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## RATIONALIZATION OF WORSHIP ACTS AS A CONVERGENT PROCESS IN MODERN RELIGIOUS LIFE

**Summary.** This paper seeks to understand the rationalization of religious worship acts in the contemporary society. We know that in modern sociology and philosophy many theorists have argued that rationalization refers to the replacement of traditional values and emotions as motivators for behavior in society by their rational explanation. The report is only about one of the trends in the religious life of modern society that we call convergent process generated by the changes taking place in globalizing society.

**Key words:** religion, rationalization of religious worship, convergent process.

We know that modern society is marked by increasing rationalism, i.e. process wherein precise calculation of means, ends, and goals spreads into all areas of the social life.

We would like to begin this paper with a quotation from the article “Rationality and Religious Commitment” by Robert Audi: “Rationality is not just a matter of normative acceptability of beliefs; rationality does not merely consist in evidence sufficient to dispel doubts. Rationality is a more permissive notion than many think. It is also highly comprehensive: it concerns not only intellect but also attitudes, values, motivation, emotions, and more. Religious commitment is determined not only by that we believe in or not even by our actions based on our beliefs. It is the main guideline in life, a matter of many connected elements: of faith, of intellect and will, of our relations with others, even of emotional, aesthetic, and sociopolitical aspects of our lives” [1].

Accepting this thought as the way to research into other aspects of correlation between rationality and religions, anyone could ask a question: “What does “and more” mean? Is it unlimited process in the philosophical sense, or we have only a claim. As Lara Buchak wrote about it, “in the course of this discussion several key claims have emerged. The first is that there are many ways – both religious and secular – of discovering and apprehending our moral obligations. In harmony with this claim, Audi advocates for a theory of divine commandability rather than divine commandedness (though he leaves open other possibilities), since the former allows that our obligations can be based on nontheological grounds. The final claim is that classical theism is consistent with most normative ethical positions held by contemporary

philosophers: classical theism generally provides a lot of latitude in this domain” [2].

For further discussion of this issue, I give the judgment of the priest A. Agapov about the rites, corresponding with the fact that in today’s Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) it isn’t obligatory to bow, although the bows have always been the most usual commonplace in it. “Why - he asked - the Church stood for traditional ceremonial culture? Apparently, it is a rite of communication, mutual convergence of all the elements of the world order and human life. Through the symbol of rite and visible, tangible world the person looks for contacts with the world of heaven (and believes that he would find!), the world that under no circumstances fits the logic of our rational schemes. Surprisingly, to fulfill this difficult task of crossing the border between the earthly and the heavenly, visible and not visible the rite rarely uses symbolic means, that are quite easy for us to understand – “childish”, as we could call them. These simple and at the same time important ritual actions also include the bows” [3].

Offering several reasons for the need for the bows in general rational sense, he concludes: “The bow shows the paradox of the Christian faith. I bow to God, because it is my belief through suffering (or education), and I admit that it is right and I am not ashamed of it: for example – by giving a bow I express my freedom” [3].

I use the theistic rational thesis about the necessity of bows in the ROC as the point to suppose that secular arguments need this action to distinguish between two levels of perception of this ceremony as a symbolic act, and at the same time, as a very simple “childish” perception of the need to bow to God. It should be noted also that the arguments of the priests of the Russian Orthodox Church are addressed to those members of the church community who generally do not see anything of the divine in the rites, and even oppose to the bows as a servile habit, and can treat other rites as something false and hypocritical. Now I leave aside the “obryadoverie” (the faith in rites) as a characteristic of the Russian Orthodox Church believers, as the function of traditional rites performing concerns mainly priest. Of course it is difficult to examine the effectiveness of this kind of argument.

But I admit that such a priest knows about his congregation quite a lot and the fact that he is given the floor on the Orthodox mass media (MSM) is evidence

of his sufficient skill of communication with the church people on the subject.

I would like to offer some hypothetical reasons for the church members' need for giving bows in the church. That is, I am going to give those arguments for the benefit of bows that could be used by any ordinary person in his reasoning not from the point of the theistic rationality. Such argumentation could be much more convincing for the coreligionists if supplemented by the other kinds of reasons for the good of bows.

Let us find examples in the history of religions. As far as we know, all faiths, from primitive beliefs to all traditional religions, all modern denominations, including the newest religions perform certain complex actions (or omissions). These actions are very diverse: dance, recitation of certain texts, glossolalia, lying down, drinking, eating, etc., including bows. In addition to symbolic value (the connection of the two worlds: the lower and the higher, the visible and the invisible), their effect varies from encouraging the faith to what we may now call the physical exercises or gymnastics. Now let us pay attention only to a bow as a component of religious rites.

I should emphasize that particular importance of this ritual action is indicated by the fact that in the Russian language the word "pokloneniye" (worship) is derived from the word "poklon" (bow) and is used to describe any religion or faith, from the primitive beliefs to the various modern religions. It seems to us, that any religious cult (as a combination of religiously significant actions) may include elements that contribute to the deterioration in the believers' perception of the religious meaning of the ritual. For example, prolonged standing during the liturgy, prolonged kneeling during prayers, long lying before the subject of worship or a long crawl on pilgrimage, etc. All this can cause overstrain of muscles or even convulsions, or rather more negative effects on the human body.

But it is known that bowing is the basis of any health-enhancing exercises. They not only strengthen the muscles of the back, but have a good effect on all the organs of the human body. Breathing properly, a bowing person (a worshiper) improves his lungs, strengthens hematopoietic organs and the immune system. Thus, the bow shouldn't be eliminated from religious and ritual practices. Besides its religious meaning they have effects on health and viability. Speaking in philosophical language, apart from the theistic rationality we can use as well scientifically grounded (in this case, only medical) argument to justify the need for bows during divine service (there is no doubt about its rationality until the philosopher meets such a kind of "argument"). But these reasons can concern any ritual act that presupposes different kinds of movements, or even the lack of them (omission). All the movements together or separately can be seen as an exercise for the body, which can be recommended for a believer (an im-

proving of health, fitness, and so on) in terms of health expediency.

Our attempt to use the hypothetical arguments for the bows gives an example of very popular in the media judgments indicating that in addition to the existing rationalization of religious beliefs and commitments, the modern philosopher has to note the rapidly forming complex of rational religious acts. Not to make unsubstantiated statements, I should give some examples of such reasoning common in the media including Ukrainian ones in the recent years.

- Yoga is an antidepressant, available for people of different ages. The purpose for all kinds of yoga is to strengthen physical health, improve mental abilities, give physical balance and form stable opinions.
- If you still do not keep the fast, it is not necessarily the matter of religion only. Vegetarian food helps bring your digestive system in order, eliminate toxins from the body, improve health in general. Each asana is aimed not only at spiritual perfection but also does good to health. It is no mere chance that the ritual positions of body are practiced in all world religions.
- Those people who regularly attend church and pray in it, live longer than those who reject religion. It is not surprising: prayers are expressed in kind words, soothe the soul, inspire faith and love for others.
- The scientists have already known that meditation is associated with the entire set of positive factors.
- New research suggests the benefit of religion for mental health. American women believe that prayer helps to be slim. In the US the number of the Christian weight loss program participants is growing. They combine exercise and diet discussion with prayer, asking the divine power to help them overcome bad habits.
- As the Italian researchers have shown, religion and faith in God help to slow down the progress of Alzheimer's disease. Doctors say that going to church is useful.
- "Experts have clearly shown that our ancestors were right when they incantations and prayers in the treatment. The "good" vocabulary that scientists in Krasnoyarsk have begun to use in their therapy really helps. "Sincerely reciting the prayer, a person escapes from reality in his mind and it has a good effect on his health. The same effect was recorded in relation to infants aged six months and younger. Therefore the words in the Bible, "be like children, and then you will be saved," can be regarded as a specific physical therapeutic advice "[4].
- Baptizing: water extravaganza miracle. On January 19 all Orthodox denominations celebrate Epiphany. On this day, water changes its physical properties and becomes truly a miracle not only in water bodies but also in a usual washbasin. Water acquires



“pristine property of incorruptibility” and does not lose its freshness. Water acquires the ability to cure diseases, to sanctify a person with divine grace. Specialists in nuclear physics involved in research into cosmic radiation conducted long-term observations and recorded that each year on January 18-19 the descending of neutron flux on earth takes place. As the scientists have found out a long time ago, intense neutron fluxes have got the sterilizing properties [5]. By the way, the person who explained the miracle was Leonid Galitsin, whom journalists represent as “researcher and philosopher”.

- Scientists have already confirmed the benefit of male circumcision in childhood. In the regions where such a rite is commonly performed, the number of gynecological diseases is reduced. Male circumcision helps to practice good hygiene. Actual scientific evidence demonstrates the potential medical benefits of circumcision of the newborn boys.

Could the procedures of the linguistic analysis be applied to such a kind of judgments so easily, as to those judgments that constitute the transcendental aspects of any faith? Are these judgments as meaningful as those evaluating the ethical soundness of religious prescriptions? The problem concerns a relatively new form of explanation of the supernatural by means of the rational. This supernatural cannot be reduced to religion as such, and today the rational may be more convincing for some believers, who do not care much for the theological meaning of the ritual aspects of church life.

But in light of analytic philosophy, expert judgment is a sufficient criterion of truth in justifying the significance of knowledge, including those about the supernatural. Therefore, here we can speak about the rational inspection judgments that establish scientific rationality. The problem is to determine how they can be rational, if they explain irrational religious perception of reality, the religious world view. It is from the religious explanation of the world, more precisely from the regulations formed by it, that the need for the commission of worship acts rises. And, as you know, for the time being the religious basis only for performing the rites was quite sufficient. Of course, it was religious rationality that contributed to accumulating facts about diseases or provided healing, ethical rationality of religion had an effect on general and particular ritual actions (Day of Atonement, Easter, kissing, mutual bows, etc. - we are sure that everyone who is reading this paper could give a number of similar examples). By moral behavior you please God and hope for his mercy in return. But ethical religious rationality not necessarily loses its significance now being supplemented by rational science.

Abovementioned examples show several features of this new rationality: 1) it is impossible to imagine a religion, that doesn't interrelate with this rationality; 2)

it is addressed almost to all religious practices; 3) and there is no one particular ritual that could be derived from such arguments.

Making the analysis of the importance of rational judgments of this kind, on the one hand, I refer to them just as to one of the modern aspects of the rationalization of religion, but on the other hand, I have to make the following observations.

1) I understand that such “scientific” recommendations are important for many people because they make them do physical exercise, and it is especially good for those who have no motivation for physical activity. But, most of them are unlikely to read philosophical articles on rationality.

2) The basic philosophical freedom requires of us exactly the same relation to the studied type of rationality, as to any other conclusions and concepts, including those relating to religion in general and to specific religions and their images in particular.

3) I deliberately have not given here the arguments for new scientific “health” practices (“group health”, “fasting” diet followers, salt-free diet followers, etc.) In these new organizations health is the main purpose of their activities and religious rationality only helps to achieve it. Although methods of rationalizing health in many ways are similar to the medical rationality, in fact such practices are closely connected with religious sphere. The problem of their interrelation and mutual influence is of particular interest.

4) In addition, I admit that in practice, in some cases, the beneficial influence of scientific rationality of religious rites is not properly coordinated with their religious significance and psychotherapeutic appropriateness of their use.

5) It is interesting also that according to many studies on the history of religion that religious practices precede religious meaning, the theoretical (rational) level of religion. Religious practices are the foundation and the source of religion: ritual precedes its interpretation. If to apply this idea to the present day reality I can suppose that the scientific rationalization is able to cause secularization of ritual actions. According to the Hegelian dialectics it is most probably. But the last point is not the problem of analytic philosophy.

It can seem that it is the easiest thing to subject such a rationalization of religious conduct to verification by experiment, scientific experience. But it appears that religious rationalization is not verifiable by science, and even often contradicts it.

Let us mention a few examples.

1) Last year physicians recorded poisoning of people after drinking water from groundwater sources at Epiphany Mass near the Archangel Michael Church in Irkutsk. Swimming in cold water at Epiphany can cause hypertensive crisis. Every year on Epiphany Day more

people drown or die from hypothermia than on any other winter holiday.

2) A few years ago the Catholics in Mexico began to attend the church service in the main cathedral of the city in sanitary masks to protect themselves from the flu viruses. Attempts to make laypeople to observe the fast with monastic austerity may end in failure. It is necessary to keep fasts carefully, because the immunity can weaken as a result of hunger. Children, pregnant women, people with chronic diseases are allowed not to keep the fast. Beans and nuts can't be a good substitute for meat.

I think that the list of such medical restrictions is quite extensive. Not only in the meaning that "there is an equal reaction to every action", but also in any other logical relation.

Supporters and opponents of medical appropriateness of religious worship have heated debate, but such a debate is very similar to the discussion on the existence of God and the need for religion in general. Lilli Cannon's «debate» about infant circumcision is a good example of such theoretical arguments. The word «debate» is quoted for summarizing the parties' arguments. Lilli Cannon arrives at the following conclusion: "That's it. That's why you rarely see a "balanced" site about circumcision – there is no balanced view of it. Some people are for circumcision because they have unquestioningly accepted cultural myths, or they make money from circumcision, or don't want to disturb their colleagues who make money from it, or are perverts who fetishes circumcision. Other people are against circumcision because they are fully informed on the ethical, moral, physical, psychological and sexual reasons why infant circumcision is wrong. See which group you fit in, and then check your motives. If your reasons fit into the Pro-Circumcision group, face reality with honesty and maturity. Are you rationalizing and defending a decision you made in ignorance so that you don't have to feel bad about yourself, your spouse, or what you did to your child? Then it's not that circumcision is good – it's that you don't want to feel bad. Those who are against circumcision are not trying to offend or hurt your feelings, but the facts don't lie. There is no reason good enough to cut off part of an infant's healthy penis" [6].

Such disputes resemble the medieval debates, like those among the Christians, e.g. what kind of bread it is better to use during the Holy Communion: fresh or stale, or among physicians – which hand is better for getting blood tested: left or right. The only difference between such positions is that today debates use scientific (in this case, medical) arguments as a decisive factor. Obviously, the need for this kind of argument is related to the general changes in the modern society, particularly to the higher level of education of the discussion participants. But we do not see changes in psychological characteristics of the disputants. It is clear that the arguments in the dispute

are selected arbitrarily, and the choice is motivated not so much by scientific cogency as by current psychological attitudes of participants.

From the position of philosophical anthropology the importance of such judgments is not only in rationalizing, justifying the usefulness of religious prescriptions in compliance with religious acts, but also in their values for a particular believer in his daily religious practice, and even in this case the arguments for the practice from the point of medical appropriateness are questionable.

On the one hand, these "scientifically" valid views on the essence of certain religious practices can enhance the willingness of believers to follow them, but on the other hand, the word "scientific" may cause doubt as to the religious significance of these actions (e.g. circumcision as the sign of Testament between Abraham and God). And doubts as to the religious significance of a rite may cause its secularization. The problem of secularization of religious acts reveals another level of degradation of religion in general. The third aspect lets the religious and "scientific" views on the nature of religious rites exist equally, without interfering with each other; any believer can freely choose himself whether to perform any ritual or not.

Since nearly all the judgments given in the article are debatable, I would like to note that all attempts to justify the need for observing the religious rituals with the help of scientific rationalization (in this case health, although there are many similar judgments appealing to physics, chemistry, biology, etc. in my opinion, does not have basic value) from the epistemological point of view are highly controversial, but in terms of ontology - are quite arbitrary to serve as a pattern or regularity. Obviously, the paper is only about one of the trends in the religious life of modern society that I call convergent and divergent processes generated by the changes taking place in globalizing society.

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**Никитченко Е.Э. Рационализация культовой практики как конвергентный процесс в современной религиозной жизни. – Статья.**

**Аннотация.** В статье описывается тенденция в современной религиозной жизни - рационализация культовой практики, которая характеризуется признаком наличия более чем в одной религии, как конвергентный процесс смены в сознании значительного числа верующих установок по поводу необходимости отправления культа и его элементов, которые выходят за пределы сугубо религиозного отношения к религиозным институтам.

**Ключевые слова:** религия, рационализация культовой практики, конвергентный процесс.

**Никитченко О.Е. Раціоналізація культової практики як конвергентний процес у сучасному релігійному житті. – Стаття.**

**Анотація.** В статті йдеться про сучасну тенденцію у релігійному житті світу – раціоналізацію культової практики, що характеризується за ознакою притаманності більш ніж однієї релігії, як конвергентний процес зміни у свідомості значущої кількості віруючих установ з обґрунтувань щодо необхідності відправлення елементів культу, чи його як цілого, що виходять за межі суто релігійного ставлення до цієї релігійної інституції.

**Ключові слова:** релігія, раціоналізація культової практики, конвергентний процес.