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Students' Attitudes Toward Religion

For a number of years now people have been crossing swords over the question of the permissibility, propriety, and usefulness of adopting innovations of a religious orientation in the secular schools of Russia. In defending their positions, both those who support it and those who oppose it appeal to various arguments that are convincing in some way. Nonetheless, the experiment of teaching the Orthodox culture, which began in the early 1990s and was renewed on a new organizational level at the end of the 1990s and at the beginning of the new century, continues to spread all over the country. In the past year alone it has been taken up in Kaluga oblast, Krasnodar krai, Orel oblast, and Riazan oblast, and both Belgorod and Briansk oblasts have legislated the introduction of the subject “Orthodox Culture” as a part of the regional component of general education. In the opinion of analysts, although the situation is not clear cut when it comes to the level of demand for courses in religious studies of a denominational orientation in schools in most large cities of Russia, what is most realistic in the

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future (although it is not indisputable) is an “option according to which Orthodox elective subjects will continue to be adopted in state and municipal schools” [4, p. 30].

The problem of the study of religion in the system of secular education, in the long run, hinges on the *reproduction of religiousness* in the secular school and, more broadly, in Russian society space, via the process of mass education. It is the prospect of expanded reproduction of religious consciousness, of religious psychology and practices as a possible result of the corresponding educational policy, that is the main point of contention between those who support and those who oppose the denominational approach in the mass secular school. While those who are in favor of it see it as a last effective tool against the “spiritual impoverishment” and degraded antivalues of the Western mass culture that flooded Russia in the 1990s, those who are against it are fearful of religious fundamentalism, fanaticism, extremism, and other manifestations of sociocultural backwardness that must inevitably go hand in hand with today’s “religious boom.”

In our opinion, the balance that has become established in society between the social interests and forces that support and oppose having religion in the system of general secular education makes it essential that this problem be taken out of the context of a primarily ideological standoff and channeled into the context of well-considered and objectively based decisions that, as far as possible, take into account all of the arguments on the two sides from the position of an open-minded, critical attitude toward the arguments themselves. This can be facilitated by stating the problem of the reproduction of religiousness in a secular society in terms of the interaction of two different types of cultures: the secular culture that is directly forming present-day public consciousness, and the denominational culture, which, to a large extent, is being artificially “grafted” onto this consciousness at a time when the cultural and political influence of religion is becoming stronger and the social position of the church is becoming more firmly established.

From this angle, the problem is one of complex components, in the form of a number of interconnected questions: (1) the extent to which the present secular culture, in its “pure” form, remains

socially constructive—that is, can legitimize the most important social values and ensure the normal socialization of the younger generation; (2) the extent to which religion actually has an influence on secular forms of the consciousness of the younger generation; and (3) the character of that influence, whether constructive, destructive, or neutral. These are the main questions that confront the researcher studying the educational effect of today's religious renaissance in a secularized society.

In this connection, it is of special interest to the researcher studying contemporary religious and cultural processes to look at the generation that was born in the late 1980s and early 1990s; their primary socialization coincided with the systemic crisis in the secular society of Russia and with religion's and the church's escape from the sociocultural ghetto of the Soviet era, as well as the religious renaissance in Russia. This is the generation, represented by the graduates of the general education schools in the past few years, which, in our opinion, reflects most contrastively in its life and world, the collisions of the interaction between the secular culture and the religious culture in a situation of sociocultural instability.

As is well known, the reverse side of the development of secular culture and its increasingly firmly established leading position in public life, was the secularization—the contraction of the “social world of religion” [2, p. 700], manifested in policies that forced religious meanings, symbols, and practices out of social, cognitive, and actively participatory circulation. The resulting situation has been characterized by us as an asymmetry of the representativeness of cultures of the secular and the religious type in the social space [8, pp. 27–31]. At the present time, the sociocultural “mainstream” is almost exclusively in the hands of secular cultural patterns. Regardless of their attitude toward religion, just about all of the members of present-day society are subjects or carriers of the secular culture. Corresponding to this state of affairs is the mass biographical assimilation of the secular culture “by the natural method,” in the process of the primary socialization and inculturation of the individual.

In contrast, as a rule the religious culture is not internalized by

today's individual in childhood, through any "natural" assimilation of some particular denominational tradition; instead, it is formed as a result of one's conscious, willed, personal choice at a more or less mature age. "The development of the industrial society led to the breakdown of the traditional way of life and, as a consequence, to a change in the means by which the religious tradition is reinforced. The traditional society in Russia was distinguished by a closed cycle of compliance with it; in the secularized and modernized society, on the other hand, this cycle has been characteristically broken" [3, p. 159].

And so, the secular culture can be viewed as a sociocultural constant. It is present in the consciousness, the world, and the life of the individual and of society, as a primary, all-encompassing expression of social knowledge. Today's individual is not able to turn away from his secularity, since it has entered into him, it has formed and continues to reproduce his social nature. In its turn, the religious culture is a kind of "sociocultural variable," and whether it is brought into vital circulation depends on the position of the social entity, on that person's conscious choice of life strategy. As a consequence, even if he accepts religious forms of consciousness and behavior as a guide to action, today's individual remains secular in terms of his sociocultural base. His acceptance of religion does not do away with his initial secularness, but it does confront him with the problem of how mutually to reconcile and adapt the two "habitués" that are different in nature.

Following from this is a fundamental aspect to which the sociology of religion has not paid enough attention. In contemporary society, one's religiousness does not represent so much a synonym of affiliation to the religious culture as a counterweight to the secular culture, but rather as a *sign that one is affiliated simultaneously with both of these cultures*. Given the vigorous expansion of religion, and the attempt of secular consciousness to find its bearings in a socium that is in crisis, the epicenter of the problem of the interaction between the secular and the religious is shifted out of the intersubject space and into the space of the individual's life and world.

Accordingly, the main question is how to determine the patterns

that govern the interaction between the cultures of the religious type and the secular type in the individual consciousness and, on the basis of these patterns, how to study the specific processes going on in people's minds.

It is reasonable to assume that under certain circumstances, where the secular culture and the religious culture are accommodated in the individual consciousness, there is an extreme principle in action, namely a *dominance of religion*, since religious meanings by definition are linked to the sphere of the sacred [16, p. 156]; they are linked to certain overarching values. Without this dominance, they lose their religious meaning, without which, as a rule, they also lose their mutual bond, they are either forced out or they become completely assimilated by the secular culture.

For this reason, when a person turns to religion in our time it comes about by way of a more or less dramatic clash between the religious meanings that he has acquired and the secular patterns of social knowledge assimilated earlier: "In a situation where there has been a loss of institutions that provide for the traditional inculcation of religiousness in childhood and in a person's early stage of socialization, such as having a religious family, or a system of religious educational institutions, the mechanism for the inculcation of religiousness ends up being 'overturned'" [12, p. 100]. These days, religion does not serve to form a person's basic knowledge about the world, about the social and interpersonal relations out of which his ideas about the meaning and purpose of life organically flow. Religion becomes a part of the individual's life and world exactly on the level of these latter things, whereas the foundation of his social knowledge in terms of values and worldview turns out not to be correlated with it. The task of achieving that correlation, the task of achieving a value and logical integration of the secular and the religious content of his life and world, is something that a person has to deal with for the rest of his life.

As a consequence, the emergence and firm establishment of religiousness in the individual requires more than just a simple replacement of the secular sociocognitive structures that are basic to his consciousness, with some kind of religious structures that are symmetrical to them; instead, it requires that the latter be placed

firmly “above” the secular structures and, in time, that they “grow and flourish” on that soil.

The problem is to figure out the extent to which (and which part of) current secular culture is to be included in the process of integration: which of its basic elements, along with religious consciousness, will become a part of the solid nucleus of the synthetic, representative culture of the individual personality, and which will drift to the periphery. On the one hand, this will directly determine whether the religiousness being inculcated in young people today (including in general secondary education) will be “socialized” and “domesticated” in accordance with the customary norms and conceptions that are accepted in society, or whether it will become marginalized and remain in opposition to the fundamental purposes and values of the secular culture. On the other hand, it will determine whether the secular culture will be able to take advantage of the spiritual and cultural potential of the religious traditions in order to overcome the state of crisis and achieve a new impetus in socio-cultural development. In the long run, these results will determine who is right: those who support introducing religion into the “holy of holies” of education—the schools, or those who consistently are in favor of protecting the purity of secular traditions.

Hence, a person who has ended up in the sphere of the influence of the religious culture is not free to stop being a carrier of secular culture. He is free only to choose a social and cognitive strategy that orients him toward a particular measure and quality of correlation between the secular culture and the religious culture in his life. At the same time, the array of such strategies is limited by the extreme principle of the “maximalism” of the religious culture, which either forces the secular culture to submit to it or else itself becomes completely absorbed into the secular culture.

Consequently, the objective of the present study was to determine the main social and cognitive strategies of students’ attitudes toward religion, and to correlate them with the characteristics of the basic elements of social knowledge that are authentic for them.

In consideration of the above, the following propositions served as the basis of the methodology of the study:

- (1) as a socially significant human quality, religiousness is based

on the individual's assimilation or inculturation of the religious culture of a particular faith;

(2) any culture, including the religious culture, is a self-organizing systemic whole that develops from a particular subminimal state to a state that is relatively complete and full;

(3) the religiousness of today's individual is a result of the interaction between the secularized, secular culture that defines the individual's life and world from the outset, and the denominational religious culture that he places at the center of his world and life and which transforms it as time goes on.

To construct an empirical and analytical model of the main variants of the interaction between the secular culture and the religious culture, given the asymmetry of their representation, we made use of A. Schutz's generalized typology of relevancies [15, p. 193]. In accordance with that typology it is possible to single out four basic positions toward which relations between the representatives of the secular culture and the religious culture gravitate in the consciousness of the entity.

The first position assumes religion's and the religious culture's maximum relevance in the life and world of the individual. According to this position, religion represents a stable, independent value and goal for the individual. In accordance with the principle of dominance, religion exerts a defining influence (and, in time, a progressive influence) on the formation of the individual's overall life strategy.

The second position corresponds to a solid "instrumental" attitude that presumes that religion and the elements of the corresponding religious culture are perceived as a means by which to achieve certain other objectives. Corresponding to this position, in our opinion, is the "desanctification of the Orthodox faith, while still acknowledging its value as a social institution" [1, p. 94], which L.G. Byzov classifies among the basic characteristics of the mentality of the nucleus of the new Russian way of thinking [ibid., p. 94].

The third position is similar to the second one, but it is different from it owing to the unstable, situational character of the individual's attitude toward religion. In this case, religiousness does

not represent for the individual any kind of stable frame of mind; religion does not represent a conscious value, but it can, for a while, serve as such, depending on the situation.

And finally, the last position, the fourth position, designates the irrelevancy of religion, where the individual has no use for it in his life strategy and tactics. In the light of such a disposition, religion is practically devoid of interest to the individual (which, of course, does not rule out the possibility that he has assimilated particular elements of it in the secular context).

Now it is necessary to correlate this gradation with the indicators of the individual's attitude toward religion—his religiousness or its absence. It is essential to note at the outset that the criteria for determining religiousness that are so widespread today in the sociology of religion, criteria that are based on the total of particular ideas and worship practices, are not fully in keeping with the requirements of the concrete historical approach. That way of stating the question, in our opinion, entails an "automatic" expression of religious impulses in traditional religious and cultural forms and virtually ignores the sociocultural catastrophe and the rupture of tradition that befell religion in Russia in the twentieth century.

For this reason, the task of today's researcher of religion is coming to involve the search for and substantiation of different indicators that will make it possible to detect an "emerging" religiousness on the part of the individual under the conditions of the "dispersed forms of the assertion and reproduction of the religious tradition" [3, p. 277]. In this connection, as Zh.T. Toshchenko has rightly pointed out, these things "ought not to exclude, as well, people's intuitions, their predisposition to accept particular dogmas of the church, which symbolizes common sense and the requirements of morality that are safeguarded by the people and by time. In our opinion, this is the kind of approach that makes it possible to determine the degree of the population's religiousness more accurately and objectively, without bias, without putting belief and unbelief in opposition to each other" [14, p. 159].

We have already presented an elaborated substantiation of the conception of the qualitative conversion of a subject from a state of "not involved in religion" into a state of religiousness, based on

a comparative analysis of the approaches to the determination of religiousness that are established in the sociology of religion in this country [9, pp. 153–68]. Let us cite the conclusions that serve as the conceptual base for the formulation of a methodology of empirical analysis of secular vis-à-vis religious intercultural interaction.

From our point of view, the mere fact that a respondent defines himself as “a believer” and “an Orthodox believer” (and, likewise, as a “Muslim,” a “Catholic,” or a representative of some other traditional religion or faith), is not sufficient to classify him as such. As has been pointed out more than once by M.P. Mchedlov, very often “religious self-identification is not made on the basis of actually being affiliated with some particular religion but rather on the basis of assigning oneself to a particular culture or national way of life” [10, p. 50]. For this reason, as we seek to determine the actual level of religious culture empirically, we are going on the basis of a combination of the respondent’s *subjective indicator* of his religiousness (his self-identification in terms of religion and denomination), and its *objective indicator*, mainly the fact that in the life and world of the respondent there is a minimal aspect of the relevant religious culture, in which the potential of its self-organization is concentrated. At the same time, the actual degree of the development of such an aspect—the number of its structural elements and the complexity of the connections among them, does not play a fundamental role. What does play a role is its potential, the possibility in the future of rising to a degree of development that will make it possible to integrate the subject’s social knowledge and, in this way, to make a cultural synthesis of the basic secular component and the “new” religious component. In its most harmonious variant, such a synthesis will, in certain key features, resemble P.A. Sorokin’s integrated or “idealistic” system of culture—“a more or less balanced compound of ideational and emotional elements, with, however, a preponderance of ideational elements. . . . Its needs and aims are spiritual and material, but the material aspects are subordinate to the spiritual aspects” [13, p. 50].

From our point of view, the necessity and sufficiency of the objective component of the criterion of religiousness are met by the individual’s value orientation toward the *priority of the value*

of religious belief. This orientation is expressed with maximum precision in this passage from the Gospel “Lord, I believe! Help thou mine unbelief!” [Mark 9:24]. What that means is that for the individual, the value of religious faith is of a terminal character: the individual does not feel that he has reached the necessary state of belief, but strives to do so since it represents a very important—if not the most important—value and goal of his life. That kind of craving for belief is the constant of religiousness (and at the same time the minimum of involvement in the religious culture) that characterizes the individual as one who “is already affiliated” with religion. At any rate, this can be rightly applied to the Christian traditions. As far as the subjective component of the criterion of religiousness is concerned, moreover, which is expressed in the indicators of the respondents’ religious and denominational self-identification, their main function is to orient the individual toward a specific religious culture. Consequently, if an individual for whom religious belief is a value that is of a terminal character subjectively considers himself to be a believer and identifies with the Orthodox tradition, for example, then it is reasonable to say that his consciousness includes a minimal aspect of the Orthodox religious culture.

We submit that what constitutes a sociologically relevant criterion of an individual’s religiousness is the religious culture that has become firmly rooted in his consciousness and has a substantial influence (whether actual or potential) on his manner of thinking and way of life. In the case of the specific individual or group, the subminimal indicator of the presence of that culture is expressed in the value dominant of religious belief that is combined with the corresponding religious and denominational self-identification (for example, “believer” and “Orthodox”). Such a combination is an indication that a systemic nucleus of self-organizing religious culture has come to be formed in the consciousness of the individual (or the set of people), a nucleus that in time is capable of transforming the entire initial secular cultural representant in the corresponding key.

We have taken the integrated aggregate set of sociocultural values to serve as the basis of the social and cognitive structure of the

cultural representant. "The system of values forms the inner core of the culture, the spiritual quintessence of the needs and interests of people and social communities" [7, p. 47]. To a large extent, the values, which are the basic guidelines of social knowledge, determine the basis of cultural identity. At the same time, we supplement the hierarchical approach to the analysis of the correlation of values that is traditional in sociology, in accordance with which "the hierarchy of values is determined by the basic conceptions about what is the most important and significant for the individual as these are prevalent in the specific culture" [1, p. 543], with a syndromatic approach that takes account of "combinations of value choices that consist of central, nuclear ideas about what is good, and values that are peripheral with respect to these nuclei" [6, p. 56].

To serve as a simplified sociocognitive matrix of intercultural interactions we compiled and tested a scale consisting of twenty value positions, including nineteen secular terminal values and the control value "religious belief." The method of the study was based on comparing and contrasting the structure of the respondents' values and the way that the structure is connected with a change in the relevance of the value of religious belief. To serve as absolute indicators of the relevance of axiological elements we made use of the parameters of the mean value and mean quadratic deviation. For the purpose of discerning any latent or hidden patterns and tendencies with respect to the functional relation between axiological elements of social knowledge of interaction of cultures, we made use of cluster analysis (the Clustering Method Simple Average program [Weighted Pair-Group] with the "Manhattan" distance type, which is included in the licensed package of the NCSS 2003 and PASS 2002 programs). With a high degree of probability the combination of the minimal mean connections and the maximum tightness of cluster connections characterizes that set of values as the nucleus of a sociocognitive structure, a nucleus that determines the chief guidelines of the consciousness and the behavior of the subject. A lowering of the corresponding indicators goes hand in hand with the values' transition into the status of peripheral values.

In the course of an empirical study we conducted in September and October 2005, a survey was made of a sample contingent of

students in Belgorod, Moscow, and Nizhnii Novgorod oblasts between the ages of fourteen and seventeen ($N = 710$). The survey was carried out on a quota, multistage sample: equal quotas were maintained in terms of gender, place of residence (city or countryside), and in accordance with the criterion of whether religious disciplines of a denominational (Orthodox) orientation were or were not studied in the schools.

Among the contingent of young students who were surveyed, the study found all four basic positions that correspond to the various social and cognitive strategies for overcoming the contradictions between the representants of the secular culture and the religious culture.

The first position that corresponds to the criterion of religiousness designated above characterizes 24.8 percent of the sample set. All of them, while they are secular people owing to their social origin and were given a “conventional” secular upbringing in the home and in school, nonetheless identify themselves as religious believers of the Orthodox faith, and they back this up by acknowledging the priority (the terminal character) of their value orientation toward religious belief and the corresponding self-identification. Accordingly, these young people are classified as those who have in some way allowed elements of the Orthodox religious culture into their consciousness. These elements have the potential to become fixed in their consciousness and to further develop the acculturative religious complex. In doing so they face the problem of finding a permanent resolution to the contradictions between the authentic elements of their social knowledge that were shaped by the secular culture and the elements that have been borrowed from the “socio-cultural table” of the Orthodox culture.

The characteristics of the respondents who have adopted that position, compared with analogous characteristics of those who have taken different positions in regard to religious culture, are of particular importance in the context of our study. This subgroup of respondents, with a high degree of probability, today represent the primary if not the only “human resource” of any actual influence by the Russian Orthodox Church in the mass general education schools, and, accordingly, they represent one of the most important

potentials for the church's social influence in the foreseeable future.

On the other hand, the "secularist" variants of the development of the secular culture are presumably represented by the second position, which looks at religious belief as a kind of tool, and the fourth position, in which religious belief is virtually on the brink of irrelevancy. In the case of the second position, the value of religious belief (and, accordingly, everything that has to do with religion) is solidly legitimized in the consciousness of the subject as a serviceable, instrumental value; attempts to legitimize it as a terminal value are potentially capable of provoking internal, personal conflicts in the subject who is a representative of that cultural attitude. A total of 21.4 percent among the sample set held that position.

In the case of the fourth position, religious belief does not have any kind of significant value to the individual at all; for that individual, religion is basically a matter of indifference. This position characterizes 17.5 percent of the sample.

And finally, the third position (making up 27.9 percent of the sample), by definition corresponds to the mindset of "situational" religiousness; it is not of a solid character. It is our opinion, at the same time, that this specific status position is connected with potential changes and risks of secular-religious intercultural interaction. Theoretically, interpersonal conflicts are quite likely in the group that represents this cultural attitude, in connection with the possible polarization of attitudes toward religion.

And so, on the basis of the findings of the survey it is reasonable to suggest that we can say that religion (in this case, Orthodox Christianity) has a real influence on about one-quarter of the graduates of secondary general education schools whose primary socialization took place under conditions of the "religious boom" and the general sociocultural crisis of the 1990s and after. Nonetheless, this still does not enable us to judge how strongly expressed this influence is and what its qualitative characteristics are.

We can obtain an idea of how the complex of the Orthodox culture that is taking shape in the consciousness of the younger generation is influencing the secular culture by comparing the value hierarchy of respondents' religious and secular subgroups.

In the opinion of a number of authoritative social thinkers, a

sociocultural split has been formed in Russia and is becoming deeper. It “runs through the very nucleus of people’s values and divides them in terms of their attitudes toward problems of existence, toward major problems. People take different positions not because the ‘truth’ is not complete or that they lack information, but rather as a consequence of their moral choice. To put it another way, two different systems of moral values have come into being in Russia, and each of them has its own flag and its own language” [5, p. 312]. What this refers to are the traditional and the neoliberal systems of values, the latter characterized by a pronounced antisystemic influence on the traditional Russian social code. A.S. Panarin summarizes this as follows: “The new liberal doctrine legitimizes wholesale corruption, civic irresponsibility, money grubbing instincts, and even outright national treason in accordance with the ideology of unlimited individualism and the morality of success” [11, p. 225]. In this connection it is of particular interest to verify the comparative influence on the value sphere of students by that ideology, on the one hand, and traditional religion (the Orthodox religion), on the other hand.

In accordance with the data of the cluster analysis as verified by statistical indicators of mean values and the mean quadratic deviation, all four status positions are characterized by a constant content of the sociocognitive nucleus. This nucleus is represented by the values “health,” “family,” and “education.” On the whole, this corresponds to the representative national data of a survey of values conducted under the aegis of the “Tomsk Initiative” project in 2000, according to which “in all groups of respondents . . . the first few values . . . are absolutely identical” [1, p. 188]. The relevant group of values, as a rule, included “health,” “family,” and “security.” Since we did not include on the list the strongest “vital” values, such as “life,” “security,” and so on, with the exception of the value “health,” the place of the latter was held by the value “education.”

In three subgroups out of four subgroups (the second status position was the exception), the value “motherland” was also added to the axiological elements listed above. These values in all of the subgroups that represent the main status positions, are character-

ized by the lowest indicators of provisional mean values (1.1–1.3 in the case of the value “health”; 1.1–1.4 in the case of the value “family”; and 1.3–1.5 in the case of the value “education”) and by some of the smallest indicators (0.4–0.7; 0.5–0.8; and 0.6–0.8, respectively). At the same time, analysis consistently records a high level of density of the cluster connections among these values, one that either corresponds to the maximum on the tree diagram or approaches it.

Nonetheless, the differences both in the makeup of the basic value structures and in the hierarchy of the elements that form them seem indicative. For example, the highest level of relevance for the first status position marks the values “religious belief,” “family,” “motherland,” “respect for the elderly,” “health,” and “education.” According to the criteria substantiated above, these are the axiological elements that, with the highest degree of probability, make up the value structure of the social and cognitive pattern that forms the life and world of the first subgroup of students. It is characteristic, moreover, that the indicator of the distance between the closest elements of the first cluster—the values of “religious belief” and “family” (0.144) is a great deal lower than the indicators of the distance between the closest values in the other status subgroups (from 0.285 to 0.332). This provides indirect indication of the presence of latent or even explicit ideas that link them in the consciousness of the respondents in the first subgroup.

In turn, the analogous indicators of the second and fourth subgroups, which represent solidly secular status positions, differ from the indicators of the first subgroup to the same extent that they are similar among themselves. In both the second and the fourth subgroup of respondents the composition of the nucleus of the sociocognitive pattern included just three basic axiological elements (“health,” “family,” and “education”). Any difference between the corresponding status positions in this regard was manifested only in the priorities. For example, the second position is characterized by the maximum closeness of the link between “health” and “education,” whereas the value “family” is farther away from them, an indication that the first two values have higher priority. On the other hand, the fourth position exhibits the maximum correlation

between the values “health” and “family,” whereas the value of education lags a bit behind them.

As far as the third status position is concerned, the value nucleus of the social and cognitive structure that corresponds to that position is also represented by the cluster “health”—“family”—“education.” In this regard, the corresponding subgroup of students showed an almost identical similarity to the fourth position. Any occasional turning to religious belief does not bring most of the members of this subgroup to substantial change in their inner world, and it remains on the level of a superficial social sentiment.

A number of conclusions follow from the data cited above.

—In the first place, no substantial differences in the most important value orientations were found between religious and nonreligious respondents. Accordingly, neither religiousness nor its absence revealed any connection with fundamental changes in the constant value priorities.

—Second, the respondents’ assimilation of a system-forming element of the Orthodox religious culture is linked to a noticeable expansion of the axiological nucleus of the current culture. This provides evidence of the value constructive function of the Orthodox religious complex, which, for respondents, legitimizes the important sociocultural values (in short supply these days) of “motherland” and “respect for the elderly.”

—Third, the expansion of the axiological nucleus in the case of religious believers is taking place exclusively on the basis of the values that have been traditionally legitimized in the Orthodox religious culture as among the most important ones (“motherland” and “respect for the elderly”). This also provides indirect evidence that the corresponding value priorities are linked to the religiousness of the students and find religious legitimization in their consciousness. This assumption is corroborated by the fact that these “accompanying” values, which have been introduced into the nucleus along with the value of religious belief, show a considerably higher degree of closeness of the cluster connections with this matter, compared to the constant values of the nucleus of the secular culture (with the exception of the value “family”).

In sum, on the whole the individual’s attitude toward religion

derives from the meeting and established interaction between the secular culture and the religious culture in his life and world. One's lack of religiousness means one has essentially put religious culture out of one's life and perceives religion as a purely external reference. Conversely, the presence of religiousness involves an ongoing "unwrapping" (as V.V. Nalimov has put it) of the semantic package of some particular religious culture of a particular denomination. In the former case the individual is confined within the meaningful horizon of the secular culture that he is familiar with, and he either keeps himself distant from any active assimilation of religious cognitions or else selectively assimilates a few of them as peripheral elements of his life and world. In the latter case, on the other hand, the individual initiates active interaction between the elements of the secular culture that he assimilated "with his mother's milk" and the actual elements of the religious culture of the religion that he wants to and strives to profess. Corresponding to this process is the individual's practical involvement in the sociocultural space of the religion he has chosen, his secondary inculturation or socialization.

The findings of the survey have shown that the axiological nucleus of the social and cognitive representant that is relevant to the respondents maintains its constant content without regard to whether the relevance of religion and the religious culture increases or diminishes in their life. Consequently, the anticipated "breakdown" of Russian secular culture in terms of values, amid the formation of social and cognitive strategies of attitudes toward religion, did not occur, and any polarization of societal values does not constitute a decisive factor to account for why young people turn to or distance themselves from religion.

Proceeding on this basis, there are insufficient grounds for predicting an implacable conflict of values in the foreseeable future between secular culture and Orthodox religious culture among the students surveyed. The data obtained provide evidence that the contradiction between religious and secular consciousness is not overlaid on any fundamental axiological fracture within the secular culture, which as a result of such an overlay could come to serve as the basis for a protracted permanent conflict between the Orthodox

religiousness that is being reborn and the secular culture that still retains its social “advantage.”

At the same time, it is instructive to note that three-quarters of the students surveyed, who objectively hold an unreligious position, exhibited fewer differences in the composition and correlation of their value priorities. This provides evidence not only of perceptible divergences between young people who are or are not believers, but also of a predominant secularity in the value and worldview attitudes and orientations of the kind of subject of general education who was shaped during the “era of changes” in the 1990s. As the findings have shown, so far this secularity has not been destructive; it has not tended to push the most socially significant values onto the periphery of the individual’s life or to replace them with the values of individualism and hedonism. The secular culture that has been assimilated by young people whose primary socialization took place during the catastrophic postmodern era in Russia, even though that culture has lost its most effective ideological guidelines, continues to retain its constructive potential as it remains standing on a solid platform of tradition. It is reasonable to suggest that this circumstance fosters the constructive influence of the Orthodox religious culture on the religious consciousness of the respondents.

At the same time, along with the aspects that they have in common, there is a significant difference in the number and structure of authentic cultural representants in the case of the respondents whose value and worldview choice is for the Orthodox religious and cultural tradition and those who retain a secular outlook. The young people’ assimilation of the dominant of religious belief has shown a link with real changes in their sphere of values and in their life as a whole. Moreover, there is good reason to believe that these changes are constructive, since they go hand in hand with an expansion of the axiological nucleus thanks to important traditional values such as “motherland” and “respect for the elderly,” and they are spreading to about one-quarter of the senior students in the secondary general education schools, students of the middle of the first decade of the twenty-first century. We hope to verify the data obtained definitively by means of a survey conducted on a national representative sample.

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