

UDC 130.2:2 (045)

M. Abysova

**RELIGIOUS FACTOR OF SOCIAL DYNAMICS: SEMANTIC ASPECT**

National Aviation University

**Abstract.** *The article is devoted to the semantic aspect of the dialectics of sacralization and secularization as an integral part of social changes.*

**Key words:** language, profane, religion, sacralization, sacred, secularization, semantics, social dynamics.

**Introduction**

Historical experience proves that religious phenomena has been a barrier to innovations, feeding conformism, or a stimulus of socio-cultural changes, initiating the protest movement in the society. In recent years migration has turned to be a force returning of religion into the center of the European social life. Converting religion into a subject of public debates, migration has thus stepped up pressure on those (often unspoken) rules that set limits of religious influence on society. The analysis of semantic changes in a religion system reflecting existing social dynamics seems to be of particular actuality.

**The Goal of the Article** is to explore the relations of the social dynamics and semantic dimension of a religion system passing through the stages of sacralization and desacralization.

**Level of Progress of the Research**

The problem of the sacred and sacralization has been studied since the end of the XIX c. mainly in the framework of theology and religious studies (N. Soderblom, W. Christensen, G. Van der Leeuw, R. Otto, P. Tillich, F. Heiler, M. Scheler, M. Eliade). The interest for religious phenomena was shown by sociologists (E. Durkheim, C. Levi-Strauss, M. Mauss, P. Berger, Th. Luckmann), ethnologists (L. Levy-Bruhl, B. Malinowski, A. Radcliffe-Brown, E. Tylor, J. Frazer, E. Evans-Pritchard), psychoanalitics (K. Kerenyi, Z. Freud, E. Fromm, K. Jung). As a social phenomenon religion in its symbolic, semantic, transformed forms was investigated by H. Hegel, K. Marx, M. Mamardashvili, A. Leontiev and others.

**Main Body**

The way of settling religious conflicts typical for Europe goes back to the days of religious wars of the 16th and 17th centuries. These conflicts plagued for Western and Northern Europe that political norms and structures called for an end of suffering and instability caused with the religiously motivated struggle for political power. A number of peace agreements, known as the Peace of Westphalia, were signed in 1648. They laid down the principle of mutual respect of borders and state religions of sovereign states. This recognition of permanence and legitimacy of religious diversity within Europe in conjunction with the activities of such thinkers as Grotius, Th. Hobbes, J. Locke, and D. Hume provided the Europeans with the opportunity to talk and think of politics and religion, not mixing them.

A weak political influence of religion was counterbalanced with its legal and symbolic privileges in a variety of spheres of public life. For instance, in most European countries the work calendar is arranged in accordance with Christian holidays; crosses are depicted

on the flags of many European nations; religious holidays are held as national ones and others. Until quite recently, to be a part of the nation means to belong to the definite religion (to be a Spaniard means to be a Catholic, to be a Swede means to be a Lutheran, to be Greek – to be an Orthodox, and so on). This intersection of religious and national identities led to the decline of importance of symbols and other elements of the dominant religion in the public life of the country.

Recently, however, the excessive visibility of religious symbols of Muslim communities has pushed European national governments to restrict public wearing any religious symbols, including Christian and Jewish ones. In 2004, France banned "conspicuous" usage of religious symbols in public schools. In 2008, Denmark banned usage of religious symbols in courts. In France and Belgium there was a ban on veils covering the face in public places. While all of these measures were mostly motivated with a desire to restrict wearing Muslim symbols, in fact, they contributed into secularization of public life, limitation of religion with the private sphere. Decreasing a deep connection with a particular religious denomination, religious symbols have lost their status of undisputed signs of the national culture and to play a significant role in maintaining of the social order.

The question of the role of religion and its place in the series of economic, domestic, educational, political and other phenomena was in the focus of the social thought of the XIX c., represented by A. Comte, K. Marx, E. Durkheim, M. Weber.

A. Comte's doctrine of social dynamics contains an evolutionary model of society, arranged with the help of concepts drawn from the history of religion. This is the doctrine of the progress of society, passing three stages, which correspond to the periods of human life – childhood, adolescence and adulthood. In the first (theological) stage, one tries in vain to achieve absolute knowledge of the inner nature of phenomena and their causes. The explanation is based on the principle of analogy: things and acting forces are endowed with human qualities. The religious consciousness there is represented in three types: fetishistic, polytheistic and monotheistic. The latter type shows the expansion of personified abstractions and the shift from the theological thought to secular speculation dominated in the "philosophical", or "metaphysical" stage.

Religion, which at least in the first stage was an integral part of human society, further is no longer required. It is gradually being replaced with scientific knowledge on the last (positive) stage. In the positive stage the inevitable decline of religion causes the threat of disintegration of social system. Science is sought to be a new supporting for a social system.

Disappointed in the hope for a reasonable organization of society with the help of enlightenment of minds, A. Comte comes to the conclusion of necessity of the second theological synthesis as a spiritual support of social ties. It offers a secular, rationalist version of "positive religion" – the cult of humanity as a single great being, a huge social organism. In this religion a sociologist, who knows the mechanisms of social dynamics better than others, becomes a high priest.

Under the influence of A. Comte's ideas, E. Durkheim aimed at studying the basic structure common to all the religions. E. Durkheim proceeded from the fact that religion is found in all societies known to us, and in this sense it is a universal social phenomenon performing an integrative function.

The new paradigm of interpretation of the place of religion in society was suggested by M. Weber [2], grounded the theory of religiously motivated social change. M. Weber proceeded from the fact that all the social institutions, structures, forms of behavior in fact are based and governed with the sense given to them by people. The main function of religion is rationalization of human activity. According to M. Weber, religion as a unique socio-historical phenomenon that rationalizes human relationships, unifying them into the system. Rationalization is manifested in the fact that individuals' activity is characterized with their choice of adequate methods, tools, ways of achieving certain goals. Thus it marks a new degree of personal ease from non-functional means of achievement the goals. Religion is a stage on man's road to human freedom, a step towards the rationalization of the world, its "disenchantment". Therefore, religion has a strong potential impact on human activities, whatever its vector is.

The next step in understanding of the social dimension of religion was taken by T. Parsons with his study of social and cultural systems as dynamical phenomena. The theory of T. Parsons proves the universality of the mechanisms of changes in social systems. Appealing to the classification of social institutions elaborated by T. Parsons, one can see that religion is presented as a social institution, which unites believers into one social group based on a common cultural goal. Thus religion plays the role of social stability legitimizing the normative system and institutionally ensuring the patterns of social and cultural changes.

According to T. Parsons, preservation of equilibrium of the system necessarily implies a structural change of its subsystems. The thinker associates the changes of the social system with its internal differentiation – exemption from ascriptive ties. As a result, individual elements and subsystems receive a new degree of freedom, they haven't had before. Among the main factors disturbing and differentiating the religious sphere, according to T. Parsons, could be firstly found the spread of secondary education, which led to the rationalization and intellectualization of consciousness in all spheres of social life, and secondly, urbanization and privatization of life. As a result the position of religious and secular fields has changed. Religion has lost its centering position, which led to the two

oppositely directed vectors of development: it became dependent on the secular sphere, but at the same time gained autonomy (ease from ascriptive bonds), like other spheres of culture (philosophy, science, art).

As an autonomous subsystem of the society religion has its own mechanism of reproduction that is not applicable to the nature and pace of development of the rest. The specificity of the religious reproduction can be described using the antinomy of the sacred and the profane: "It is unfortunate that we don't have a more accurate word than "religion" to describe the sacred experience. Is it not strange to name experience of the Middle East, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Confucianism, and so-called primitive peoples with one and the same word? But it's late to seek for a new term, and we can use the concept of "religion", if we remember that it does not necessarily imply a belief in a god, gods or spirits, but it is the experience of the sacred and, therefore, is associated with the ideas of existence, meaning and truth" [7].

E. Durkheim offers to see a religious phenomenon as a kind of social action different from the rest, solely with the object it is directed at. This object is "sacred things" separated from the ordinary ("profane") world. The access to these "things" and return them to the profane world, to normal life is the basis of the ritual. Thus, religion implies "sacred things" and ritual activities connected with them.

According to E. Durkheim, the social life is collective by nature; therefore the sacred things are the symbol of a particular social group. Participation of members of the group in common ritual activity, gives them a sense of group solidarity. Religious rituals provide the access to sacred objects thus allowing a man to identify with his society. Profane is understood as the opposition of the sacred, its absence or desecration. It is qualified as worldly, mundane, everyday, sensuously perceived, transient one. Separating the profane things from sacred ones E. Durkheim stated that a sacred nature is given to a thing, is not inherent in it. Thus, anything, any object (a living being, a social phenomenon, others) can serve as "sacred" one.

One can see that the sacred is the hidden force of collective representations and emotions shaped in a symbolic form and embodied in rituals, which leads to the structuredness and solidarity of primitive societies through the dichotomy "sacred – profane".

The sacred object has the ability to meet the very specific need of an individual and society to overcome spontaneity of being, its unavoidable disastrous. That is the dominant motivation of sacralization of the object.

There is nothing in the world that would be sacred by itself and is equally sacred for everyone. Converting into sacred objects ordinary things do not change outwardly, but in believers' perceptions they become very different things, which cannot be treated as before. They cause fear and reverence at their discretion. They are dangerous and "forbidden" (it is impossible to approach them without dying). These two kinds of things (the sacred and the profane) cannot be in contact: on touching the profane the sacred loses its unique qualities. The profane and the sacred should be separated, isolated from each other, and at the same time – they both are essential for life: the first as a life

background, the second as a creating force, on which man depends on but may under some conditions use it for his own benefit. Thus, all the religious rituals are divided into the negative ones aimed at delimitating the sacred and the secular in order to prevent the desecration of the sacred, and the positive ones aimed at turning believers to the sacred world. They are complemented with redemptive rituals pointed at obtaining forgiveness for breaking the sacred rules.

Thus, according to E. Durkheim, religious rites at the collective level maintain and strengthen the social solidarity, and at the individual level strengthen man's faith in his own might. So, the essence of social functions of religion is to create conditions for stabilization and reproduction of society, to ensure the public system needs for stability, unity and order.

Religious actions, as a unity of cultivation and reverence, form a symbolic reality on the basis of a symphony of different symbolic forms. Nothing accidental that could disrupt the semiotic ensemble is allowed in such an environment. All the expressive means of a ritual service are symbolic: space, architecture, religious objects, clothes, music, sounds, scents, etc. Altogether they create an atmosphere significantly different from the daily one. These symbolic forms express the spiritual essences in the sensible perceived forms. Every single symbol, like a beacon shows the way of the religious experience; a unified system of symbols allows the faithful to overcome the sense of the flow of life as an irrational chaos. One can combine graphic symbols of religion in a more complex text. Key symbols are transformed into space volume structures, thereby enhancing the fixing connection of two worlds in one place. The transition from a planar to a spatial image seems to be the most dramatic in the form of architectural structures. By three dimensions one more – the scale as the most significant means of expression – is added. Increased images emphasize the greatness, the power of supernatural forces. Though there is a bucking trend of approximation of images to the human proportions that is harmoniously coordinated with man's worldview.

Hidden features of a symbol as an intermediary sign between man and absolute reality started to be realized in ancient times, during the formation of first religious teachings, when there was the need for connection of the invisible and revealed aspects of Being. In all subsequent religious cults, these symbols continued to be accepted as speculative border areas between the sacred and the profane worlds and endowed with mysterious ontological and epistemic features – that is the believer's mystical properties to connect with the Absolute, and serve as a way of expressing and storing the knowledge of Him. Over time, some symbols lost their value (for example, the early Christian symbol "fish"), while others acquired significant new meanings (for example, the "triangle" and "eye" are relatively new Christian symbols of the Divine). Some symbols are conditional, others are unconditional. Thus, the cross is a conventional symbol of suffering, and the river – a natural symbol of eternal change and flux. The same religious symbol can have dissimilar confessional meanings and be accompanied with various ritual actions. For example, the symbolism

of the Eucharist as a sacrament is interpreted by the Catholics as a transubstantiation of bread and wine into the divine flesh and blood of the Christ, and by the Protestants – as a reminder of the Lord's Supper.

So there is no universal "symbolic form", which would perform religious functions for all the members of society.

Word is the most universal symbol. There are a variety of number of serious language issues required serious decisions and special attention to. In most religions, the idea of "Revelation" as the most important knowledge that the God has revealed to people as the key to the mysteries of life plays the central role. Revelation can be thought in the form of fortune-telling, divination, prophecy, and so on, or in the form of specific texts, dictated from above.

The religions with recorded Revelation are named religions of Scripture unlike religions of Cult. The concept of non-conventional character of a symbol in the sacred text creates a distinctive atmosphere of biased sensitivity to the written word typical for religions of Scripture. It generates the fear of translation of Scripture and generally the fear of any, even formal variations in the expression of sacred meanings.

The religious consciousness fetishes the sacred text, it finds the direct dependence between the success of the religious practices and the correctness of the sacred text. Hence – the increased attention to a pronunciation, spelling and even calligraphy. Non-conventional interpretation of a symbol of Scripture, in practice, led to the conservative-restoration approach to the religious text: the correction of liturgical books was done in accordance to the authoritative ancient lists, the interpretation of obscure words in the lexicon, spelling rules and grammar – all major philological efforts of medieval scribes demanded the appeal to the past, to "the holy antiquity" they sought to save.

Religious symbolic forms are very diverse, so the special task is to classify these forms and to analyze their impact on social life. R. Bellah offers a five-step evolutionary classification of religious systems, based on the degree of differentiation of religious symbol systems. At that R. Bellah does not confirm the inevitability of passing all five stages by any religion in its development, and posits the possibility of coexistence of the earlier forms of religion with later ones within a particular society. Thus, the differentiation of religious symbol systems is represented in the following forms: primitive, archaic, historic, early-modern and modern stages [1].

1. Religiously-symbolic system on a primitive level is characterized with connectedness of the mythical world of a prehistorical man with "the details of the real world." As a part of the religious system, each object can be explained in terms of deeds of mythical creatures. **Primitive religion** is not institutionalized; the church and society are unseparated, religious roles are merged with other social roles. The religious consciousness of primitive religion penetrates into all the forms of social life; the activity of the group is characterized with a religious component carried out in the form of the rituals unifying activities of all members of the group.

Primitive religion is confined to two symbolic forms – a ritual and myth. The social consequences of primitive

religion are interpreted by R. Bellah, referring to E. Durkheim: ritual activity strengthens the solidarity of the community and contributes into inclusion of young people to behavioral norms of the tribe. It gives sacred resources for the transformation of the world, the very fluidity and fragility of primitive religion are an obstacle to radical innovations, although constant revision and change of specific myths and rituals do not exclude reconsideration of religious symbols.

2. A feature of **archaic religion** is "the emergence of a genuine cult with the complex of the gods, priests, divine services, sacrifices, and in some cases, deified or priestly approved royal power. The complex of myths and rituals inherent in primitive religion is stored in the structure of archaic religion, but it is systematized and developed in new ways. As a symbolic system archaic religion is different from a primitive one: notwithstanding that the sacred and profane are still perceived as different ways of arranging of the single universe, the distance between man and divinity is increasing. In the primitive religion a participant of the ritual comes into contact with the deity, conceiving and influencing it, in the archaic religion the ritual included in a coherent worship system determines this distance, and causes the need for special rituals aimed at reducing the gap between man and gods, primarily with the help of sacrifice.

This religious system is functioning in a socially heterogeneous society. It is the most tenacious in the form of national cults, folk religions, in which the national identity has a religious significance.

The appeal to the higher power requires the language different from the daily one to impact the world with the help of transcendental possibilities of words. The system with different requirements for semiotic capacities of language and their use is formed. It regulates different degrees of translation, paraphrase or adaptation of sacred texts. For example, in Judaism the religious canon is composed of the Old Testament books and the Talmud; in the Jewish tradition in the Old Testament the Pentateuch, or Torah are recognized of particularly importance. Until now, in the synagogue, the Torah is read only after the text written by hand on parchment scrolls.

Content-genre hierarchy of texts stimulates the functional differentiation of the language, creates an atmosphere of constant attention to it. Philology in its origins was a service of preservation and transmission of the sacred text in its unchanged oral or written form.

3. In contrast to the primitive and archaic religions, **historic religions** preach the doctrine of the "transcendental" – a completely different sphere of reality, which has the highest value for a religious person. This is the decisive turning point in the history of religion: now the God is opposed to the world and the world is deprived of self-worth. Historical religion is the religion of negation of the world. This is the era of "religions of salvation." The approach to the world, understanding of the sense of human life and organization of religious life are profoundly changed. In this very stage religious organizations of people are separated from other forms of social organization; the church (unlike E. Durkheim's definition as a "community of believers", identical to the clan) is

differentiated from political power although becoming a factor of legitimation of politics.

In this stage, borders of religious worlds are fixed with spreading of their holy books and the languages they are written in. Under such conditions, functional bilingualism is held: the supra-ethnic language common for the cultural-religious world is used in the book-writing culture of the church meanwhile vernacular languages and dialects are used in everyday communication, in some genres of writing.

Along with the spread of religion in the language that requires a constant translation for the mass consciousness of believers (for example, in Islam the translation of the Koran is still not allowed as the canonical pronunciation has a sacred meaning, and in mosques all over the world it is read only in the original Arabic), translations of sacred texts are implemented, turning to be the linguistic basis of supradialectal (national) literary language (for example, a German translation of the New Testament done by M. Luther).

4. **Early modern religion** was characterized with a shift to "the daily worlds as a basic sphere of religious activities." Salvation must be sought directly in worldly activities. Historic religions insisted either on keeping the religious law, or participating in the sacramental system, or performing mystical actions. It was all in one way or another connected with the detachment from the earthly world. After Reformation the worldly activities became the main means of salvation. Thus, early modern religion recasts the idea of historical religious systems in such a way as to impose the religious motivation on secular activities.

Early modern religion recasts the symbolic structure of the historic religion to direct the energy and discipline of religious motivation at transformation of the secular world, which allowed achieving amazing results in economy, politics, education, science, law. The start of modern religion can be attributed to the Enlightenment deism, I. Kant's "religion within the reason." This religious system is characterized with increasing individualism: an individual is a bearer of faith and identity, performing the function of the control of symbolic systems, interpretation of dogmas, responsibility for a search of the sense of life, which is not predestinated any more by belonging to some religious organization.

In Christian bookish-written traditions comments to the texts were compiled to provide some level of understanding of the text (for clergy and laity). In fact, historical commentary is called "exegesis"; language comments (internal) – interpretation of unintelligible words and speech forms – called "hermeneutics". Interpretation of obscure words ("glosses") is combined in a compilation of interpretations (the Glossary).

Polyglots – biblical texts in several languages represented in parallel columns – appeared. Religious needs act as a factor that promotes and deepens the reflection on semantics.

5. The growing secularization of society causes the emergence of **modern religion**, the form of which is not entirely clear, but that is a consequence of relativizing of man's place in nature and the universe due to the development of sciences. "The process of secularization entails not elimination of religion itself, but a change in its

structure and role." Religion is individualistic in nature, and religious symbols are used for comprehending of personal and social actions. However, even in the most advanced societies a significant bottom layer of the primitive and archaic is preserved.

R. Bellah states the shift from early modern to modern religion in majority of the most developed countries. This shift is the road to the search of personally significant ethical guidelines, from the church's commitment – to personal responsibility. The social role of religion is increasing in this regard, since the scope of its activities becomes a sphere of constant improvement of society and personal culture values. A new type of religion is personal and individualistic, but its character is not asocial and apolitical.

Thus, according to Bella, the language of religion in each of its subsequent stages of evolution becomes a matter of individual choice and preferences, what he sees the main cause of the secularization process. Under such circumstances, religious symbols noticeably lose their traditional sacred character and are loaded with ideological meanings. Taking into account the fact that in today's world, the symbolic tools have become the most widely used by medium of mass culture, ideology and politics, the principles of understanding of religious symbols are being deconstructed, and basic religious symbols are estimated in a new way.

### Conclusions

There are reciprocal links between the changes in the religious sphere and social dynamics. Social changes are mainly determined with the processes occurring in religion, traditionally functioning as a factor of integration and social stability. The source of changes in religion losing its integrative power of the society is the dialectical relationships between the sacred and profane spheres. Sacralization as the process of inclusion of consciousness, activity,

behavior, social relations and institutions in the sphere of religious sanction determines unconventionality of sacred texts, deepens the reflection of semantic problems. Secularization (inverse sacralization process) is accompanied with the spread of bilingualism of religious and vernacular languages (the religious canon is needed to be translated for); complexity of genres of written and oral speech, the expansion of semantic resources of the language by creating interpretations and comments of difficult words; multiplication of individual interpretations of religious symbols.

### Bibliography

1. Белла Р. Социология религии / Р. Белла // Американская социология: Перспективы. Проблемы. Методы; пер с англ. В.В. Воронина, Е.В. Зиньковского. – М.: Прогресс, 1972. – С. 268–281.
2. Вебер М. Протестантская этика и дух капитализма / М. Вебер [Электронный ресурс]. – 2004. – Режим доступа: <http://socioworld.narod.ru/>.
3. Дюркгейм Э. Элементарные формы религиозной жизни. Тотемическая система Австралии / Э. Дюркгейм [Электронный ресурс]. – 2003. – Режим доступа: [http://www.etnograf.ru/k\\_pub/durkgejm/durkgejm\\_formrel3.php](http://www.etnograf.ru/k_pub/durkgejm/durkgejm_formrel3.php).
4. Малиновский Б. Магия и религия / Б. Малиновский // Религия и общество: Хрестоматия по социологии религии / Сост. В. И. Гараджа, Е. Д. Руткевич. – Ч. 2. – М.: Аспект-Пресс., 1996. – С. 23-40.
5. Мечковская Н. Язык и религия. Лекции по филологии и истории религий. – М.: Агентство «ФАИР», 1998. – 352 с.
6. Мистика. Религия. Наука. Классики мирового религиоведения. Антология. / Пер. с англ., нем., фр. Сост. и общ. ред. А.Н. Красникова. – М.: Канон+, 1998. – 432 с.
7. Парсонс Т. Современный взгляд на дюркгеймову теорию религии / Т. Парсонс // Религия и общество: Хрестоматия по социологии религии / Сост. В.И. Гараджа, Е.Д. Руткевич. – Ч. 1. – М.: Аспект-Пресс., 1996. – С. 104-115.
8. Сорокин П. Социальная и культурная динамика: исследование изменений в больших системах искусства, истины, этики, права и общественных отношений / П. Сорокин; пер. с англ. В. В. Сапова. – СПб.: РХГИ, 2000. – 1056 с.

М.А. Абисова

РЕЛИГІЙНИЙ ФАКТОР СОЦІАЛЬНОЇ ДИНАМІКИ: СЕМАНТИЧНИЙ АСПЕКТ

Стаття присвячена семантичному аспекту діалектики сакралізації та секуляризації як невід'ємної складової процесу суспільних змін.

*Ключові слова:* мова, профанне, релігія, сакралізація, сакральне, секуляризація, семантика, соціальна динаміка.

М.А. Абисова

РЕЛИГИОЗНЫЙ ФАКТОР СОЦИАЛЬНОЙ ДИНАМИКИ: СЕМАНТИЧЕСКИЙ АСПЕКТ

В статье рассмотрен семантический аспект диалектики сакрализации и секуляризации как неотъемлемой составляющей процесса общественных изменений.

*Ключевые слова:* профанное, религия, сакрализация, сакральное, секуляризация, семантика, социальная динамика, язык.

УДК 1 (091) (045)

А.В. Александрова

## «НЕИНОЕ» НИКОЛАЯ КУЗАНСКОГО И ЕГО ТЕОРЕТИЧЕСКИЙ ПОТЕНЦИАЛ ДЛЯ ИСТОРИИ ФИЛОСОФИИ

Киевский национальный университет имени Тараса Шевченка

*Аннотация.* В статье рассмотрены два подхода в интерпретации «неиного» Николая Кузанского в философских исследованиях А.Ф. Лосева и Х. Шталь.

*Ключевые слова:* неинное, единое, иное, платонизм, христианская апофатика, диалектика.

### Введение

Статья посвящена, в первую очередь, исследованию одного из аспектов философского наследия выдающегося мыслителя Николая Кузанского в ис-

торико-философском прочтении мыслителя XX века Алексея Федоровича Лосева. Во все времена драматического, но всегда творчески насыщенного жизненного пути А.Ф. Лосев демонстрировал глубоко-