution, race and human progress

Abstract

The aim of this article is to reflect on the categories of the Bulgarian nation as well as the "Bulgarian soul" in the teachings of Peter Deunov. These categories will be presented in the context of such notions as evolution, race and human progress. The text also attempts to show the transfer of certain Western ideas and the nature of their reception in Bulgaria.

Two selections of homilies by Beinsa Douno have been thoroughly analysed – *The Bulgarian soul* (Българската душа) and *Bulgarians* (Българите). These texts are a synthesis of dispersed ideas and views that were espoused by Deunov over different periods of time, and which refer to the issues in question.

The concepts of the Bulgarian nation and "Bulgarian soul" that appear in Beinsa Douno's teachings may be interpreted as an attempt to create an original hermetic national mythology. This mythology, embedded in a scientific context (references to such notions as race, evolution and human progress) was supposed to become – according to Deunov's intention – the indisputable truth rooted in empirical knowledge.

Keywords:

Bulgarian nation, "Bulgarian soul", race, evolution, progress, national mythology, cosmic determinism, national character

Kwestia narodu bułgarskiego i „bułgarskiej duszy” w świetle „nauki” Petyra Dynowa o ewolucji, rasie i ludzkim postępie

Abstrakt

Celem niniejszego artykułu jest refleksja nad kategorią narodu bułgarskiego i „bułgarskiej duszy” w „nauce” Petyra Dynowa. Kategorie te zostaną przedstawione w perspektywie takich pojęć jak ewolucja, rasa i postęp. Tekst jest jednocześnie próbą wskazania na przepływ niektórych zachodnich idei oraz specyfikę ich bułgarskiej recepcji. Analizie zostały poddane dwa zbiory homilii Beinsa Duno – *Bułgarska dusza* (Българската душа) oraz *Bułgarzy* (Българите). Teksty te stanowią syntezę rozproszonych i wygłaszanych w różnym okresie poglądów Dynowa na interesujące mnie kwestie. Pojawiające się w „nauce” Beinsa Duno koncepcje narodu bułgarskiego i „bułgarskiej duszy” można interpretować jako próbę stworzenia oryginalnej hermetycznej mitologii narodowej. Mitologia ta, dzięki osadzeniu jej w kontekście naukowym (odwołania do takich kategorii jak rasa, ewolucja i postęp), miała stać się – zgodnie z zamysłem Dynowa – niepodważalną, zakorzenioną w empirii prawdą.

Słowa kluczowe:

naród bułgarski; „bułgarska dusza”; rasa; ewolucja; postęp; mitologia narodowa; kosmiczny determinizm; charakter narodowy