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THE DYNAMICS OF THE SACRED CODE OF NATIONAL IDENTITY

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Abstract

Contemporary science does not give an unambiguous answer to the question of a nation's nature as an object of national identity. There is unsolved problem of dynamics of its consolidating principle from perceiving the nation as a personality-integrating tradition to understanding a nation as an imaginary community and, further on, as a multitude of national identities competing in an individual's consciousness. An all-embracing theory is necessary to identify the factor causing the above-mentioned processes that could remove theoretical contradictions in propositions of numerous approaches to the studies on a nation. The article argues that the factor is represented by the sacred code of a nation, whose historical dynamics – from the consecration of the real consolidating principle of a community to imagining the sacred and subsequent fractioning into a multitude of loosely connected sacred discourses – is described as a condition for transformations in the understanding of the national identity. The aim of this article is to reveal the dynamics of the sacred code of a nation and its dependence on the global secularization process by using the method of social constructivism, historical and phenomenological methods, and the method of multy-paradigmal self-reflection. The study results in disclosing the deep relationship between the history of the perception of the sacred and the understanding of the national. This proposition may be used as a research method for studying a nation and national identity, which allows for viewing the object of research as evolving over time and understanding the reasons of this evolution.

Keywords: Imagination, multiple identity, national identity, sacred code dynamics, secularization, social construction

1. Introduction

The present philosophical discourse is characterized by the fixation of a deep destabilization of socio-cultural and political reality, which causes a crisis of social identity, accompanied by transformations at the personal level. In addition, there is the transformation of the subject of social action. At the beginning of the XX century, it is a social group, later, at the beginning of the XXI century, an individual becomes the subject of social action (Shkarin & Shelestyuk, 2020).

One of the directions devoted to solving this problem is the study of national identity, covering the personal and sociocultural sphere of reality. However, the unity in regards of identifying the consolidation principle of a nation has not been achieved yet, and the unified research environment demonstrates a wide range of theories and hypotheses. One can also speak about a dynamic in the localization of the consolidation foundation of national identity. The early period of research is characterized by its detection in the sociocultural and sociobiological sphere, while the research of recent decades has localized the national consolidation principle at the level of an individual.

Thus, the main contradiction in the majority of the nation theories is the local nature of their practical application. In this regard, it is necessary to form a universal theory, the descriptive potential of which will be sufficient to reveal the consolidation foundation of the nation and the mechanisms of its dynamics from the inception of this phenomenon to the present.

2. Problem Statement

This work uses the provisions according to which a person does not perceive reality directly, but through the prism of the myth that constructs this reality, the myth is functioning through the mechanisms of sacralization and profanation. The adoption of these provisions determines the main task of this work, which is to study national identity as a sociocultural and psychological phenomenon, the implementation of which is driven by the dynamics of its sacred code.

3. Research Questions

The main hypothesis of this research is the idea of the sacralization of some aspects of external or internal in relation to an individual and reality, as a result of which a certain picture of the world or a sacred code is formed and perceived as a national one. Transformations in the localization of the sacred code determine the corresponding understanding of a nation as a sociocultural phenomenon or related to the sphere of individual imagination.

Acceptance of this hypothesis allows solving the problem of the consolidation of a nation, removing the contradictions between the primordial and constructivist directions in the study of a nation, since the gradual desacralization of the social determines the localization of the sacred at the personal level. This provision, in the light of the accepted hypothesis, contributes to the understanding of the sacred as a factor shifting the perception of the national subject from the sociocultural to the personal level.

The main provisions of the accepted hypothesis are confirmed in social constructivism. J. Tsou writes about the fundamental projectability of social groups (Tsou, 2020); Greenwood (2020) dwells on the

instability of the composition and structure of any social group throughout its existence. A common place in these theories is value reorientation as the main mechanism for constructing social identity, which, in the light of understanding the sacred as the highest value open to targeted profanation, allows considering sacralization and profanation as the leading mechanisms of social constructivism.

Another subject area in which the adoption of this hypothesis makes it possible to resolve existing contradictions is the research on an individual's losing the quality of a single subject of national action and the formation of an individual's eventual (contextual) integrity or dependence on institutional practices (Miroshnichenko & Morozova, 2017). As a result of the process of global secularization, the social sphere turned out to be profane, which resulted in the localization of the sacred at the level of an individual. However, the subsequent desacralization of the individual removes the integrity of the personality and affirms the transition "from individual to dividual" (Golubinskaya, 2017).

4. Purpose of the Study

Based on the above-mentioned sphere of application of our hypothesis to problem areas of scientific knowledge, the formulated purpose of this study is to describe the features and transformations of national identity as a process driven by the dynamics of its sacred code.

5. Research Methods

Since understanding the foundations and transformation of a nation and national identity necessarily presupposes an interdisciplinary nature of research, this work uses a complex methodology that includes a variety of approaches and methods.

In this work, a nation is presented as a community open to re-construction and complete deconstruction, for which the method of social constructivism is used; it allows us to perceive identity as a relatively stable value in a constant process of identification. Further on, the method of historicism is used, which is necessary for understanding the transition from a stable national identity to its projection in the imagination of the individual, and, finally, to understanding identity as the dynamics of a "hermeneutic category constantly rethought" (Ivic, 2018, p. 147). The study of the sacred as determining not only the development of culture, philosophy, and politics, but also the nature of the personal worldview and the integrity of the individual, is a condition for using the method of phenomenology.

According to the accepted hypothesis, the basis for the indicated transformations of national identity is the dynamics in the perception of its sacred basis. To study this process, the method of multy-paradigmatic reflection is applied.

6. Findings

The study proves the understanding of a nation as a social construct; features of its formation and development are determined by the targeted dynamics of desacralization. This phenomenon is illustrated by the flourishing and subsequent crisis of the perception of the sacred as a social phenomenon. In the history of a nation, it was manifested as the rise and fall of the influence of the primordial direction and the formation of constructivism.

In response to the profanation of the social, a tradition of perceiving the sacred as a single center of a personality is being formed, this determines the localization of the "infinite trans-temporal identity knot" at the personal level (Brain, 2018, p. 81). National identity, therefore, appears as a phenomenon secondary to the process of secularization. On the whole, secularization is characterized by a consistent "constriction" of the sacred and its departure from the social to the personal sphere of reality. In this regard, opportunities open up to predict the future of the nation and national identity.

The research results presented in this article can be applied as a method in philosophical, social or historical research of the national. This method is also applicable to predict further dynamics in the development of national identity.

7. Conclusion

The earliest ideas about large stable social groups reflect the naturalistic attitude of a person in a traditional society, when a person does not separate himself from the world of nature and considers the existing order of things to be static. In this period, the dichotomy of "friends and foes" is based on the approach and departure from the sacred center, located in the center of the sacred land and understood as the center of the universe.

The situation changes with the spreading of the Christian doctrine, which declares sacred only the sphere sanctified by God. Other spheres of the universe are cut off and considered profane. Thus, the sphere of the individual is actualized; it is manifested in the doctrine of personal responsibility for sin. In this regard, the formation of Christianity is considered a significant stage in the unidirectional process of desacralization of the socio-cultural environment. J. Casanova defines this phenomenon as one of the aspects of the broad secularization that accompanied the modernization of European societies (Casanova, 2018).

According to the model offered in this work, modernization, like nationalization, is a consequence of secularization. The philosophical foundation of this period is Aristotle's holistic attitude, according to which the whole has a certain special quality that its parts do not have (Fedchuk, 2019). Regarding the problem of identity, this means that a person, being included in an existing community, receives a new quality or a new opportunity.

The second stage of global secularization occurs, according to Taylor (2017), in the XVIII-XIX centuries. During this period, the profanation of the social reaches significant levels, releasing a personality as a new subject of social relations. The departure of the sacred from the public sphere resulted in the departure of religion from this sphere as an institution that preserves the experience of connection with the sacred.

The process of privatization of the sacred, which led to the localization of the sacred center at the individual level, was accompanied by the desire to discover the sacred in the new, profane reality, surrounding people. This phenomenon corresponds to the idea of a civil religion, offering "its own sacred topoi, symbols, ideas, texts, holidays, rituals, founders, etc." (Egorov, 2017, p. 262). The term "civil religion" was introduced by J.-J. Rousseau, his theory asserted the need for artificial sacralization of a part of the profane reality, first of all, of the institutions of political state. Rousseau's ideas were implemented

by the leaders of the Great French Revolution; they established a new type of state, the sacred status of which was ensured not by the monarch, but by the nation, as a religious and political community.

Thus, the formation of a nation indicates a departure of European civilization from a holistic attitude and a transition to a different principle, according to which the sum of the parts ensures the quality of the whole, which each of the parts already possesses. In practice, it is manifested in the form of the idea of a democratic form of government as a condition for the formation of a nation.

The history of German nation-building has shown that not only the institutions of a political state, but also the history, language, and culture of a group of peoples having a small ethnic distance, on the basis of which a nation is formed as a religious and cultural community, can be sacred.

Thus, according to the main provisions from Bagdasaryan's (2018) article, the building of a nation presupposes the formation of a sacred history. It is based not on the study of facts, but on the ideological meanings of the nation, which perceive fiction on the same horizontal line with a reliable fact.

The last decades of the XX century, which revealed the concept of a nation as an "invented tradition" (Hobsbawm & Terence, 1983, p. 14), can be perceived as the period of emerging new understanding of national identity, affirming the individual as its own basis. The sociocultural stratum of the nation, the sacred foundation of which is mobile and constitutes a construct, is now oriented towards satisfying the needs of an individual.

The formation of the sociocultural environment of a nation in this period is carried out in regards to the provision of integrity and a certain self-sufficiency of personality. According to the concept of N. Madrid, the unity of a modern nation is possible only on the basis of its members' identity of. (Madrid, 2017). The focus of nation-building on family values is illustrated by the introduction of images of father, mother, son, and others, as well as family archetypal concepts into political rhetoric.

In this way, the interest of the nation's designers in the existence of a strong personal sphere for the formation of sacred sociocultural meanings on its basis becomes evident. The personality trend in the study of a nation postulates its object as a self-valuable one, thus reducing the genesis of a nation to the formation of a two-level structure, consisting of personal and socio-cultural levels, in which the personal level is meaningful.

The exclusive focus of some researchers on the socio-cultural sphere was expressed in the creation of a modernist direction; according to its main provisions, the conditions for the nation formation are changes in the course of economic processes (Hechter, 1986), the implementation of the national state phenomenon (Mann, 2013) and other phenomena of the reality surrounding a person.

However, revealing the deep processes of a nation's formation indicates that the formation, development and withering away of a nation and national identity must be viewed as the realization of a certain period of global secularization. At the earliest stage of development, tendencies aimed at fragmentation of the perception of reality emerged. The consequence of this is the incipience and formation of a personality as an independent subject of sociocultural, political and other relationships. At this stage of secularization, a nation is formed as a phenomenon in which an external, mobile and open for deconstruction level serves the internal sacred center. Their unity is understood as the sacred code of a nation. But the process of secularization continues, and the personal level, which has hitherto been perceived as unshakable, is subjected to fragmentation.

The fundamental significance of the personality as a historical subject is studied within the framework of the postmodernist trend, however, postmodernism perceives modernity, as a rule, as an integral phenomenon, the disintegration of which leads to an exit into the unknown, the designation of which is possible only through the prefix "post". According to our hypothesis, modernity, with its subjectivism, is a reaction to a certain stage of secularization, followed by another stage which is accompanied by processes of desubjectivation.

A nation and national identity are phenomena located in the discourse of modernity and based on the sacred potential of an individual, around which an artificial sacralization of the social is built. The deconstruction of the subject, which removes personal integrity, calls into question the very existence of the nation, the further realization of which is associated with the expansion of the sphere open for construction, into which the subject now enters. In connection with the disintegration of the subject, the sacralization of the sociocultural sphere is included in building a nation, as well as the sacralization of the inner foundation of the personality, which is necessary to ensure both personal integrity and the unity of a nation.

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