

## **НЕВЫРАЗИМОСТЬ В РЕЛИГИИ: НЕКОТОРЫЕ ДИСКУРСИВНЫЕ ПРОЯВЛЕНИЯ**

**Аннотация.** В статье обсуждаются ключевые теоретические утверждения о проблеме религиозного дискурса. Богословские, референтные, лингвистические, операциональные эпистемические черты религиозного дискурса обозреваются в статье в терминах решения центральной интегральной проблемы религиозного дискурса, т.е. проблемы невыразимости религиозного опыта и неприменимости рациональных процедур к правдиво утверждаемым тезисам в религии.

**Ключевые слова:** религиозный дискурс, религиозное познание, религиозное знание, дискурсивная практика, эпистемология.

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## **UNEXPRESSIVITY IN RELIGION: SEVERAL DISCURSIVE MANIFESTATIONS**

**Abstract.** The paper discusses the key theoretical claims on the issue of the religious discourse. The theological, referential, linguistic and operational epistemic features of the religious discourse are observed in the paper in terms of the solution of the core integral problem of the religious discourse, i.e. the problem of unexpressivity of the religious experience and inapplicability of rational procedures onto truth-claiming thesis in religion.

**Key words:** religious discourse, religious cognition, religious knowledge, discourse practice, epistemology.

Any discourse, as a historically, socially and culturally determined speech and thinking activity, is enacted in regard of a communicational and cognitive problem. The need for finding the solution for the explicitly or implicitly posed question or a set of questions is what constructs the content, type, manner and the room for the discourse. The problem forces the epistemic operations and communication. The lack of problem indicates the “over-evidence” of cognitive and communicational operations and makes the discourse superfluous or legitimizing what is already known or discussed.

The solution of such core problem of the discourse is defined in communication which means it depends essentially on cultural, social and psychic experience of communicants. A discourse has some identifying features in a concrete historical and cultural epoch. More over, its content may often be marked as “inappropriate”, “untrue”, “dangerous”, etc. It shows that different core questions grounds the discourse in different historical, cultural and social conditions. Therewith, the type of the communicational and cognitive problem both grounds and integrates discursive items (concepts, images, enunciations, terms, etc.) into the whole communicational-cognitive unit.

In communicational terms the discourse problem is expressed and experienced by agents as a discursive conflict (“lack of means of expression”): an agent faces difficulties in topical developing, expressing and shaping knowledge, affiliating with views and speech norms, evaluating the communicational context, etc. This discursive conflict is an indicator of agentive understanding of the discourse problem and it results from the mo-

tives of an enunciator to adopt his linguistic and textual potential to the changing context, including the existential context.

These considerations come in full force with the core problem of the religious discourse. Further in this paper we are discussing the determination of the religious discourse by its core communicational and cognitive problem.

To clarify, we interpret the religious discourse as a speech and cognitive activity under regulation of historical, cultural and social codes and aiming at shaping, translation and development of the dogmatic thought, sacral worldview and mystic experience.

The religious discourse concerns the matter of belief. This matter appears in rational indefensibility of the true-claiming thesis while the truth is regarded in the religious discourse as the ultimate value. It is referred to the contradiction between the understanding of mystical experience and psychic cognition of supernatural phenomena, on one hand, and the principal inapplicability of rational communication to cognition and translation of such. The emotional experience of the mystical experience is laid here as the subject of communication since the translation (narration and understanding) of this experience is set in this discourse as of the key conditions of reproduction of the religion. But still, the verbal shape of this experience does not principally coincide with its conceptual content and deserves non-rational means of expression while the language and speech are not to be such by default. In other words, the religious experience is “un-narratable”, but at once it must be narrated since the religion essentially needs reproduce the grounding values.

These features of the core problem of the religious discourse let explain its some general patterns.

*Goals of the religious discourse.* This discourse, in functional terms, is the activity for the search and confirmation of ways to set the connection with the Absolute as the terminal reason of the being. Let us mark that the interpretation of the Absolute in religion differs from the conception of the truth in science. The Absolute here is not constructed, it cannot be interpreted as “a subjectivity” (Kierkegaard) or “ideological construction” (Althusser). The Absolute is entity or even “super-entity” which imposes itself to subjective minds. To this extent, the religious discourse is shaped according to the ideal idea and in line with the ways of its “true” perception.

The religious discourse is about description and interpretation of religious worldview claims, including specifying values, norms, ideas, myths and narrations. To represent the knowledge of the basic dogmas, of the institutional construction of religion, of the means of mystical experience and the ways of attainment the Absolute (e.g. Christian Testimonium) means to confirm the verity of this claims, whether explicitly or implicitly. Since the religion supposes the translation of the sacral knowledge (where “sacral” often metaphorically and practically means “for chosen ones”), it is in contemplation to identify the status of addressers: their enunciations are to be perceived as adequate to the content of the religious doctrine and the addressers themselves are to possess the requisite mystical experience or the urgent status in the church hierarchy. The religious personages are clothed with the status of the media between the humans and the Absolute, and therefore are perceived as those with authorities to estimate the set of things. The estimation in the religious discourse is strictly normalizing and confirming the demands for the individual and collective actions. In this regard, the religious discourse is seen as the mechanism of preservation and reproduction of the social and cultural order.

To a certain degree, all religions have the tools for representation of how to organize human experience which can differ from maxima and demands to technological specifications (e.g. the Buddhist “Book of Dead” is a sort of the detailed specifications for dying).

Conservation and translation of sacral knowledge in the religious discourse assume to enact the complex of references which put together the subject domain of the discourse. The link between goals and subjects of the religious discourse is provided, on one hand, by the intentions of communicants (e.g. the idea of God can mean the intention to become eternal and thus, to structure the personal experience in order with canons), and, on another hand, by the social representations and collectively rooted images and stereotypes.

*Subject domain (system of references) of the religious discourse.* Since the core problem of this discourse is the matter of belief, the subject domain includes rationally unknown phenomena which are often treated as “truly existing” and apprehensible through the mystic experience. But in as much as an agent do rationalize phenomena in the discursive practice there is always a conflict between the nature of the subject domain of the religious discourse and its content. To say in other words, the religious discourse is specified with the necessity to talk and think about belief which is principally “unsatisfied” in semiotic terms.

The religious discourse has a rather complex system of references which include at least two levels – apprehensible objects and phenomena (physical, social and psychic ones) and irrational essences which are supposed to be the reason of the first level phenomena. From the religious point of view, the apprehension of physical, social and psychic phenomena as autonomous ones represent a naïve view on the set of things. Semiotically speaking, the objects of the first level are significant for the second level objects which are enacted as “super-signified”.

This feature determines a higher conventionality of religious discourse representants: it is not by chance that it is in the religious discourse where tokens, omens and portents are typical representations of the reality. In a certain degree, the medical discourse has the similar feature as the diagnostic procedures are based on the “significant” (symptomatic) representations of processes and phenomena. But the evident difference is that the medical discourse does not “overpass” the physical (or psychic) reality: some physical phenomena are symptoms of other physical phenomena while the religious discourse is specific with its “ontological shift” in the object domain (the objects of one ontological domain are presented by objects of other ontological domains).

Meanwhile, some types of the religious discourse do not juxtapose physical and spiritual objects, thus their central object is not “spiritual phenomena” but “eternal phenomena”. Such are, for instance, the gods of the Ancient Pantheon which were treated then as “beings” (also “material”), while they differed from other, “terrestrial”, beings in death overcoming and in eternal existence. But still, we deal here with the supernatural category which fixes the breakage of physical laws, the “mystery”, and therefore, does not refer to the physical object domain and represents the reason or the condition of the physical (“material”) world.

The complex system of objects and references of the religious discourse presupposes that the agents have to have the mystical irrational experience or to take attempts to imagine a reality which is different from the apparent one. The system of such imaginaries is exposed as the irrational virtual object domain which dominates in the religious discourse while other object domains are subordinated. It is important to mark that virtuality is taken here as the cognitive condition of an agent (not as an ontological attribute).

The virtual object domain contains the phenomena expressed in categories as “God”, “redemption”, “soul”, and “virtue”. These categories are shaped by the action of belief. In other words, the object of belief is what cannot be perceived rationally and can be experienced as the value. Both the psychic “getting into” the object of the belief and

perceiving of them as real, or even super-real, indicates the system to be specified by the system of virtual and psychic references.

*Language of religious discourse.* Lexical, grammar, stylistic and speech means of the religious discourse are used by the agents to express the referential system. Since the mystical experiences cannot be principally formalized in semiotic systems, the linguistic parameter of the religious discourse represents only a degree of approximation of the utterance in regard to the content of the mystical experience.

The problem of unexpressivity of religious experience tends to be solved at least with two means of the religious language. First, there are plenty euphemisms, tropes, expressive lexical items, fascinating speech facilities, expressive speech acts, judgments nominatives which are widely used in the religious discourse. These means contribute to the "intuitional comprehension" of the utterance reference. The emotional and intuitional reference helps interiorize the conceptual content of the religious discourse. Second, the dogmatic aspect of the religious discourse is seen in active usage of "conservative" linguistic strategies such as the usage of outdated lexical items, specific religious terms, sacral texts citing. "The conservation" of the linguistic usage (and therefore, of semantic structures) contributes to retain the dogmatic potential of the discourse and to orient at the precise reproduction of the sacral text containing the "true value".

Meanwhile, being esthetically rich and emotionally abundant, the religious discourse excludes invective, taboo or downgraded items. It is resulted from the sacral, "godlike", ultimate "nature" of referential system of the discourse. Such treatment to the character of references in religious communication does not redound to represent them in "down-to-earth" terms, since they are always "over" the mundane and deserve specific nominations and epithets.

In terms of speech acts, the religious discourse is rich with performative utterances. To use sacral nominations and texts means to enact the mystical transcendent experience, a kind of conjuring the world. Pragmatically, prayers, mantras, invocations, etc. are to make an attempt of irrational passing from mundane to sacral and mystical. The performativity of the religious discourse is also in abundant usage of institutionally performed utterances. Cursing, clerication, repentance, chrismation, confession are verbalized and suggest the cliché utterances; in certain cases (confession, anathema, and invocation) are exceptionally reduced to speech acts. It makes us compare the religious discourse with the juridical or, partly, political discourses which also use speech acts as full-rate institutional acts.

*Epistemic operations of the religious discourse.* What is specific to the religious discourse is an open articulation of norms and values of life and religious communication. The religious discourse fully disposes the argumentation means. One of typical epistemic operation of the religious discourse is interpretation (e.g. of the sacral text). The argumentation helps adopt the canonic and dogmatic grounds of the religious doctrine to the concrete mundane situations. The religious discourse is constructed to the extent that every routine situation can be evaluated in doctrine terms, while arguments back the judgment acts.

Many authors [1; 2; 3; 4; 5] refer to the presumption of personal verity as one of the key features of the religious discourse. The utterances of the religious agent can be treated as "false" or "true", "right" or "wrong" but never as "deluding" or "manipulating". An agent, from the point of religious discursive practice, can be wrong but never lies if he or she argues in the religious discourse "regime". It exclusively makes the religious discourse differ from the political discourse and conciliates it with the scientific discourse. Let us mark that the verity of an interpreting utterance in the religious dis-

course is linked to the authentic meaning of the sacral text knowledge which is shared in a social milieu imposed with the certain mystical experience.

*Generalization and concretization* are used in the religious discourse to distinguish the classes of phenomena in the object domain and to operate with abstract nominations. The meaning of abstract notions ("God", "redemption", "sin", "good", "evil") is often represented in concretized utterances which inductively adopt them to everyday situations. And otherwise, everyday situations are deductively generalized in the religious discourse to let unify all possible actions, intentions and interests of religious communicants and to bring them together to the general religious ideological framework.

The operations of generalization and concretization in the religious discourse function to demonstrate not only real but also due states of things. The synchronous usage of the both operations makes religious texts conform the standards of "moral reflection" when a case (concretization) is compared with an absolute value (generalization). Moreover, the concrete is often treated in the religious discourse as a derivative from the general (the Absolute). This is what makes the religious discourse different from the political discourse with its tendency to construct the general as the sum of concrete cases (compare religious "We all are under the God" and political "The nation depends on your choice").

Categorization is another frequent operation in the religious discourse. Both for political and religious discourse it is common to use the categories of "us" and "them". In religion, "us" refers to the individuals of the same confession or religion or even all believers, while "them" refers to those of other confessions, religion or unbelievers.

The "supernatural beings" are often categorized, too. There are religions where it is normal to hierarchize "the upper beings" in order of the degree of their sacrality and closeness to the Absolute. Moreover, the religious discourse tends to distribute categorical statuses among the physical and social objects. It orders in a special way the physical objects according to their place in religious narratives, the individuals according to their "goodness", and the clergy according to the way and intensity of the mystical experience).

Convention as the epistemic operation is aligned with the normalization aspect of the religious discourse. As distinct from other types of discourse and due to the high dogmatic degree, it almost does not operate with the conventional norms. Its normalization potential is shaped with rather decisive and put into writing prescriptions, principles and commandments. But still. The religious discourse avoids using sharp definitions of terms. It can be explained by the institutional attitude to use more efficient (in terms of impact and interiorization) means such as "ipse dixit" arguments, appeals to emotions and canons. The definitional operation typify the rational cognition which does not mark the religious discourse with its principles of emotional, existential and experiential interpellation of addresses into the institutional field of religion.

*Conclusion.* The teleology, reference system, language and epistemic operations of the religious discourse represent its "inner tension" and attempts to express the mystical experience in language, and these attempts are a priori forlorn. At the same time, the religious discourse is a highly reflective activity, but its reflectivity does not exclusively reduce to the rational schemata of validation and explanation (the theological discourse) but also refers to the dogmatic norms of interpretation (the mythological discourse).

The condition of belief exacts of an agent an internal force to enact the religious discursive practice, while in other institutional discourses it is common to use an external constraint for the agents' discursive practices.

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### **К КРИТИКЕ БАЗОВЫХ ПОНЯТИЙ СОЦИОЛОГИИ РЕЛИГИИ: «РЕЛИГИОЗНОСТЬ»**

**Аннотация.** Статья посвящена критике базовых понятий социологии религии на примере понятия «религиозность» и представляет три возможных стратегии критики этого понятия.

**Ключевые слова:** социология религии, религиоведение, критика базовых понятий.

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### **TOWARDS CRITIQUE FOR BASIC CONCEPTS IN SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION: «RELIGIOSITY»**

**Abstract.** This article includes a critique of the basic concepts of sociology of religion at the example of the concept of religiosity and presents three possible strategies of criticism of this concept.

**Key words:** sociology of religion, religion studies, critics of basic concepts.

Вне зависимости от различного типа теоретических конструкций, устанавливающих корректное – в том или ином смысле – соотношение между социологией религии и религиоведением, базовые понятия социологии религии аксиоматизируются в рамках собственно социологии религии и не становятся предметом осмысленного рассуждения. В каком-то смысле можно утверждать, что «родовой травмой» религиоведения является проблема определения «религии» (лишь частично снимаемой введением типологии определений – множественное число! – религии), в пределе приводящей исследователя к отказу от работы с проблематикой общих понятий.

Базовые понятия социологии религии, подобно «религии» для религиоведа, оказываются для социолога религии своего рода «табу», зачастую употребляются к месту и не к месту (как божба в бытовом религиозном дискурсе), а сомнение в их осмысленности или хотя бы однозначности приводит критически настроенного исследователя в область само собой разумеющихся норм, «бессознательное» науки.