

## **Destructiveness as a Disfunction of Religious Identity: A Comment on the Methodology of Research into New Religious Movements**

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**Abstract:** In the article, the problem of new religious movements (NRM) is regarded as a specific form of modern religiosity, shaped under the influence of the deconstruction of traditional religious normative conventions. The special attention is paid to the identification processes, influenced by NRMs, particularly to such controversial aspects as its destructive potential for the human personality. Authors suggest that the destructiveness emerges at the stage of interpreting religious experience and is reinforced by its ritual and institutional organization in the religious act.

**Key words:** New religious movements • Identity • Religious experience • Religious act

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### **INTRODUCTION**

It seems to be very difficult to talk about religious identity at a time when subject and subjectivity are in crisis: in the situation of anonymity, decentration and splitting of man, why continue the discourse of the self and self-identity? At the same time, the search for identity has already become a dominant factor of modernity. In the context of the “second individualistic revolution” (to use Gilles Lipovetski's term) [1], the search for identity determines all our individual and social actions. Moreover, for many modern philosophers, the notion of identity is a kind of reference point for the analysis and evaluation of modern social life. Here, religious identification as a process of searching and finding one's own religious identity occupies a prominent place.

The XXth century was an epoch of religious controversies, a time both of a great downfall and a great upsurge of religions and religiosity [2, 3]. It was a time of substantial changes in the religious history of mankind, a time of the flourishing of global antireligious propaganda, when people lost their orientation in the world of faith, as well as the epoch of the all-time largest number of new religious movements. The topic of the present article is one of the most important factors of this change: the expansion of so called “new religious movements”, a unique phenomenon which has become a characteristic feature of the globalized era.

Some decades ago, in the middle and the second half of the XX century, the idea of modernization dominated the minds of social scientists. Likewise, representatives of the entire ideological spectrum regarded the historical process as something universal, that is, it was generally accepted that all nations and cultures go one and the same path to one and the same goal. The process of secularization (in its various versions and interpretations) was analyzed in a similar way, by Western as well as by Russian researchers of religion [4, 5]. Later, Eastern scholars, facing the shift of ideological landmarks, unanimously interpreted modernization as westernization, i.e. development according to Western models, accompanied by secularization [6, 7].

At the same time, the clash between the West and traditional societies in the second half of the XX century generated the opposition of West-centrism and traditionalism caused by the evident resistance of some non-western societies to Western ideas and values. It seems that the cause of this resistance is clear: the fact that from the modern Western secular point of view, the religious principles and roots of culture as a whole are often ignored.

Various social roles, played today by the subject, sometimes conflict with each other because the sets of subjects' roles may be “overfull”. This leads to the emergence of a plentitude of identities, sometimes not coordinated with each other. Social functions, as well as

social behaviour determined by social status, seem to demand a certain set of identities; however, identity may, in its turn, be determined not so much by a free choice, but rather by a socially defined identification, i.e., the behavioural aspect of social status. Thus, in a country with a traditional religious structure, public posts are to be occupied by people with traditional religious identity; other situations are principally impossible. For example, in Russia, notwithstanding its centuries-long multi-confessionality, the absolute majority of respondents say that they are unable to imagine a President of the Russian Federation belonging to any but the Orthodox religion.

However, this situation is nothing more than a residue of a traditional process of self-identification, of social processes typical for a pre-modern era, where individual freedom depended on responsibility before society. Today, man is entangled into a network of manifold identities, where it is very hard to find the proper "Self".

The crisis of identity is manifested in the merging of different levels and layers of identity: thus, concerning religious identity, in Russia the Orthodox identity-regarded by many as a tribute to "traditional culture" and thus becoming cultural rather than religious identity-coexists with an identity of an esoteric, mystic type. This is clearly demonstrated by sociological surveys: trying to describe religious world pictures of Russians, researches encounter side by side with Orthodoxy such exotic views as polytheism, pantheism, magism, even fetishism, etc.

But the problem is not only that in the everyday practice of traditional confessions (in so called "popular Orthodoxy", for example) we discover the coexistence of incongruous, sometimes contradictory identities, but also that it is impossible now to formulate what the "normal", "true" identity is.

**Some Characteristic Features of Today's Religious Situation and NRMs:** The modern religious situation (even interpreted from an empirical viewpoint as a set of religious practices at a certain territory) is characterized by a huge variety of religious formations, stepping over the bounds of local cultures, challenging traditional confessions. Many of them claim they bring a new, universal message, a synthesis of the religious history of mankind. The religious situation is always analyzed considering historical tendencies, but the result of this analysis, taking into account the frequency, with which these new movements emerge, is valid only for the present moment.

The religious situation in the first decade of the XXI<sup>th</sup> century is characterized by several specific features. First, as a result of an ideological shift, we see the development of religious "anomy." It is caused by the loss of the traditional system of religious values; at the same time, sets of moral codes, having their source in religion, can no longer reproduce themselves as earlier. The outward manifestations of religiosity (attending services, for example) become less and less intensive. At the same time, confessional confrontations are evidently aggravated and fundamentalist and extremist tendencies increase. We can also note the growth of religious phobias (usually of "terrorism" and "sects"), accompanied by often a too sensitive reaction of the mass consciousness towards everything connected with religion (particularly in two-or multiconfessional regions).

In the situation of the proclaimed "crisis of religiosity", new religious movements spread more and more widely. However, despite its topicality, this phenomenon has not been properly investigated yet because scholars are facing difficulties not only in trying to define its essence or classify its forms but even in designating it adequately [8]. In Russia, for example, scholars studying NRMs use different names for them: sect, cult (often with the addition of "destructive", "totalitarian"), new religious movement. In this case, the way in which the subject is designated characterizes not so much its essence as the researcher's attitude towards it. Thus, the term "totalitarian sect" introduced by Alexander Dvorkin reflects a conception according to which the specific feature of new religious movements is a strong inner hierarchy, where methods of mind control are used by sect leaders, which, in its turn, results in the suppression of the free will of sect members and total control over their thinking and emotions [9]. This description, nevertheless, is not appropriate for many NRMs (from the New Age to followers of Porfiry Ivanov). The term "destructive cult" is not as specific, but it also limits the sphere of NRM research to those groups which negatively influence their adepts. But destructive influence (in the modern sense) can be found in some traditional religious practices and, vice versa, many new religious groups are far from being destructive. At the same time, the neutral term "new religious movements" is sometimes a means for veiling evident danger present in "non-traditional", deviant forms of religiosity. That's why it's very important to define the subject of research-the processes which result in the emerging of NRMs and which made them popular, the specific features of these

movements,-or the factors which make religions (not only new ones) destructive. And it is not reasonable, when studying religious destructiveness, to define it institutionally (in terms of organization, movement, sect, etc.).

All human life, social behaviour and social interaction strongly depend on cultural norms formed in the past. Deviations exists in all spheres of social life; however, they are punished (or rewarded) in unequal measure. Every innovation is also a deviation-the evidence for this thesis can be found in the history of various religious organizations-the Christian church, for example.

A similar situation characterizes religious life as well. Religion is a sphere highly permeated by various normative conventions; in the course of time, these conventions, change at the most slowest pace (in traditional religions) as compared to other spheres of social life, if they change at all. Thus, one of the greatest challenges of modernity is the conflict between fixed religious norms, forming the basis of traditional religious life, sanctified by highest religious authorities and because of that thought as absolutely unchangeable and the huge changes occurring in all other spheres of modern culture.

What does it mean to be a truly religious person today? Is it the confession of certain creed or articles of faith (which ones? there are many opinions on this); or practicing religion, partaking in the life of a religious community, in sacraments (in what way and in what degree?); or the reproduction of a certain discourse and way of life (but how can this indicate the level and quality of inner religiosity?); or, finally, certain moral principles (but if so, the parameters of what we understand as religion will inevitably become too broad)? Earlier, when to belong to the Church meant to be socialized, to be a part of society, the mechanisms and criteria of identification were given at the universal social level and given rather strictly. Much has been written about the *social* aspects of, for example, the dogmatic formulation of the Church's doctrine, when the faith turned into a set of clear normative formulas that did not allow the slightest variation, as well as about the rigid ritual and canonical regulation of all spheres of life in medieval Christian society. Here, self-identification as a Christian, a member of the Church, meant the unconditional acceptance of the system of dogmatic and canonical prescriptions of the Church as a norm or attainable ideal. This system was established at the level of the social system as a whole

and at the level of the state in particular. The Church, however, understood this system ontologically. In this situation, the Church and society are inseparable. Man can not position himself outside society and cultural and social institutions "continue" themselves in religion (the most striking example of which is the Muslim *ummah*). Here religion functions as a kind of social and cultural totality. When one identifies himself exclusively with one type of religiosity, this inevitably results in confronting all other types as alien and even hostile. The problem is that *traditional* religiosity knows only this type of religious identification. In this connection, it is appropriate to remember the thesis of Charles Taylor that secularization is not the situation in which faith is inevitably abandoned, but occurs when faith loses its absolutist place in culture and becomes a matter of free choice: "The belief in God is no longer axiomatic. There are alternatives" [3]. The holistic world view that had been a common background implicitly shared by all people in traditional societies ("naïve" faith) is substituted by a reflexive standpoint, which means questioning the basic beliefs and, consequently, the problematization of faith and the clash of different world concepts. Belief irrevocably becomes a private matter. Only in the time of modernity, of "man's maturity", man dares to identify himself his own religiosity, which is connected with many difficulties.

**Religious Identity: Various Dimensions:** The destruction of a religious tradition is, first of all, the process when the elements of this tradition, naturally integrated into a system of world views, cultural norms and social relations are put in an alien context. The problem is that the life world of man of modernity is not compatible with the life world of man of traditional culture. The former is bound to deconstruct the religious traditions having been formed during ages and configure from them more or less eclectic new formations. Principally, religious identification is actualized in two parallel directions: firstly, when personal moral structure is identified with that accepted in a certain religious community; secondly, when the norms of religious behaviour of a certain we-group are accepted by the subject. Identification as a multi-stage process existed in all times; however, in various epochs, emphasis was laid on different concepts of man's personality. And if the philosophy of the classical age highly appreciates the "total", identical "Self", today's science, pointing out the multi-faceted and multi-layered structure of man and the diversity of social roles and identities, de-identifies him.

Thus, if we define polyidentity as a pathological identity, it is worth mentioning that such pathological forms occurred in every age. Following E. Erikson, the famous psychologist and a leading researcher on the problems of identity, identity crisis means, first and foremost, the loss of self-understanding; for young people, it is a form of the adolescence process, a way of creating a new self-conception by changing an old way of life, but for an adolescent, these processes may be pathological. Identification disorders are connected with the disfunction of emotional and cognitive processes of young people's non-conscious or conscious identification of themselves with a group as a model, which helps them master various kinds of social activity, to acquire and transform religious norms and values, to take social roles.

Thus, according to chosen parameters of religiosity, religious identity can be treated in various ways: -an institutional, traditional identity is opposed to a non-institutional, non-traditional one [10]. In this case, the youth is unwilling to enter "traditional societal structures", not being aware that in many NRMs, there is a much more structured and formalized system; -a traditional religious identity, i.e. transmitted during the socialization process as a tradition (which is a characteristic of the Church in the Troeltsch-Weber classification)-so called "true, old believers", give place to "new believers", who form a new identity through personal religious search, as well as being influenced by society, media, state, social groups, etc.; -a quasi-religious identity also finds its place, more and more deeply penetrating society and opposing itself to religious identity as such; quasi-religious organizations are regarded by many authors as NRMs; -finally, new religious movements and organizations form new self-identification processes, developing outside the culture-forming identity in its traditional variant; the most dangerous here is the destruction of socially important values, such as family, state, community.

However, religious identity is a much more complicated phenomenon. With Ch. Glock and Ch. Stark, we can single out dimensions of religiosity and, in each of them, self-identification processes are formed in an independent, specific context [11]. Thus, the following dimensions can be defined: -the ritual dimension, where identification is carried out according to the fact of taking part in social practices of a certain confession-the behaviour of NRM members here, as a rule, is regulated

by sets of values different from those of the wider society and often opposed to them; -the ideological dimension, adherence to the creed of the group, closely connected with doctrinal justification of self-identification- incidentally, the ideologies of many NRMs have a distinct antisocial trend, which perfectly resonates with rebellious young hearts (the negation of established social order and slight anarchism are normal for the adolescence process and this plays into the hands of destructive cults); -the empirical dimension, where identification processes are connected with religious experience-many NRMs cultivate specific forms of religious experience and develop abilities for its deepening and repetition; -the intellectual dimension, i.e., the intellectual side of belief, connected with the reinforcing of acquired religious identity by means of reading literature on the basic issues of the chosen religion or conversations with a teacher- here, we encounter guruism as a characteristic feature of NRMs; -and, at last, integrative dimension, which is the way of peoples' everyday interrelation, its ethical dimension (this may indicate the level of individual religiosity, as well as that of religious self-identity manifesting in other spheres of human life).

Thus, we can see that all levels of religiosity are stimulated in NRMs, but the religiosity itself is transformed, passing to other forms as compared to traditional religiosity.

Destructiveness, religious as well as social, means a nihilistic attitude towards existing social values, norms, relations and sometimes institutions, including those which are necessary for society functioning in contemporary historical conditions. In this case, it is a question of the apparent or latent implications of theoretical systems or (as for the subject of the present article) forms of behaviour that are destroying not aged, dying, but quite relevant types of religious existence, necessary for normal social functioning and for which the ultimate basis of religious life is often faith itself.

**The Role of Religious Experience in Constituting of Religious Act:** The act of religious faith is an act which forms the ultimate horizon of personality, an event on which all "border situations" of personal being are focused. "Faith is the state of being ultimately concerned", [10] the expression and realization of man's ultimate concern. Religious faith is the most demanding concern, a realization of such spiritual interests which subordinate all other values-social, intellectual,

aesthetical. This is why the character and content of religious faith is carry determining aspects in the characterization of personality.

However, defining faith as the state of ultimate concern, one can only state that the its object and content are important for the believer, but it is difficult to define what the object of faith really is or should be. It cannot be verified in sensation, it is often difficult to understand and it can easily be changed by destructive influence. Evidently, faith is not a completely rational act even from the point of view of religious behaviour; besides, it does not fully coincide with the rational structure of personality.

“God exists for me while I in freedom become my real Self” [12]. Thus, the content of faith determines the personality, cardinally influences the process of identification and the crisis of faith often ends with an existential catastrophe. Nevertheless, each religion has its “method”, the “How” of faith, the *ways* of its realization, a certain character of religious activity, which, of course, is associated with the content of faith and , more importantly, reveals its true, existential interpretation, sometimes obscured by too abstract or conventional dogmatic formulas. It is in this process, where the existential content of faith is made clear (for the subject as well), the institutionalization of its practices, the rationalization of its foundations and the emergence of a universal system of meanings, which is, in fact, the theoretical expression of religious norms, always having the existential experience of faith as its source. This scheme can be traced in the history of many religions: the sacred text (where the personal religious experience of the founder(s) of the religion is formulated)-the establishing of a religious community (the institutionalization of religious practices)-the formalization of credo, the development of religious philosophy.

Representing thus the interrelation of two-existential and social-components, religious behaviour is influenced by two components of faith: “objective faith”, “ultimate concern” as it is understood by the majority of believers (i.e., a field of universal meanings) and “subjective faith”, faith as it is experienced by actor himself. Religious experience also includes both these sides, though usually it is not accessible to the actor in its fullness: as a rule, he can identify only one component of the whole religious experience and interpret his own experience in a certain way, asserting or denying it according to his own conception of faith. It is also worth mentioning that it is the latter, subjective component, which motivates individual religious action.

Religious practice, through which the system of religious action is constituted, is determined in its basis by different sets of subjective meanings, typical for various anthropological models of religion, internalized during this practice. We argue that the way to understanding religious destructiveness lies in determining the basic existential characteristics of personality models, offered by various religions, their doctrines, philosophy and matching them with real religious practice and ways of internalization of these models. In its turn, this research is to be based on the phenomenological analysis of subjective meanings, which constitute the religious act, as well as their interpretation in religious practices.

Generally the situation can be described thus: the religious act has a double intentional structure. Its main intention is the transcendent, Absolute, “that than which nothing greater can be conceived” (Anselm of Canterbury). At the same time, the act of faith, initially directed at the Absolute, Ultimate, can not posit it as something definite, as *Gegenstand*, for the act itself is generated and encompassed by it. If, following Brentano and Husserl, we define consciousness as initially directed upon an object, then, we must concede that the intentional object of faith can never be given fully; actually, it cannot be given *as* object at all. Given as an ideal object, the Ultimate is only *revealed* through it, but is never represented. Thus, the very structure of the religious act implies that the Ultimate can be experienced only through mediation.

On the other side, faith “dies” in conditions of pure rationality: faith as only an act of voluntary and rational assertion of the chosen ultimate concern is impossible: human will can initiate activity or guide behaviour, but it can not awake or create faith. The Russian philosopher Semyon Frank, for example, discerns such concepts as “faith-trust” and “faith-certainty”. He defines certainty as “the real presence of the object of knowledge or thought itself in our mind. This real presence of the object itself is what, in distinction from logical proposition as a thought of transcendent reality, is called experience.” [13]. However, this experience is to be freely accepted, sanctioned by the free choice of man. “Religion as condition of man is, before all, religious experience.” [14] But the fact that the subject possesses some religious experience, does not unconditionally lead to its acceptance; it may even be rejected, because its object is not *compulsory* evident, as are the objects of sensation. Thus, the main antinomy of religious experience shows up. The object of religion, being experienced in the very

deep recesses of personality, sometimes even identified with some levels of personality, never *belongs* to it, cannot be adequately seized and captured neither as sensation, nor as notion, always remaining absolutely Other. That's why the interpretation of religious experience is particularly difficult and it is here where it can be misinterpreted and even distorted.

In actuality, religious experience can include the experience of a breakthrough into another dominating reality. Everyday life, experienced mostly as the only reality, becomes pale, lessens and even "disappears" in the face of such a religious experience. This also may result in escape from everyday reality.

Regarding the first aspect of religious experience taken as a process, as a flow of events, where the structure and volume of information constantly changes, where the "Other" is translated into the language of everyday life, it is easy to see that not each moment of this experience changes its conception. At the same time, each "Now" (the term of A. Schutz), if it appears as something special, turns us again to the experience we already have had (disregarding whether it was the institutionalized experience of earlier generations or an individual one) [15].

The structuring of religious experience, though providing wide possibilities in creating a typology, does not always fit the scheme of structuring other groups of human experience. The main problem is that the actual experience, introduced into the whole of one's knowledge, offers certain interpretational schemes of the existing flow of feelings and emotions. It is performed by comparing the present experience with a complex of social and individual experiences-pre-experiences-and recognizing them in terms of familiarity, similarity or analogy.

Religious experience is a type of experience which the subject cannot incorporate fully into the framework of the usual everyday life complex. Moreover, the subject is prone to mark every experience, which is difficult to classify, as belonging to the sphere of the Transcendent.

Fixed in tradition, religious experience undergoes various modifications in the real emotional and intellectual life of the individual and thus cannot be grasped in reflection immediately. Undoubtedly, there is a problem of legitimation of religious experience within existing religious tradition in the case of sudden contradictions of the results of one's reflections to the common dispositions of everyday life. However, here we can speak of actual institutionalization of primary religious experience, of forming a new tradition.

Now the religious experience into which each new adept is immersed, is the institutionalized experience of earlier generations; it existed before he was born and most likely will exist after his death. This world offers to every actor who enters the we-group a socially justified system of typologies and relevancies. To be active in this world, the actor must accept existing dispositions and use the given system of types as the point of reference, the scheme of forming new projects of religious actions, as well as of interpreting his own religious experience. That is, we can say that the primary religious experience not only impacts the further history of the future community, but also is a reference point for relevancies and interpretations of generations yet to come. Speaking generally, it is to be mentioned that the religious experience of the founders of Christianity (as well as its branches) actually laid the basis for modernity as it exists today.

However, the time of religious experience has not passed. The breakthrough to the other reality in religious experience and experiences interpreted by the subject as conceptual ones, take place even within traditions already fully formed. It can be empirically examined in the rising frequency of the emergence of new religious movements, new we-groups.

## CONCLUSION

It is worth mentioning that this experience is often not primary in the proper sense, although it is *understood* by actor as falling out from socially inherited typology systems, as a result of which the actor sees it necessary to create a new we-group. Sometimes it is also occurs when the subject evaluates his experience and being unable to find a group which approves it in his close surrounding, stops his efforts to find it, although such groups exist. This, in its turn, results in multiplying we-groups and institutionalized religions, so called new religious movements, with practically identical interpretation schemes of religious experience.

Let us examine the process of institutionalization of religious experience and forming the system of relevancies of the religious actor based on the example of new religious movements. The sole primary religious experience is not a sufficient basis for institutionalization; it is necessary to form a system of routine acts, shared at least with one another actor. New religious movements provoke to act those who strive to break from everyday life and undergo an otherworldly experience. Following Jean Baudrillard, we would like to define these religious

movements as a “disappointed form of the world”, because, in this disappointment, the desire to tear down the bounds of everyday experience and to undergo a new one is clearly seen. New religious movements imply mystery, instigate the craving for new meanings. Mystery seduces.

Traditional religions, which possess systems of religious experience typization, are often devoid of mystery, but rather pretend to be a sort of a system of objective knowledge. There is no place for my own, personal relation to the Sacred. However, it is mystical knowledge which possesses a great attraction and seems to open the real truth. The concept of truth in religious experience cannot be reduced simply to an adequate perception. It is commensurable to the mystery which the adept strives to touch. Trying to approach the truth, the adept experiences it and at the same time “puts off” the final experience, so that the temptation remains to repeat this experience and to develop the mystical knowledge. Without this religious experience-of any form-the religious behaviour has no ontological roots.

The dominating reality of everyday life is paradoxical: being real, it is, using the expression of P. Berger, “absolutely accidental”. Social confirmation and accordingly, social approval of “correct” understanding of reality is easily interrupted once an actor is in another reality, of more “interest” for him. Moreover, the historic understanding of everyday reality, i.e., the normal reality, from the point of view of society, is in the process of constant change, according to modifications of the world picture. Originally, the reality of religious experience did not imply “falling out” from everyday life. It became something special only in modern times, chiefly as a result of the secularization processes.

Thus, we discover religious experience lying in the foundation of everyday life, of its typical interpretation schemes; however, it, as it is, contradicts to them, thus also being a cause of breaking the structure of everyday life meanings. For example, Christianity and Christian religious experience, which during centuries formed the social framework of Western European culture, now are seen by modern European world (once centered around Christ and now-by any means-around Christian moral values) as something which is beyond the everyday life.

Besides, we argue that another cause for destructive religiosity (at least from the point of view of modern religious personality) is the monopolization of means of interpretation of religious symbols, representing the Absolute, by an authoritative outward instance. The religious act itself, as we have seen implies this

possibility. In this case the search for one’s own Self before the face of the Absolute by means of the autonomous interpretation of religious symbols, which K. Jaspers meant to be the highest point of religious life, is substituted by adopting certain alien values and behaviour patterns [16].

Discussing destructivity, we purposely made a reservation, having said “*from the point of view of modern religious personality*”. In fact, all researchers, analyzing the negative influence of various religious practices on human personality, explicitly or implicitly mean the personality of modern man, which was formed on the basis of Modernity era principles. That’s the reason many then effective and wide-spread practices, for example those of mediaeval monks, which were developed in the culture, oriented on a certain universal, non-personal ideal of sanctity, only reproduced in various individuals, may turn out to be absolutely unfit for modern conditions. Religious practices of the Middle Ages were created for developing a *typical* saint and ignored and even denied individuality. (That’s why stories of Christian mediaeval hagiography sometimes seem to contemporary readers to be a monotonous set of clichés, migrating from one text to another almost unvaried, standard plots, legends, etc.) And, though these practices bear an outward similarity to those of modern “destructive cults”, they can not be equaled. However, the similarity itself is very significant in other aspect.

From this point of view, the archaic way of personality models’ forming in “new religions” of the XX century is evident. Many NRMs use old medieval methods: restriction of contacts, exact order of life, uniform dress, strict fasting, reduced sleep, absolute obedience to “guru”, etc, which are rather scarcely present, for example, in modern Christian churches, preserving patristic tradition. This shows that NRMs are depended on traditional religious practice more than it is usually thought. Despite their outward “modernity”, NRMs reproduce those forms and methods of traditional religions, which were the causes of the today’s crisis of religiosity: authoritative type of spiritual leadership, which usually leads to extreme fideism and hostility to critics, aggressive irrationalism, resulting in authoritarian methods of life organization and control, isolationistic attitude to “outer”, secular human culture.

Religion is a mighty means of creation, as well as of destruction of human personality. Thus, the idea of absolute equality of all religions can not be acceptable from the existential point of view. For man of modernity

(and postmodernity as well, with its “*cultural criticism*, which is to make explicit the hidden (power-shaped and constraining) mechanisms and contexts that implicitly influence and shape our conscious discursive understanding ... and thereby to further promote agential reflexivity, self-understanding and self-realization-withouthowever succumbing to a Kantian idealistic model of autonomous, free-floating self-ruling)”[17], religion must also imply the possibility of self-reflection and criticism.

Religion sees in the situation of modernity a new chance to enter the public sphere; for in the context of modernity, new possibilities open in the process of forming individual identity, including its religious aspects. It may sound as a paradox, but religion and globalization pursue similar goals-universalization and unity of mankind; in some sense, globalization paves the way for religion in all its manifestations, including its non-traditional, even dangerous forms.

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