

ISCKMC 2020**International Scientific Congress «KNOWLEDGE, MAN AND CIVILIZATION»****CONVERSION-LIMIT-TRANSGRESSION: ASPECTS OF
RELIGIOUS TRANSITIONS**

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Abstract

The problem of forming a worldview is one of the urgent tasks for researchers studying the transformations of modern society. The complexity of the task is explained by the constant emerging of new cultural and religious formations in reality and in the virtual space. Their values delegated to society are in many respects different from traditional binary oppositions formed under the influence of moral norms and tested over centuries. Appeals to go beyond the usual normative boundaries including all types of transformations, both moral and physical, increase the number of transgression transitions, which puts significant pressure on traditional religious institutions. Since these processes require careful study and detailed description, this article is devoted to this very issue. In scientific discourse, the term “transgression” is used to record the phenomenon of crossing the impassable border between the possible and the impossible, sometimes leading beyond the established limits of everyday life and generally accepted norms. Thus, traditionally, religious conversion is perceived as a society-controlled transition from one confession to another. However, under the influence of globalization and migration processes, the historically formed borders of world confessions begin to collapse substituting the sacrament of conversion with an act of uncontrolled religious transgression. This is especially true for believers who are not particularly drawn to a coherent system of dogma. Such processes have a destructive effect on the historically established balance in society but lead to a new awareness of opportunities.

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1. Introduction

In scientific discourse, the term “transgression” is used to record the phenomenon of crossing the impassable border between the possible and the impossible, leading to going beyond the established limits of everyday life and generally accepted norms. Understanding of transgression as an independent philosophical problem belongs to the French poststructuralists Bataille (1997, 2000) Foucault (1994, 2010), who recorded the existence of a “limit” in a person in society in the form of rules and prohibitions and focused their attention on finding a way to avoid this limit. The very fact of the existence of borders, according to researchers, leads to the division of worlds into profane, sacred, transcendental but all these worlds are open to each other in acts of transgression. The most vivid example is the religious transgression associated with the conversion to another faith. This is not only a “spiritual revolution” but also a gradual deepening in the knowledge of the rules and norms of a new religion. The processes of enculturation and socialization being the main stages of adaptation to society of each person determine his original form of culture and religion. The religious individual’s worldview is formed gradually and the result can be either Faith acceptance or atheistic views formation. The choice between opposing views must be associated with an unthinkable solution to the problem of what exists as a deep existence, freed from the forms of appearance (Bataille, 2000). Thus, the American researcher Strickland (1924) studying the typology of appeals, distinguished two types of such situations. In the first instance, the main reason is a spiritual or life crisis, which allows a believer to quite accurately indicate the spatial and temporal framework for gaining faith. In the second instance, the process of conversion proceeds against the background of a gradual and calm increase in the level of religious consciousness, without sudden shifts in spiritual life, and sharp emotional changes (Strunk, 1959).

2. Problem Statement

A new state of being associated with transgressive experience, overcoming the binarity of the everyday world is accompanied by the deconstruction of an ordinary picture of the world and therefore requires the use of a new language of description and understanding. It is noteworthy that the act of transgression not only transcends the existing limits but also implies a return to the previous state while the subject is always “becoming” and never “became” (Dyakov, 2008). In this sense, transgression is comprehension of the totality of the double movement: denial and return (Bataille, 2007). Therefore, a modern individual being nomadic constantly slides from one discourse to another (Deleuze, 2010). It is at the moment of crossing the “border” when changes occur in the perception of the surrounding world understood in religious experience as conversion. The reasons for this change may be different. However, as a rule, they do not follow from the ordinary and are not a consequence of established schemes. Transgression as a transition implies the unconditional acceptance of a different system of values, which they differ from, a transformation that suggests a gradual transition with the preservation of certain elements of an old worldview. Transgression, on the other hand, positions a negative attitude towards everything that has preceded it and by this already determines the deconstruction of an old worldview built on the cultural norms of the community (social group), which a person lives in, and assimilated in the process of acculturation and socialization. Religious, scientific, artistic, political and moral ideas are

intertwined here. However, the worldview does not just describe the world, it is like a contour diagram that outstrips, defines and controls human experience (Riezler, 1999). This is a “coordinate grid” through which people perceive reality and form the view of the world that exists in their minds (Gurevich, 1969). Since a worldview is a certain way of organizing knowledge about the world, changes occurring in key areas entail a change in the worldview affirming its new standards, world perception and attitude (Zhidkov & Sokolov, 2003). A new perspective determines the emergence of new value orientations, semantic paradigms, methods of scientific cognition.

3. Research Questions

World religions, being integrated into public, political, social and cultural processes, have developed their own traditions of prohibitions and recommendations aimed at maintaining a balance between religion and society. The process of religious transition within the framework of world confessions means moving from one traditional system based on permissions/prohibitions to another. It is the prohibitions that build a certain religious worldview, which should be shared by a believer of a particular confession.

According to the authors of the article, understanding the process of conversion solely as a gradual growth and deepening of religious faith slightly narrows the boundaries of the concept while in this context the specificity of the semantic content is lost, and, therefore, the transitions from unbelief to active and deep religious faith, and vice versa, as well as acts of religious transgression associated with the transition from one religious worldview to another should be considered in the semantic field of this phenomenon. According to the Irish scientist O’Doherty (1978), a follower of the Catholic doctrine, the process of conversion should not be limited to psychological changes in an individual’s psyche since it is based on divine grace. Other criteria must be applied to the phenomenon of conversion in order to discern whether there is a possibility of supernatural influence of God (O’Doherty, 1978). According to the researcher, only in this instance we can speak of genuine conversion. According to the American scientist Clark (2012), the most noticeable changes in a person’s religious worldview occur as a result of sudden emotional insight. The overwhelming majority of conceptual statements on this topic are consistent with the idea of James (2019) that religion is endowed with the power to transform the most unbearable sufferings of a human soul into the deepest and most lasting happiness, and conversion leads to inner growth, to more intense spiritual life. According to the authors of the article, the conversion process is not limited only to individual experience but also largely depends on external factors. Therefore, this problem must be considered within the framework of modern scientific discourse.

The globalist paradigm is aimed to form a single cultural space through dialogue, for which it is vitally necessary to identify the logic and perception of the world of each specific culture, with its own characteristics, ideas, and a way of transforming the world. After all, what is significant in one culture may be not significant in another. And in this case, the emphasis is shifted to the search for something that can unite. That is why today the concept of worldview can be considered as a method of pragmatist understanding of a cognition process, a kind of program of activities to transform both the external and internal world. The higher the complexity of a culture is, the more people in it are formally united by one view without knowing many of its details. Different types of cultural consciousness construct and

interpret a worldview in different ways. Consequently, it is very difficult to identify the criteria of this model by common parameters.

The logic of globalization is opposed by a growing trend towards the localization of cultures, religions, and confessions. And here the growing competition for the “flock” is clearly visible. Therefore, the religious transgression deserves special attention. Prohibitions build a certain view of the world, which a believer of a particular confession should belong to. Thus, the Jews must observe 613 commandments, including 365 (according to the number of days in a year) prohibitive ones, the remaining 248 (according to the number of organs of the human body) are prescriptive (Zhukova, 2016). Christianity warns believers against the temptations which the world is full of. Almost all spheres of a Muslim’s life are regulated by Sharia law. In religious transgression, the situation of prohibition is emphasized. Indeed, in any religious tradition there is a limit of impassability, each has prohibitions and recommendations but the negative prohibiting part plays a different role in different religions. Many prescriptions-prohibitions today are questioned due to the impossibility of denying the achievements of science and technology, information disseminated in the media. Thus, all orthodoxy turned out to be infected with modern attitudes bringing with them numerous returns to religion in recent decades. In such a situation, any isolation policy turns out to be very problematic.

Many confessional bans no longer correspond to modern realities and even begin to bother. Thus, certain alimentary and vestimental religious prescriptions simply cannot be observed since they no longer correspond to modern realities. For example, a Muslim cannot wear shorts, pants with shirts are prohibited because it is forbidden to show off the beauty of clothes (Orishev, 2015) but a dressing gown is not an acceptable dress code in institutions. A special problem is represented by interethnic marriages, the attitude towards which in almost all confessions, if not categorically negative, then at least extremely skeptical. Nevertheless, in the modern world such marriages are a noticeable fact and their number is steadily growing. The attitude towards polygamy has also undergone changes. It is not encouraged but under the pressure of migration processes, the specifics of the demographic situation in different countries, is beginning to be tolerated. Many believers begin to independently adapt to the needs of society. According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right includes the freedom to change one’s religion or beliefs (UN, 1948). Such a transition is accompanied by a value enculturation into an accepted religion (sect, confession). In the confessions, the right to such a transition is clearly pronounced. In Judaism, in contrast to national religions being Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Shintoism, there is permission for conversion to Giyur, that is, conversion to Judaism (if you were not born into a Jewish family). Orthodoxy, like Islam, does not approve of such a transition. However, religious transgression is not rare today.

4. Purpose of the Study

World religions being integrated into public, political, social and cultural processes, have developed their own traditions of prohibitions and recommendations aimed to maintain a balance between religion and society. Appeals to move beyond the usual normative boundaries increase the number of transgressive transitions, which has become a serious problem which traditional religious institutions face today. In contrast to the processes of transformation, which admit the preservation of certain elements of

an old worldview, the transgressional transition positions a negative attitude towards everything that has preceded it and by this already determines the deconstruction of an old worldview, built on the cultural norms of the community (social group) into which an individual is integrated in the process of acculturation and socialization.

This situation, which generates new value orientations, semantic paradigms, methods of scientific knowledge, requires a detailed and careful study, which makes the problems of this article relevant. In particular, based on a comparative analysis of a number of rules and regulations adopted in different religions, in order to regulate the behavior of believers, the authors analyzed the influence of society on the formation of a religious worldview of an individual and society.

5. Research Methods

In the course of the study, an integrated approach was applied. Modern methods of cognition of social and cultural processes based on institutional and retrospective methods of comparative analysis were applied. In order to better understand the factors influencing religious transgression, the typologization method was used. When working with primary sources and original research, content analysis was used.

6. Findings

Any worldview reflects the dominant preferences of society. Therefore, the 19th century gives a naturalistic view and the 20th century provides a scientific and philosophical system of notation concerning the general properties and laws of the world. Today, interest in the worldview is not ontological but social. This is the being, knowledge of which goes beyond the scope of scientific and philosophical problems, involving practically all spheres of human activity in the research field. However, the worldview is not a mirror image of the world; it is rather a model of the world perception, which means not just some picture depicting the world but the world understood in the sense of such a picture (Heidegger, 1993). Therefore, judging by the variety of interpretations of the universe, each individual can become an author of his vision by forming another, “second” world, built for himself and placed between himself and the “real world” (Heidegger, 1993). In this interpretation of being, a person’s place in the natural and social space, where everything is based on the generally accepted worldview shared by members of their group, is clearly defined (Fromm, 1990). This is a simplified perception of reality, where the memorized ways of behavior inherent in a particular community are recorded. They guide and structure in much the same way as grammatical rules, unconscious for most people; they structure and direct their linguistic behavior.

In general, transitions from one religion to another are local in nature, determined by moral choice (for example, under the influence of spiritual enlightenment) or external factors (a change of faith at the request of a husband is indicated as one of the common reasons). At the same time, multiple obstacles can affect the conscious choice of the transitional, the analysis of which is, at least, the topic of a separate study.

7. Conclusion

In the modern world being subject to the laws and principles of the globalist paradigm aimed to form a single cultural space through dialogue, the concept of the worldview can be considered as a method of pragmatist understanding of the cognition process, a kind of program of activities to transform both the external and internal world, which leads to collaging various systems of knowledge and practices of being. At the religious level, this manifests itself in the form of syncretism when elements of the dogma of different confessions are mixed into a single system of beliefs and practices of a particular individual. Such syncretism was characteristic of many communities at the dawn of Christianity formation. However, even today, according to the authors of the article (Dryagalov, 2015), one can observe the return of this phenomenon but already in the name of pluralism. This means that the problem of religious transgression is being actualized again as a challenge for world confessions from the information society and religious formations of various kinds. History has many examples of a rhizome model when a dogma of an old religion was adapted to the values and practices of a new one. In such a case, does conversion mean complete transgression or is it a partial transformation with a possible return? The authors of the article are inclined to believe that in most cases a partial transgression, examples of which can be observed in inter-ethnic marriages, occurs. Today we are dealing with massive conversions to a new faith, which does not always represent a legitimate confession. And a new believer freeing himself from some prohibitions meets with the need to accept the others. How this happens and whether it happens at all is exactly what the phenomenon of religious transgression shows, when the traditional set of cognitive matrices and schemes loses its functionality. However, such a transition leads to an unpredictable state, which is difficult to accurately determine and even more difficult to predict due to the lack of analysis criteria. The existing discourse does not allow rational interpretation of a new situation. On the one hand, the removal of previous prohibitions should lead to going beyond the limits but, on the other hand, a person receives new rules and prohibitions, which set his own limits. In other words, a subject living in society is always determined by existing traditions that he assimilates in the process of socialization and enculturation, and accepts the religious worldview offered to him.

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