

LATIP 2021**International Conference on Language and Technology in the Interdisciplinary Paradigm****OPTIMAL STRATEGY OF INTERCULTURAL AND SOCIAL
INTERACTION FOR MODERN RUSSIA**

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Abstract

The article is devoted to the search for the optimal strategy of intercultural and social (interpersonal) interaction, relevant for modern Russia. Two strategies are considered: based on tolerance and based on Orthodox values. The first strategy was formed within the framework of the secular tradition and is genetically linked to liberal democracy and the idea of human rights. The second strategy is historically connected with the religious (Orthodox) tradition, which has had a decisive influence on Russian culture. The following research methods were used: dialectical, comparative, and sociocultural. It is generally accepted that these two social strategies are antagonistic to each other. Therefore, a strategy based on Orthodox values, as relevant to the Russian cultural code, should replace tolerance. The analysis reveals common values and meanings that share both strategies and identifies differences. The main thing that brings these strategies together is the recognition of dignity in each person. In addition, the dialogue is an important semantic point for both strategies. As for the differences, they focus on different aspects of life: a strategy based on tolerance - on the outside world (society), a strategy based on Orthodox values – on the inner world (soul). These aspects or levels of being are inextricably linked as soul and body. Hence, the author concludes that these strategies do not contradict each other. Therefore, the problem of choosing the optimal strategy for intercultural and social interaction is solved not by eliminating or replacing one strategy with another, but by their complementarity.

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1. Introduction

The world is changing right before our eyes. The rapid development of technology reduces distances, "blurs" the borders between states and people, makes available what was considered science fiction yesterday. But at the same time, information technologies and globalization, while solving many problems, create new challenges and risks in the form of terrorism, fundamentalism, and xenophobia. The unprecedented mixing of peoples and cultures, as well as the difficulties of translating foreign cultures into their own language create serious problems of social interaction that can destroy the social world with outbursts of violence and aggression. Russia, being a part of the international community, has not escaped such problems either. In this regard, the topic of tolerance is particularly relevant, which many Russian scientists consider as an optimal strategy for civilizational communication and an important method for resolving conflict situations (Chumakov & Korolev 2016; Zinchenko & Loginov 2011).

Speaking about the ideology of tolerance, well-known scientist Asmolov (2011) considers it as a universal norm for maintaining diversity in the world in the process of evolution. In other words, tolerance is understood as a principle that is designed to maintain a balance in society, promote the harmonization of social space, create opportunities for communication and cooperation of people belonging to different peoples, ethnic groups, groups, cultures, religions, worldviews and beliefs.

Russian researchers draw attention to the relationship between tolerance and multiculturalism, which is based on the dialogue of cultures (Guseynov 2009; Lectorsky, 2015). It should be mentioned here that the concept of multiculturalism has recently been seriously criticized: it speaks of the collapse of the model of a multicultural society, the failure of the policy of multiculturalism and even its death due to the inability of this policy to integrate migrants from different countries into the European community and to ensure national security. The disillusionment with the theory and practice of multiculturalism especially came after the tragic events of September 11, which were subsequently exacerbated by the migration crisis in Europe. This was first discussed by politicians, namely, the top officials of the leading European states, and then representatives of the scientific community joined the discussion. Today, hopes are pinned on a new paradigm – interculturalism, which is often seen as an alternative that has replaced multiculturalism.

But not all researchers agree with the conclusion that the potential of multiculturalism has run its course. So, Mironov and Mironova argue that it is not the idea of multiculturalism itself that has failed, but its current version of practical implementation, and that it is necessary to clearly distinguish between the theory of multiculturalism and its implementation in practice. In other words, the main thing is missing: understanding the importance of dialogue between cultures, which means real, and not formal, recognition of the value of another culture (Mironov & Mironova, 2017).

A similar position is held by a number of Australian authors who, based on empirical data and their previous work, consider the view of multiculturalism and interculturalism as mutually exclusive political paradigms, untenable and counterproductive. From their point of view, these paradigms represent two different, but interrelated approaches, while interculturalism does not replace multiculturalism, but only complements it. They propose to replace the opposition of multiculturalism-interculturalism with the

principle of complementarity of these two concepts in order to maintain cultural and social diversity in the world (Elias et al., 2020).

In a new paper, one of the authors of this article, in collaboration with another researcher, continues the discussion around multiculturalism and interculturalism and develops the above position, emphasizing that dialogue is also a central idea for multiculturalism, which is considered to be the strength of interculturalism. The authors note that it is not the rejection of dialogue and interaction that distinguishes these two concepts, but the different focus of perception of social reality: if multiculturalism pays attention to the macro level and therefore more often turns to political topics, then interculturalism focuses on the micro level (civil society institutions) and interpersonal communication (Mansouri & Modood, 2021). Domestic researchers Kuropyatnik and Kuropyatnik (2018) argue in a similar vein, considering interculturalism as a new model of social integration, which does not replace multiculturalism, which has recently undergone a significant update. Thus, we can state that the positions of tolerance are close not only to multiculturalism, but also to interculturalism: the dialogue of cultures is an important and necessary attribute for each of them.

As for the concept of tolerance itself, there is no consensus among researchers on this issue: there are different interpretations of this concept. But most researchers define tolerance as toleration. At the same time, tolerance is understood in two ways: as patience and as acceptance and recognition. In my opinion, it is acceptance or recognition that reflects the true meaning of tolerance. Patience is psychologically extremely uncomfortable for both sides: as for the one who tolerates, so for the one who is tolerated, and therefore - unstable. Sooner or later, someone's patience will run out, and the situation may explode. Therefore, it is worth agreeing with the conclusion of researchers of Mironova and Mironova (2017) that says "tolerance as a social principle requires completion in the recognition of the other as an equal to oneself". True recognition of the "other", of otherness as such, is possible only in the form of a dialogue, in the process of which a single semantic space is formed (p. 25).

2. Problem Statement

- It can be stated that there is no common position among researchers in the interpretation of the concept of tolerance, its content, but a consensus has been reached in the understanding of tolerance as an important method of social communication that contributes to the integration of social space. It is generally accepted that tolerance is directly related to political democracy and liberalism, to the idea of human rights. In modern Russia, there is a sharp rejection of the liberal paradigm, hence the rejection of tolerance, perceived as the fruit of secular Western culture. Today's Russian discourse is dominated by the idea of traditional values, commitment to its own spiritual and historical experience. Therefore, as a strategy of social behaviour and interpersonal communication, it is proposed to rely on this experience, to be guided by one's own cultural code. As Russian culture has developed under the great influence of the Christian tradition since the adoption of Christianity, it is primarily about Orthodox values. Accordingly, the strategy of social interaction based on Orthodox values is considered as a real alternative to the strategy of social interaction in intercultural and interpersonal communication based on tolerance. Both of these strategies are perceived as antagonistic to each other, and this is

surprisingly similar to the discussion around multiculturalism and interculturalism. Only the reasons for this discussion and the juxtaposition of these concepts lie elsewhere.

3. Research Questions

- What is the essence and features of the strategy of intercultural and social interaction based on tolerance?
- What is the essence and features of the strategy of intercultural and social interaction based on Orthodox values?
- What approaches, attitudes, and values are common to both strategies, and which ones share them?

4. Purpose of the Study

The author sets herself the following task: to identify the optimal strategy of intercultural and social (interpersonal) interaction that is relevant for modern Russia.

5. Research Methods

The following methods are used as research methods: the dialectical method and the method of comparative analysis, which allow us to identify commonalities and differences in different strategies of social interaction: based on tolerance and Orthodox values. In addition, a socio-cultural method is used to identify the influence of the values of the culture in which they exist on the behaviour of people.

6. Findings

So, tolerance is considered as a way of social communication, for the implementation of which dialogue is very important. The format of the dialogue involves clarifying the positions of the parties, correlating the value system of the "other" with their own value system, therefore, a better understanding of not only the other position, but also their own, as well as the search for common points of contact, which contributes to the convergence of views, reduces distrust, removes fears and fears. Such interaction does not harm a person, but, on the contrary, enriches them: with new experiences, new ideas, opens up new perspectives and opportunities for them, contributes to the creation of new meanings. But it also means the interest of the participants in the dialogue, the reduction of the distance between them, so we do not have to talk about indifference and indifference, in which they try to blame the tolerance of its critics. Moreover, the well-known American psychologist, who laid the methodological foundations for the study of tolerance from the point of view of psychology, the author of the concept of "tolerant personality" Gordon Ollport (2011) considered empathy to be the most important aspect of tolerance (p. 158).

Thus, the philosophy of tolerance means the rejection of the black-and-white picture of the world, the logic of dividing the world into its own and others, white and red, our and enemies, the acceptance of

otherness. Precisely this opposition lies at the heart of xenophobia. This perception inevitably turns into violence against the "Other", whose existence is seen as a threat to the established order of things and the usual picture of the world, while the philosophy of tolerance is based on non-violence. The phenomenon of terrorism, which is a fundamental problem of the modern world, is proof of this. Its researchers point out as an important basis for this phenomenon, the division of society into its own and others, when the "other" is simply put out of brackets, is not recognized as an independent subject, and, consequently, there is no need for dialogue, only a monologue is carried out (Savelyeva & Budenkova 2020).

But tolerance, understood as recognition, and acceptance of the "other", correlates very well with such an important category of Christianity as humility, such Christian principles as mercy, forgiveness, refusal to condemn the other. Justifying tolerance as a variety of forms of existence and ways of comprehending the truth, Academician Guseynov (2009) notes that it is based on the imperfection of human nature, the possibility of error on the part of man (pp. 67-68). But this is, in fact, the Christian position: to accept the imperfections and mistakes of others, realizing their own imperfection, while following the example of Christ, who forgives people all their sins. It is important to emphasize that tolerance does not mean agreeing with beliefs that you do not share. It's about accepting a person, not their views, behaviors, or worldviews that are unacceptable to us. In the middle of the last century Gordon Ollport (2011) wrote that for a tolerant person, racial, religious or any other differences are not important: a person for her/him is just a person (p. 155). In other words, tolerant people pay attention not to what divides people, but to what unites them, namely, their common belonging to the human race.

This is also what modern Turkish scientist Kuchuradi says today. She, justifying the connection of human rights with the concept of human dignity, draws attention to the importance of realizing our common human identity, regardless of the individual identities of anyone (Kuchuradi, 2018). It is the emphasis on the common human nature and the recognition of human dignity for everyone, regardless of social, gender or any other status, national, religious or political differences, that creates the basis for dialogue, gives a chance for understanding, interaction and cooperation, despite all the differences. Reflecting on the problem of tolerance, some researchers especially note the fact that tolerance as a respectful attitude to a person, tolerance does not mean a condescending attitude to moral vices. It only forbids, - according to Academician Guseynov (2009), - to take on the role of a judge in matters of good and evil, focuses on sympathy and compassion for a person whose views cause rejection (p. 67). Tolerance also does not lead to "terror of minorities", because, as Habermas (2006) emphasizes, it involves the observance of reciprocity, the rejection of one-sidedness and the mutual recognition of the rules of tolerant relations.

Opponents of the strategy of social behavior based on tolerance, who believe that it contradicts our mentality and our cultural code, oppose its strategy based on Christian (Orthodox) values, the core of which is such a Christian maxim as love for one's neighbor. By his death on the cross in the name of love, despite misunderstanding and hatred, - wrote Monk Ispovednik (1993), one of the brightest representatives of Eastern Christianity, - Christ clearly showed people the true path - the path of love, bequeathing love as the main commandment (p. 151). For the saint, love is the "opponent of selfishness." "And indeed, it is egoism, closing a person in a narrow framework of individuality, that separates him or her from the rest of the world. When loving, a person transfers the center of gravity to the object of love,

seeing in the other the same absolutely valuable principle as he or she is" (Zaytseva, 2018, p. 148). Thus, a person begins to remove the barriers that separate them from the other, thereby undermining the ego - "the beginning and mother of all evils", according to Ispovednik (1993) and this, in turn, entails the eradication of such vices as pride, vanity, envy, rage, anger, hypocrisy, malice, greed - "which divides a single person" (p. 149).

It is love that is the door that opens the way to God. Ispovednik (1993) found love as "the whole inner connection" with God, which connects people with each other (p. 150-151). At the same time, the monk especially emphasized that love for God and one's neighbor should not be separated. For him, the proof of love for God is "sincere affection for one's neighbor". And, on the contrary, hatred for any person indicates the absence of love for God. Therefore, love of humanity, sympathy, compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, non-anger, peacefulness towards one's neighbor are a guide to action for a person who has chosen the path to God. Maxim Ispovednik (1993) constantly pointed out that this attitude applies to everyone, that the commandment of love applies to all people without exception: their own and others, believers and non-believers, slaves and free, men and women (p. 86, p. 108, p. 111). This approach, in our opinion, is consistent with the idea of tolerance, which means respect for the "other", giving it subjectivity.

In other words, the love of God is incompatible with hatred, malice, aggression against anyone, it presupposes equal love for all. According to the Orthodox view, each person is an absolute value in itself, since the manifestation of vices in them, any negative are considered as a distortion of the image of God, but not its absence, caused by a disease of the soul. Therefore, the holy fathers taught not to identify a person with their bad inclinations and vices: according to Simeon, the New Theologian, it is necessary to separate a person from the passions that are fighting her/ him, sympathizing with her/ him with all her/ his soul and wishing for healing, but not rejecting her/ him at the same time (Emelichev, 1991, p. 197). And since man is created in the image and likeness of God, it is necessary "... to accept all as the image of God, with reverence and the desire to do good to her/ him", - taught St. Theophan the Recluse (Emelichev, 1991, p. 187). Thus, the holy fathers pointed to the deep essence of phenomena - the general spiritual nature of people, focusing on the permanent and unchangeable, without focusing on the transient and changeable-individual qualities and characteristics of people, their style of behavior and lifestyle.

In addition, in Orthodoxy there is such a spiritual practice as inner doing. This practice is an important spiritual work to restore order in one's own soul, the ultimate goal of which is to connect a person with God - what is called deification in Orthodoxy. It is in the soul that repentance takes place - that with which inner work begins, here the so-called "invisible battle" of a person with her/ his passions is carried out, step by step evil is eradicated and good is nurtured. It is in the soul that communion or dialogue with God takes place, the pursuit of which is the essence of the Christian's efforts. This necessary inner work can only be done by the person herself/ himself. this is their area of responsibility. In other words, Orthodoxy proceeds from the fact that it is impossible to change a person from outside, by force. This approach is also shared by a social strategy based on tolerance, which also implies respect for personal boundaries. Orthodoxy regards love as a fundamental law of being. Such a principle of the world order asserts the unity of all mankind in God, united by the bonds of love, for which it does not matter

any boundaries and barriers-territorial, national, confessional, or any other. It is love that makes you free from the fear that underlies xenophobia and aggression.

7. Conclusion

As a result of comparing the two strategies described above, the author comes to the conclusion that they have a lot in common: this is a view of a person as an end, not a means, recognition of the "other" as an equal, respect for personal boundaries. In addition, the dialogue is an important semantic point for both strategies. Only in the case of a strategy based on Orthodox values, we are talking about a dialogue between a person and God, through which a connection with other people is carried out. At the same time, there are also differences. From the point of view of Orthodox discourse, man is a transcendent being, able to go beyond the boundaries of his empirical nature in his aspiration to the Absolute (God). For him, whose true essence is the spiritual principle, there are no limits and restrictions. While the concept of tolerance, which arose within the framework of the secular tradition, considers a person as a representative of the human race, limited by the framework of earthly existence, who lives within the borders of states, whose life and activities are regulated by law. Hence there are different accents: the strategy of intercultural and social (interpersonal) interaction based on tolerance keeps the focus on establishing contacts in the outside world, and the strategy based on Christian (Orthodox) values focuses on the improvement of one's own soul and one's relationship with God, i.e., the inner world. But a person simultaneously lives in the external world and in the internal world: they are both equally important to her/ him.

In other words, these two strategies or approaches reflect two different modes of human existence: social and spiritual (metaphysical). But just as a person is a unity of soul and body, so these levels of being are inextricably linked. Therefore, the juxtaposition of these strategies is false, and the choice between them is artificial, imposed by the political conjuncture of the official agenda. So, in my opinion, the question should be solved not by eliminating or replacing one strategy with another according to the principle: "either this or that", but by combining and supplementing them: according to the principle: "both this" and "that".

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