

PECULIARITIES OF THE DICHOTOMOUS PERSPECTIVE IN THE ANALYSIS OF RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR THOUGHT

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Abstract: *This thesis analyzes the possibilities and limitations of the dichotomous approach in studying the religious consciousness of youth in O‘zbekiston. The study argues that dividing youth consciousness into opposing poles such as “good–evil” or “religious–secular” does not fully reflect the real situation. Youth consciousness is shaped in the modern information environment, possessing dynamic, multidimensional, and changeable characteristics. Therefore, the application of multidimensional and comprehensive approaches in this field is scientifically justified.*

Keywords: *youth, religious consciousness, dichotomous approach, secularization, desecularization, social transformation, values, sociology, religious studies*

Annotatsiya: *Ushbu tezisdagi O‘zbekiston yoshlarining diniy ongini o‘rganishda dixotomik yondashuvning imkoniyat va cheklovlari tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqotda yoshlar tafakkurini “yaxshi–yomon”, “diniy–sekulyar” kabi qarama-qarshi qutblarga ajratish real holatni to‘liq aks ettirmasligi asoslab beriladi. Yoshlar ongi zamonaviy axborot makonida shakllanib, dinamik, ko‘p qirrali va o‘zgaruvchan xususiyat kasb etayotgani ko‘rsatiladi. Shu bois mazkur sohada ko‘p o‘lchovli va kompleks yondashuvlarni qo‘llash zarurligi ilmiy jihatdan asoslanadi.*

Kalit so‘zlar: *yoshlar, diniy ong, dixotomik yondashuv, sekulyarizatsiya, desekulyarizatsiya, ijtimoiy transformatsiya, qadriyatlar, Sotsiologiya, Dinshunoslik*

Аннотация: *В данном тезисе анализируются возможности и ограничения дихотомического подхода при изучении религиозного сознания молодежи Узбекистана. В исследовании обосновывается, что деление сознания молодежи на противоположные полюса, такие как «добро–зло», «религиозное–светское», не полностью отражает реальную ситуацию. Сознание молодежи формируется в условиях современного информационного пространства, обладает динамичным, многомерным и изменчивым характером. Поэтому для изучения этой сферы научно обосновано применение многомерных и комплексных подходов.*

Ключевые слова: *молодежь, религиозное сознание, дихотомический подход, секуляризация, десекуляризация, социальная трансформация, ценности, социология, религиоведение*

Introduction

Globalization and informatization processes are bringing profound changes to modern society, particularly influencing the worldview of youth in Uzbekistan. The relationship between religious and secular values in the consciousness of young people is becoming complex and multifaceted.

In contemporary conditions, traditional methodological approaches to studying youth religious thinking, in particular dichotomous perspectives, require reconsideration. This is because such approaches often oversimplify social reality, limiting it to opposing categories such as “religious–secular” or “good–evil” [1, p. 25].

The aim of this study is to analyze the scientific possibilities and limitations of a dichotomous approach in examining youth religious consciousness.

The research hypothesis is that analyzing youth religious thinking based on a dichotomous approach does not fully reflect the real situation and is scientifically insufficient.

Theoretical Foundations of the Dichotomous Approach

The dichotomous approach is based on analyzing social phenomena through two opposing poles. It is widely used in the fields of sociology and religious studies.

In this approach, societal processes are classified as follows:

- Religious ↔ Secular
- Traditional ↔ Modern
- Radical ↔ Moderate

However, Peter L. Berger, in his work *The Sacred Canopy*, emphasizes that religion is a complex system of meaning-making in society [1, p. 27]. In his subsequent studies, he notes processes of desecularization, showing that religion maintains its role in society [2, p. 5].

Similarly, Jürgen Habermas, through the concept of the post-secular society, argues for the simultaneous existence of religion and secularity [3, p. 19].

Charles Taylor also asserts that in modern society, an individual’s religious and secular identity can coexist [4, p. 302].

Specific Features of Youth Religious Consciousness

Today, youth are shaped under the influence of information technologies, the Internet, and global culture. This brings the following characteristics to their religious thinking:

1. Dynamism – young people’s views are rapidly changing and constantly evolving.
2. Hybridity – religious and secular values coexist and manifest together.
3. Interactivity – the abundance of information sources fosters independent thinking.
4. Individualization – each young person’s religious perspective has unique features.

These aspects are also related to the processes of “reflexive modernization” highlighted by Anthony Giddens, where individuals independently form their worldview.

These processes give rise to the following characteristics in the religious thinking of modern youth:

Firstly, youth perspectives are dynamic and constantly changing [6, p. 75].

Example: A young person may initially adhere only to traditional religious teachings but, through participation in online religious discussions and exposure to international media, expands their understanding and learns about various sects and perspectives. This illustrates the practical manifestation of dynamism and ongoing exploration.

Secondly, the worldview of youth is hybrid, meaning religious and secular values coexist [5, 6].

Example: A young person may perform prayers and support spiritual values while also engaging with global culture and modern industrial values, demonstrating the hybrid nature of their worldview.

Thirdly, the diversity of information sources leads to the development of independent thinking among youth, which is connected to the reflexive modernization processes described by Anthony Giddens [6, p. 80].

Example: Youth acquire various religious and cultural knowledge from YouTube and Telegram, compare different perspectives, and form their own personal opinions. This reflects independent and reflexive thinking.

Fourthly, as Ulrich Beck emphasizes, modern individuals develop an “individual religion” model, acting partially independently of traditional religious institutions [7, p. 45].

Example: Youth adapt religious rules to their lives, practicing rituals within family and friends circles without necessarily being active in formal religious organizations. This demonstrates their individualized and personal model of religion.

Limitations of the Dichotomous Approach

The dichotomous approach presents several challenges when analyzing youth religious consciousness.

1. Reductionism

Firstly, the dichotomous approach is reductionist in nature, as it simplifies complex social processes into two opposing categories [1, p. 30].

Example: When analyzing the religious consciousness of school-aged youth, they may be categorized simply as “religious” or “secular.” However, in reality, some young people engage in religious practices while also embracing global modern values. This highlights the unreliability of dichotomous classification.

2. Neglecting Dynamism

This approach does not account for the dynamic nature of youth consciousness and portrays it as static [6, p. 82].

Example: A young person may participate in online religious and scientific discussions with friends, initially adhering only to traditional beliefs, but later expand their views under the influence of online lectures and international media. The dichotomous model fails to capture this evolution.

3. Ignoring Context

Dichotomous perspectives inadequately consider social contexts such as education, family, and media influence [5, p. 10].

Example: A young person's religious views may be shaped by family upbringing, university instructors, and online media. For instance, if a family supports traditional religious values while the university encourages critical thinking and media exposes the youth to various sects and cultural perspectives, a dichotomous model does not take these contexts into account.

4. Normativity and Evaluative Categories

Evaluative categories such as "good–evil" negatively affect scientific objectivity.

Example: Labeling religiously active youth as "good" and secular or independently minded youth as "bad" is difficult and unjust. In reality, each young person's perspective is shaped by diverse reasons and contexts, making evaluative categories misleading.

Alternative Approaches to Analyzing Youth Religious Consciousness

Given the limitations of the dichotomous approach, the following alternative methodologies are crucial for studying youth religious consciousness:

1. Multidimensional Analysis

Multidimensional analysis allows for evaluating youth religious consciousness across multiple dimensions [1, p. 27; 6, p. 75].

Example: When studying youth religion, attention is not only paid to ritual and rules but also to:

- Information sources: books, internet, media, family [1, p. 30].
- Social environment: school, university, friends, family [6, p. 75].
- Personal practices: prayer, charity, participation in religious ceremonies [6, p. 75].

Thus, a young person may simultaneously participate in traditional ceremonies and online religious discussions. Multidimensional analysis allows consideration of these diverse aspects at once [1, p. 27].

2. Interdisciplinary Research

An interdisciplinary approach integrates sociology, psychology, religious studies, and media studies [5, 6; 2, p. 15].

Example:

- Sociological surveys collect information about youth religious practices [5, 6].
- Psychological analysis examines their spiritual motivation and personal values [6, p. 80].
- Religious studies provide data on religious education and sectarian knowledge [4, p. 120].
- Media studies analyze the influence of online content on youth [7, p. 45].

This approach enables understanding youth consciousness not just from a single disciplinary perspective but within complex social and cultural contexts [2, p. 15].

3. Empirical Sociological Methods

Empirical methods allow precise and evidence-based analysis of youth consciousness [6, p. 80; 3, p. 50].

Examples:

- Surveys: Gathering data on religious practices, values, and media usage among 200 youth [6, p. 80].
- Interviews: Conducting in-depth conversations to fully understand opinions and motivations [3, p. 50].
- Focus groups: Organizing discussion sessions to observe diverse views and debates [5, 6].

These methods help identify individual and context-dependent factors often overlooked in dichotomous approaches [6, p. 80].

4. Interpretative Approach

The interpretative approach analyzes youth thinking not only through indicators but by understanding their cognitive processes and meanings [7, p. 45; 2, p. 18].

Example: Youth may respond differently to the question, “Why is prayer important?” Some answer for spiritual peace, some for tradition, and others under social influence [7, p. 45]. Interpretative analysis links these responses to context and personal motivation without reducing them to simplified categories like “good–evil” [2, p. 18].

Expected Outcomes

Applying these four approaches allows research to:

- Represent youth consciousness realistically and dynamically [6, p. 75];
- Consider social and cultural contexts [5, 6];
- Understand individual and collective experiences [3, p. 50];
- Mitigate the limitations of the dichotomous perspective [7, p. 45].

Discussion

The study results indicate that strictly classifying youth religious consciousness in a dichotomous form is scientifically limited. In reality, youth often occupy intermediate positions. Therefore, in contemporary research, the dichotomous approach should be used only as a supplementary tool, with primary focus on comprehensive analysis.

Analysis shows that strictly interpreting youth religious consciousness dichotomously is scientifically constrained. Youth views are often positioned between extremes and shaped by multiple factors. This suggests that the dichotomous approach should be seen as a supportive tool rather than an independent methodology.

Conclusion

In conclusion, while the dichotomous approach offers some analytical insight into youth religious consciousness, it cannot fully reflect the real situation. Given the dynamic, multifaceted, and hybrid nature of contemporary youth thinking, comprehensive and adaptive methodologies are necessary. Thus, the proposed hypothesis is confirmed: the dichotomous approach alone is insufficient for studying youth religious thinking.

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