

## SCTCMG 2019

### II International Scientific Conference «Social and Cultural Transformations in the Context of Modern Globalism»

#### INTERACTION OF RELIGION AND MORALITY IN GLOBAL WORLD

Valentina Chernikova (a)\*

\*Corresponding author

(a) North-Caucasus Federal University, Stavropol, Russia  
chervalen5@rambler.ru, 89887541757

#### *Abstract*

Globalization processes actively influence spiritual and moral coordinates of the current stage. The prevention of the dominance in destructive tendencies in modern society is the only alternative to keep the world community from the civilized chaos. People should be able to adapt to a new social reality in our changing world, as the processes of globalization actively influence spiritual and moral coordinates of the current stage, and have a significant impact on public consciousness. Information technologies form our new reality. The Internet, mass media, new information technologies have formed information and communication space, which is a new ideocratic social education. The result is the transformation of traditional ways in spiritual life of our society. Thus, modern humanitarian knowledge requires analyzing the state of contradictory processes of social and cultural development of the society. The important role in such study belongs to identification of the nature and characteristics of interaction of morality and religion as components of culture and the core of spirituality, need for scientific reflection on the unity and difference of moral and religious consciousness with modern social and cultural realities. The purpose of the paper is to identify social and cultural foundations of the interaction of religion and morality and study factors that determine modern peculiarities of this interaction. The research results are focused on a deep scientific analysis of cultural processes in globalization. The materials of the article can be used in scientific and pedagogical activities and the program implementation for spiritual and moral education.

© 2019 Published by Future Academy [www.FutureAcademy.org.UK](http://www.FutureAcademy.org.UK)

**Keywords:** Spirituality, religion, liberal and traditional values, consciousness, virtual reality, postmodern ethics.



The Author(s) 2019. This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

## 1. Introduction

The beginning of the 21st century is marked by the growth of deep transformational tendencies related to the formation of a new image of social and cultural reality and a shift from the dominance of the Western Euro-Atlantic civilization. A truly global character is becoming a civilizational transition to a polycentric world. Tectonic processes, new models of interaction in a globalizing world system cause instability of the modern world community.

Works by Beck (2001), Stiglitz (2003), Dugin (2009), Shendrick (2004) play an important role in the study of modern processes. They are dedicated to globalization as a deep transformation of the cultural paradigm of humanity. These authors consider globalization as a process of profound changes in the history of human civilization, which are the result of changes in ideological foundations of Western culture based on rationalism, ideas of enlightenment and humanism. The basic tenets of the anthropocentric paradigm, which were the basis of the leading European ideological models, proved to be untenable.

Understanding of social and cultural processes in modern world is important as it provides the ability of the global community to respond adequately to the challenges of time and develop purposefully, while maintaining its integrity and viability. Globalization is rapidly changing the world; the speed and depth of change challenge the ability of mankind to navigate the world around them. Considering the controversial nature of globalization processes, Chernikova (2017) notes that “on the one hand, conditions for dialogue between cultures are created, free access to world cultural values is provided through Internet technologies. On the other hand, the contradiction between globalization of the planet and identity of specific communities is intensifying” (p.89).

The problem of the interaction between morality and religion has always been at the center of attention for various philosophical trends. The scale of this problem is obvious: from complete rejection of any interaction to the establishment of their (morality and religion) essential unity. Since morality and religion occupy a dominant place in shaping the qualities of a person and regulating his behavior, a philosophical approach always upholds the principle of the interrelation of morality and religion. According to Skrypnyk (2015), “the basis for the correlation of these phenomena is their functional community and relatedness of regulatory means used: religion determines people's livelihoods through the value opposition of the sacred and the sinful, morality — good and evil” (p. 408).

The concepts of “religion” and “morality” have a common etymological basis. The moral aspect is an important component in the definition of religion. In a generalized sense, religion is understood as “faith in the supersensible world”, which existence is subordinated to the Absolute and associated with a certain kind of morality, sacrament, cult (Mayorov, 2004).

The interpretation of the term “morality” (lat. *moralitas* from *moralis*) includes the concepts of tradition, character and in everyday life is associated with the concepts of “everyday practical”, “spirituality”, “ideal” (Guseinov, 2001). Thus, based on the semantic community of these concepts, morality and religion should be considered in a close unity. When people reject religion, they cannot save genuine morality, just as difficult to be a truly religious person and reject moral principles. True morality, in essence, has a deep mystical meaning, since it contains ideas about some sacred foundations of human

existence. Genuine religion is always moral, because it constantly focuses on the absolute beginning and motivates a person to live according to moral precepts.

The unity of morality and religion is based on the functional commonality of the methods used to regulate a human life. If religion determines the life of people by contrasting the sacred and the sinful with values, morality is opposed to good and evil. The essence of this phenomenon is that moral and religious consciousness, relations and activities, reflecting various aspects and manifestations of reality, have common elements in their content. These are the needs and interests of the society and the individual, and the ideas of people about life, meaning, spiritual and moral content that they define.

The unity basis of morality and religion is the idea of a certain transcendent moral order, temporal and spatial relatedness of things and events, symbolically expressed in actions, deeds, and words and, therefore, transcendently connecting the ideal and the real in the spiritual life (Noskov, 2002).

Thus, the problem of the interaction of morality and religion occupies an important place in teachings of the representatives of world philosophy. The study of this process identifies and substantiates the side of the interaction in which certain spiritual states of social consciousness, social relations and spiritual activity are necessary to maintain the stability of the social system and its positive development. Morality and religion are interrelated social and cultural phenomena of spiritual activity, social consciousness, and social relations. Their interaction is defined, first of all, as an internal dialectical unity.

## 2. Problem Statement

This paper studies the problem of dialogical interaction of morality and religion in social and cultural transformations. The main problem involves the following tasks: characterize the peculiarities of the interaction between modern morality and religion, show that in the context of globalization the formation of new morality occurs, and identify the differences between traditional and liberal values as a factor of contradictions between religion and modern morality.

## 3. Research Questions

### **Interaction peculiarities of modern morality and religion**

The main peculiarity of the interaction of modern morality and religion is the desire of morality to assign religious functions. This process symbolizes the formation of a “new religious consciousness”, which marks the beginning of a new era — the postmodern era. One of the theorists of postmodernism as a new cultural style, Kuritsyn (2001), believes that in religious terms, postmodern morality is accompanied by the era of neo-paganism, and synthesizes into one whole different rituals, gods, symbols and mystical practices. In an ethical sense, postmodern is understood as the era that upholds “universal human values” with their installation to free a person from any religious tradition.

The peculiarities that reflect difference dynamics between modern morality and religion in the modern spiritual life of society are as follows.

Firstly, modern morality in other ways solves the problem of translating its ideologies in the sphere of spiritual relations. The main task here is mythologization of sociocultural phenomena, and the mythological image formed in postmodernism does not carry a symbolic or sacred meaning, as, for

example, in Christianity, but only conveys a certain value, turning into an image-sign. This is most vividly represented in modern myth-making – advertising. Its moral basis is the thought that people and society are what they consume. Gradually, the category “to be” is replaced by the category “to have”. Pleasure and joy become the value criterion of this world (Bart, 1995). Thus, the society accepts the idea, according to which the relations of consumption turn into life-long value, and consumer ability becomes the main criterion of self-affirmation of an individual. The quality of things consumed becomes the moral criterion of human dignity and prestige.

Secondly, discrepancy between modern morality and religious ethical principles is most vividly represented in the field of artistic creativity and mass media. For modern postmodern morality, the attitude to the world as a show is typical in which ideas about reality become derived from its representation systems. In such a “picture of life,” everything is only an idea of reality. Moral relations and principles are deprived of essential dominants. They begin to be a constantly changing sequence of “viewpoints” and aspects of reality that make it mosaic and do not find its essence. In modern postmodern art, the God really dies. The death of the God in art means the affirmation of permissiveness and irresponsibility of the man. The main character becomes the author, who essentially becomes not the creator-creator anymore. He is the author-hero, who performs the function of an interpreter, a composer, a director, whose subjective view becomes the main plot. As a result, a simulacrum, which has no ontological roots, is not able to be a reality.

Thirdly, modern pragmatic morality has a new spiritual phenomenon, which is absent in the sphere of traditional moral and religious relations. This is the formation through sign systems of a new reality and their impact on moral components of modern society. A distinctive feature of pragmatic morality is the fact that moral needs are determined by fashion or advertising. Things acquire supersensible “sign” social qualities that provoke the consumer to become their owner, to join a certain social community. Consumption becomes the dominant code of postmodern moral consciousness, and the criterion of morality. Since the sign has the ability to simulate the reality, an indicator of postmodern morality is the empowerment of the sign with a peculiar power over this reality. That is why we can talk about the attempts of pragmatism to turn religion, politics, and culture into an impersonal sign system. The appearance of reality in modern relative morality lies behind the “new formation”, which is incompatible with religious methods to influence on public consciousness. We are talking about the image, which is designed, above all, to hide the real person, to question and devalue its authenticity, condemning it to anonymity. At the same time, the boundaries of moral foundations become unsteady, alienated from their essence and amenable to various transformations.

Fourthly, the mode of interaction formed under the influence of postmodernist tendencies forms a new quasi-spiritual space - virtual reality. The Internet forms a new order of values, since the previously existing traditional religious and moral relations are insufficient. For the Web, a new order of ideas and values is needed, which could become technologies for the production of artificial systems and relationships that have the ability to influence the inner world of the man. This is confirmed by the words of Levy (1995), who believes that the basis of modern reality is information and computers, thanks to which new “social organisms” appear as a form of influence on people and society. This gives not only the fundamental possibility to simulate sociocultural reality, but also the development of processes in it

that imitate the life as something actual. The virtual reality displaces the spiritual life through new technologies by influence on the sphere of the human unconscious. Investigating the role of mass media in society, McLuhan (2003) compares them with the “technological organism”, which has its own consciousness and a nervous system. Plunging into the virtual reality, a person joins information systems, moving away from real spiritual life and replacing it with coded information signs.

Modern reality involves the study of differences in religious and non-religious morality, as well as their impact on social and cultural processes in modern society. In terms of content, it is important to study difference peculiarities in moral and religious relations and activities, which manifest themselves in the phenomenon of pragmatic postmodern morality, the system of contradictions between traditional and liberal values in the modern spiritual life of society.

History shows that morality based not on true religiosity, degenerates into a desire for hedonism, which ultimately leads to the loss of moral guidelines, which we observed in the 20th century. It leads to cruelty and lawlessness, crime, etc. Humanistic morality, freed from religion, could not save a person and society as a whole from immorality. Non-religious morality becomes relative, since morality can claim to be absolute or unconditional for its demands only if it borrows the transcendent criteria of good and evil from religion, which forms the ideal of spiritual life.

As for “imperatives” of relative morality, being a product of social and historical development, are formed and develop in the boundaries of social dynamics, and, therefore, are accessible to various forms of management, disposition, and purposeful regulation. In this case, the solution of ethical problems begins to be exact and situational in nature and depend on an exact value understanding of good and evil, forms of their expression, and specific time and space.

The example of this aspect could be situational changes in ideological attitudes, moral principles and guidelines, which led, for example, Russian society to disorientation regarding moral and value orientations in the spiritual life at the end of the 20th century. You can also mention the norms of modern morality, due to the development dynamics of postmodern culture, liberal ideology and religious syncretism. The epistemological basis of modern moral standards is not the value or intuition of the ideal spiritual being, not religious precepts, but rationally substantiated and rooted in consciousness, for example, the liberal idea of human rights, or a specific social phenomenon of reification of this idea.

Modern relative morality tries to form the so-called “non-repressive” ethics and the syncretic type of religion, combining the practice of political correctness accepted in the modern Western world. It ultimately aims at smoothing social contradictions and mixing religious and moral elements in a single culture and considered practically impracticable.

Despite the fact that the principles of political correctness are designed to cultivate tolerance in society in relation to any dissent and any religious differences, they gradually turn into an instrument of repression, and become a form of social ritual, discriminating those who do not have the ability or unwilling to observe it.

Thus, in modern morality, moral dictatorship of pluralism takes shape, in which the moral values of virtual reality based on Nietzsche's thought about the death of God acquire a special status.

## **Differences between traditional and liberal values as a factor in contradictions between religion and modern morality.**

One of the fundamental contradictions of the modern state of spiritual life is the distinction between liberal ethical standards and the values of traditional culture. In our opinion, the fundamental importance for the analysis of the spiritual state of modernity is the study of the genesis of the above contradiction and search for ways to overcome it. It is important to note that the formulation of this problem and the desire to solve it causes mixed assessments.

Representatives of liberalism as a political and cultural phenomenon by virtue of ideological considerations, reject the very idea to pose such a problem, and fear to overestimate the complex of liberal concepts on which the attempt to form a new image of the global human community is based today.

In turn, representatives of religious fundamentalism, convinced that the ideology and politics of isolationism is the only way of salvation from cultural, ideological and spiritual challenges of modernity, try to avoid discussion of the relation between liberal and religious values, priory considering liberal values to be a product of a “sinful world”.

Due to the rapid development of communications, not only the image of the modern world has been seriously transformed, but also various ways of communication. In culture, there is a revision of traditional values that constituted its core. Especially noticeable are the changes in morality, which under the influence of liberal ideas, lose their original meaning. “Traditional moral values are in their nature connected with moral ascetic and absolutist ideas and principles, while the values of transforming society are hedonistic and relativistic ...” (Chernikova, 2014, p. 46). The epoch of mono-ethnic and mono-confessional states is becoming a thing of the past; the spiritual life of society acquires an open character. For example, the Muslim presence on the European continent has become commonplace. Therefore, one of the contradictions of modern spiritual life is the contradiction between traditional norms that determine the identity and spiritual identity of society on the one hand, and the expansion of sociocultural factors that are formed under the influence of postmodern reality.

Considering the genesis of liberal values, we note that they combine the anthropocentrism of the Renaissance, the Protestant ethics and rationalistic philosophical thought. At the end of the New Age, these values were finally formed into a complex of liberal and spiritual principles. The French Revolution was the final stage in the change of worldviews. The Reformation rejected the imperativeness of Christian dogmas, which are the criterion of the truth. Their place is taken by the personal understanding of the student of Holy Scripture and personal religious experience. Since Protestantism is essentially a liberal interpretation of Christianity, the new postmodern way of life is based on individual freedom from any restrictions and conventions other than those determined by law. The most important value of liberalism lies in the idea of affirming the unconditional value of personal being, liberating the individual from various kinds of restrictions on his rights and freedoms. On the contrary, religious values of freedom lie in its understanding not as an absolute, practically unlimited freedom, but as a process of liberation from sin.

From the point of view of liberalism, a free person has the right not to accept everything that limits him and opposes in the ways of affirming his own “I”. All human actions are considered as an

internal matter of an independent, independent person. In this context, liberal ideas are diametrically opposed, for example, to the values of Christianity. The complexity of the analyzed problem lies in the fact that the modern concept of liberalism was the logical consequence of the philosophical ideas about the emancipation of a human person. Subsequently, it received its further continuation and development in all spheres of social activity: economics, politics, law, morality, religion, social relations, and social structure. So, liberal idea leads to a modern generally accepted understanding of democratic institutions, civil liberties, free competition, market economy, freedom of speech, freedom of conscience, that is, everything that is included in the concept of modern civilization. That is why, studying the question of differences between moral values of liberal worldviews and religious principles of traditionalism, it is necessary to note the existence of at least two fairly common views on the problem.

The first point of view reflects its isolationist position. Its followers advocate the formation and functioning of the spiritual life of modern society, based on the dominance of their national and social and cultural identity.

Followers of the second point of view are in favor of transferring the Western liberal and civilizational foundations to domestic ideas, rooting them in spiritual life. Unlike similar attempts made in the past, today there is no need to use power or administrative force at all. It will be quite sufficient to use the possibilities of the education system, the power of the media, etc., which spread and affirm the idea that cultural and historical traditions are outdated, the functions of universal human values are to maintain a liberal order in society, the unification of culture is an indispensable condition for its transformation and integration.

It is clear that these two models are mutually exclusive. Since they have a sufficient number of followers at the level of public consciousness and in the field of politics, a contradiction between them is inevitable. It largely determines the state of tension in the spiritual life of society.

The solution of this contradiction is seen under the condition of mutual understanding and concerted actions of the parties. At the same time, there is a wide opportunity for the interaction of traditional and ethnic religions, and all healthy forces of society. An important social and spiritual task is value justification of tradition as a norm-forming factor, which determines the entire value system of spiritual and moral orientations of individuals and society. Liberal values, such as tolerance, pluralism, in our opinion, may be applicable to relieve tensions in the modern world.

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

Based on the paper objectives, the purpose of the work is to study the ways in which modern morality and religion are interconnected, due to the development dynamics of postmodern culture, liberal ideology and religious syncretism.

#### **5. Research Methods**

Fundamental teachings were used as a methodological basis for the present study. They were set forth in the works of Russian and foreign scholars in the field of spirituality, religion, and morality. A number of philosophical concepts, such as positivism, neo-Kantianism, Freudianism, existentialism,

Marxism, interpret the interaction of morality and religion as interrelated, but at the same time relatively autonomous, autonomous aspects of spiritual activity, social consciousness, culture, etc. In this case, the basis of interaction is the idea of a certain method of temporal and spatial unity of events, symbolically expressed in social action. A number of researchers, among which Durkheim (1998), Eliade (2002), Tillich (1995) and others are distinguished, examined the specifics of the interaction of morality and religion in experiencing the sacred, that is, beyond the limits of everyday experience. Such a meeting with the transcendental or supernatural gives a rise to the phenomenon of the multidimensionality of the world in consciousness.

The interaction of morality and religion is the phenomenon of moralization of religion. I. Kant paid attention to the difference of religions by their morality, and divided religions into natural and ethical ones (Kant, 1980). These ideas were further developed by Weber (1990) and Tillich (1995). Ethical aspects form the basis of Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and the problems of morality are also touched upon in Taoism, Confucianism, Buddhism, and Brahmanism. Tillich (1995) noted that in ethical religions the sacred acquires the true meaning. It becomes the highest justice and perfection. The God can be understood only through morality (Tillich, 1995).

When solving the tasks, we were guided by the understanding of morality as a necessary and one of the main criteria of religion. It is necessary to consider religion in terms of its unconditional content, which constitute moral and religious ideals and values. Historical and philosophical methods reconstruct the views of thinkers on the ratio of morality and religion. The dialectical method helps to clarify the contradictory nature of the interaction between morality and religion. It enables to explore the historical and theoretical development of their interaction. The study of religion as a spiritual basis for social and cultural interaction in modern conditions involves the use of a synergistic approach that considers the dialogical interaction of morality and entropy, minimizing the possibilities of social and cultural conflicts.

## 6. Findings

Based on the conducted research related to the implementation of dialogue interaction, we obtained the following results.

1. The problem of the interaction of morality and religion occupies an important place in the teachings of the representatives of world philosophy. The study of this process makes it possible to identify and substantiate the side of the relation in which certain spiritual states of social consciousness, social relations and spiritual activity are necessary and essential to maintain the stability of the social system and its positive development.

2. In modern morality, spiritual relations are replaced by a sign (symbol). The place of reality begins to belong to a hypothetical “space” arbitrarily modeled by postmodern consciousness. This leads to the phenomenon of “simulacra”, that is, a sign that simulates reality. The spiritual world becomes a collection of phantoms of consciousness. Speech, word, print, clothing, art, and even individuals, who not only perform certain functions, but also become tools for ideological manipulation, become symbolic. Thus, the wide dissemination of relativistic morality produces new, different from religious ideologies, generates new mythology and relations, and seeks to oust traditional religious forms and creates new moral norms and symbols.

3. Modern society as a complex open system is forced to build a system of moral guidelines, ideals, principles, attitudes, norms to meet the challenges to preserve its viability. The actual problem of the distinction between religious and non-religious morality is the problem of breaking morality with religion. This problem historically arises in the period of the formation of the anthropocentric paradigm in the Renaissance, as one of the ideological tools of polemic with social and religious views.

4. The rapid development of communications has seriously transformed not only the image of the modern world, but also various ways of communication. The practical absence in the modern world of national and cultural borders has led to enormous cultural and ethnic shifts that consequences are not always predictable. In culture, there is a revision of traditional values that constituted its core. Especially noticeable are the changes in morality, which, under the influence of liberal ideas, lose their original meaning.

## 7. Conclusion

The paper deals with topical issues of the interaction of morality and religion in the context of contradictory social and cultural processes. Based on the study of the current situation, it was concluded that the interaction of religion and morality in the spiritual life leads to systematization and strengthening of moral norms and values.

The main results of the constructive interaction are the following. First of all, a way of social existence is formed through the actualization of the religion concept as the highest good and the meaning of life. It is based on the principles of universal morality. It requires tangible changes in the field of spirituality, associated with the transcendental foundation of morality. Panarin (2002) writes, “Where universals of culture and morality are weakened, there is much less chance for a person to resist external temptations to tout “morality of success” and internal pressure of his own instincts” (p. 284).

In addition, the interaction of religion and morality in modern society contributes to the ideological justification of the superiority of moral actions of the man over immoral through the idea of retribution, as well as the advantages of spiritual values over material ones. Finally, there are special spiritual and moral relations between people, supported by a religious understanding of human qualities and actions. They determine the process of sacralization of morality in the spiritual life of society.

To improve the moral climate is possible only if modern humanity takes into account the cultural heritage, which has always been dominated by the principle of close relation of morality and religion. The rejection of the influence of religion on morality leads to moral relativism. The minimization of the role of morality in religion leads to the replacement of truth with religion with a pseudo-religion.

## References

- Bart, R. (1995). *Selected works. Semiotics. Poetics*. Moscow: Publishing: Groups “Progress”, “Univers”.
- Beck, U. (2001). *What is globalization?* Moscow: Progress-Traditsiya.
- Chernikova, V. E. (2014). Conflict of traditional moral values and values of information society. *Bulletin of Adygey State University, ser. “Region studies: philosophy, history, sociology, law studies, political studies, culture studies”*, 3, 45–50.
- Chernikova, V. E. (2017). *Culture values in modern information world*. Stavropol: OOO “Data world”.
- Dugin, A. G. (2009). *Post-philosophy: three paradigms of history*. Moscow: Eurasian movement.
- Durkheim, E. (1998). *Elementary forms of religious life. Totemic system in Australia*. Moscow: AST.

- Eliade, M. (2002). *History of faith and religious ideas. From Gautama Buddha to the triumph of Christianity*. Moscow: AST.
- Guseinov, A. A. (2001). *Morality. Ethics: Encyclopedic dictionary*. Moscow: Gardariki.
- Kant, I. (1980). *Religion within morality. Kant I. Tractate and letters*. Moscow: Science.
- Kuritsyn, V. N. (2001). *Russian literal post-modernism*. Moscow: OGI.
- Levy, S. (1995). *Artificial Life: A report from the Frontier Where Computers Meet Biology*. New York.
- Mayorov, G. G. (2004). *Philosophy as a search for Absolut. Theoretical and historical experiments*. Moscow: Editorial URSS.
- McLuhan, M. (2003). *Media understanding: External human extensions*. Moscow: Zhukovskiy: «KANON-press-Ts, “Kuchkovo field”.
- Noskov, Yu.T. (2002). *Religious factor and spiritual security*. Moscow: VU.
- Panarin, A. S. (2002). *Orthodox civilization in global world*. Moscow: Algorithm.
- Shendrick, A. I. (2004). Globalization in the system of cultural coordinates. *Knowledge. Understanding. Skills*, 1, 59–71.
- Skrypnyk, A. P. (2015). Religion and morality. *Ethics: Encyclopedic dictionary*. Moscow: Gandariki.
- Stiglitz, J. (2003). *Globalization: disturbing tendencies*. Moscow: Thought.
- Tillich, P. (1995). *Dynamics of faith. Sel. Theology of culture*. Moscow: Yurist.
- Weber, M. (1990). *Protestant ethics and spirit of capitalism*. Moscow: Progress.