
PHILOSOPHIES OF GLOBALIZATION

THE SECOND AXIAL AGE AND METAMORPHOSES OF RELIGIOUS CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE 'CHRISTIAN WORLD'

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Departing from Karl Jaspers's prominent conception of the 800–200 BCE as the Axial Age, the author argues that from the late 15th century and especially from the mid-18th century up to now the world is experiencing the second Axial Age, that is a new period of radical change of the whole human culture paradigm. Among many other significant differences between the two Axial Ages, the author emphasizes the difference in the place and role of religion in the transformation processes with special reference to the present-day fortune and foreseeable future of Christianity in what is usually called the 'Christian World', or 'Christiandom' in the historical retrospect. The article finishes with pointing out the paradox that while globalization is making the world more and more integrated, the dechristianized atheistic consciousness of those who belong to the civilization that heads the globalization process represents the world as progressively fragmentary and unsystematic.

Keywords: Axial Age, religion, Christian world, heterarchy, homoarchy.

Religion and Transformations of the Axial Ages

As a true idealist philosopher, Karl Jaspers (1949) was mostly concerned with changes in the spiritual life, particularly in religion. Even if he did not want to represent them as *the* prime mover of the whole Axial Age (c. 800 – c. 200 BCE with the climax in c. 500 BCE) transition, the Jaspersian tradition continued most prominently by Shmuel Eisenstadt (e.g., 1982, 1986b) is in fact that of relating the Axial Age changes to spiritual transformations and of studying sociopolitical and other 'non-spiritual' novelties the Axial Age brought in their context, upon their background, as more or less strictly determined by them. Furthermore, there is even something almost mystical in Jaspers's idealistic treatment of the Axial Age: according to him, the ideas that brought the Axial Age with its changes into being arose actually from nowhere – without any clear prerequisites, *deus ex machina*, simultaneously in several (Jaspers wrote 'three' but in fact meant four) unrelated parts of Eurasia and, being amazingly similar in those three culture areas (China, India, and the Occident [Palestine and Greece]), those ideas led to yet even more amazingly similar results.

Certainly, contemporary thought, still following most often Jaspers's idealistic vision in general, is modifying some of its basic tenets. The sociopolitical sphere of the Axial Age cultures is now recognized as interrelated with the spiritual sphere in a complex, not unidirectional way, as having 'autonomous dynamics' (Arnason *et al.* 2005). Not only similarities but also significant differences between processes and results of the Axial

Age in the three areas are now emphasized, up to insisting on the necessity to speak of 'multiple axialities' (Arnason *et al.* 2005; Bellah 2005) by analogy with the paradigm of 'multiple modernities' emerging within the same circle of research and researchers (Eisenstadt 2000; Roniger and Waisman 2002).

We may not share Jaspers and others' (see, *e.g.*, Voegelin 1957; Bellah 1976; Hick 1989; Neville 2002; Armstrong 2006) idealistic stance, but it would definitely be unreasonable to ignore the fact that changes in the realm of spiritual, including those in religious consciousness and religious systems, are indicators and at the same time catalysts of more general and inclusive transformations in all the spheres of societies, or cultures as anthropologists prefer to call them – social, political, economic and so on – in humans' struggle for survival, not only physical but social as well. Even more so: it goes without saying that religion as belief in supernatural in all its forms has been determining the picture of the universe including the place of society and the individual in it, the meaning and goal of life, the mode of behavior in the humans' minds for thousands and thousands of years. Throughout this very long time religions also served as social and political 'philosophies' and 'ideologies' legitimizing or delegitimizing all forms of sociopolitical organization and types of sociopolitical institutions. Hence, the present state of the religious consciousness has a direct bearing to the transition to the new, Second Axial Age (AAII) postulated by some scholars (*e.g.*, Lambert 1999; Landon 2010; for details see below) and is definitely worth considering from this standpoint.

Christianity and the Coming of a New Axial Age

Jaspers especially stressed the continuity of the 'modern' culture from 'axial' ('traditional'), on the one hand, and radical change of the cultural paradigm at transition to the axial from the 'preaxial' ('archaic') culture, on the other. Just because of this he denoted the epoch of the archaic culture's change by traditional in the global scale as the 'Axial Age': according to Jaspers, that was the sharpest turn in history. It can be presumed that the humankind have not quite realized the fact of the current cultural paradigm's new change yet, and especially, do not imagine the degree of its radicalism. The human history in general and spiritual in particular is now finishing not just a next stage, but a coil: from the preaxial cultures through axial and close to them modern to 'postaxial' which on a number of parameters and in some important displays appear similar to archaic cultures, despite the fundamental nature of distinctions between them (Andreeva *et al.* 2005a: 28–29).

Our discussion here will be limited mostly to what is called the 'Christian world', or Christiandom. This does not mean at all that we regard the processes in the 'worlds' of other religions as irrelevant for it, or furthermore, as having no significant specific features. However, it should be taken into account that *volens nolens* in the contemporary globalizing world it is just historically its Christian part that, at least today, still sets the agenda and rules of the game for the rest. Probably it will not be so in the future, even more or less foreseeable (Bondarenko 2008a, 2009), but at present it is still the fact. So, we can suppose that the situation characteristic of the Christian world is typical of, adequate to, and critically important for the forming AAII culture. The global spread of secular education, science, and mass media, Western in origin and translating contemporary Western values, plants the seeds of the new culture worldwide (see, *e.g.*, Marranci 2010). Note that Jaspers himself related the coming of the (First)

Axial Age (AAI) to simultaneous changes in a number of very different civilizations while he actually related the transition from 'traditional' to 'rational' (modern) culture to changes just in one civilization – Western, thus emphasizing the global meaning and consequences of this local breakthrough. In our subsequent discussion we depart from the same vision.

The prehistory of contemporary state of religious consciousness in the Christian world is long. From the mid-18th century gradual turning into atheization of the process of Christian societies' secularization has been taking place. In its turn, secularization began with transition from the Middle Ages to the Modern Time and found especially vivid displays in such cultural and socio-political phenomena as the Renaissance, Great Geographic Discoveries, Reformation, religious wars, early bourgeois revolutions, rapid development of science (in particular natural sciences) and technology, rationalist philosophy, and realistic fine art.

Although the spiritual background for secularization was prepared already in the Middle Ages (Le Goff 1991; Barber 2004), the new world outlook eventually differed radically from the medieval Christian view of the world as absolutely impenetrable for the weak human mind as it was seen by medieval people not as rationally organized, objective, directed by laws of nature, but created by God's will, without any regularities but just because God wanted it to look like that. One of the most important outcomes of the worldview transformation was the change in the vision of the person's position in the world and his/her duty in it: now s/he was considered as being able to realize how the world is rationally organized, this world became valuable *per se*, not as a preparation to the afterlife only, and now the person felt as the one who must actively participate in organizing and shaping the social world (as part of the world in general) basing on the rational, objective, demystified 'natural laws' of the Universe, including the human society with its history as its part (see, *e.g.*, Breisach 1994: 77–214; Kramer and Maza 2002: 78–142; Grinin 2010, 2: 151–183; 3: 187–198) that (as if) became known to him/her. In the process of secularization of the late 15th – mid-18th centuries, intertwined with that of economic and social modernization, the immediate prerequisites for the contemporary (Modern European) democratic civil society formation developed. Both theoretical analysis and comparison of the spiritual, cultural conditions of the contemporary (Modern European) and ancient (Antique) democratic civil society formation lead to the conclusion that rationalization of consciousness, secularization (but by no means an inevitable atheization) of consciousness and culture are necessary preconditions for the appearance of society of this type as such, in any historical form (with respect to Antiquity, see, *e.g.*, Vernan 1965; Tumans 2002).

One can see the symptoms of secularization beginning to turn into atheization already in the phenomena of Enlightenment, industrial revolution and the rise of the industrial world. It is not by chance that Jaspers distinguished the Modern Time from the epoch of traditional cultures dominated by religious monotheistic consciousness. However, even the most radical trends in Protestantism naturally remained religious teachings by nature: achieving the eternal life with God in the Paradise was unavoidably recognized as the final meaning of existence and activity of the person in this world, and the reaching of the ideal, including social, in this world was viewed as impossible. What was changed in comparison to the previous, medieval, epoch was not the meaning and goal of being but the means of their achieving: the vision of the way to the soul's saving. Now this way consisted not in exaltation of the spirit in prayers and

neglect to, or even renunciation from the blessings of this world, but in the vigorous activity in this world. Any religion in this or that way orients the person at the transcendental values of being, fills everything real, included in this world, with the higher, sacral meaning, besides the meaning obvious, profane. For a bearer of truly religious consciousness (completely notwithstanding his/her adherence to a definite denomination) the profane is just an indistinct reflexion, hardly distinguishable sign and simultaneously doubtless revealing of the sacral as the higher and uniquely authentic reality (Eliade 1957). In Christianity such a perception of 'this world' was conceptualized by Neo-Platonists of the first centuries AD (Barber 2004: 386–389), especially profoundly by St. Augustine, an early Church Father who grounded the idea that the whole visible world is only a chain of signs testifying to the Founder who is above it (see Stepantsov 2001).

Nevertheless, gradually in the historically Christian societies religious values began to transform implicitly in especially ethical, non-transcendental ones, destined to promote humans' well-being in this world as the final meaning and goal of their life, and not as the way of approaching God and eternal life with Him in the Paradise. In the socio-political sphere it found a vivid reflection in the typical from the late 18th century on phenomenon of the so-called 'civil religions'. These are ideologies that, notwithstanding their particular stances – democratic, communist, nationalist, *etc.* – always confirm belief in the possibility of achieving the absolute blessing and building up the ideal society here and now, being instilled in consciousness of people, in whose pictures of the universe there is no place for God any longer. As civil religions eliminate everything transcendent, truly religious from the picture of the universe and orient their adherents at achieving the ideal due to the force of human reason and will in this, profane, world, now openly declared and implicitly perceived as the only real one, these are quasi-, pseudo- and even antireligions in their deep nature. One of the first attempts of creation a civil religion, a very indicative, baring the essence of the phenomenon, was the replacement of Christianity with the Cult of Reason by the late 18th century French revolutionaries of the Hébertist faction (see Smiley 1966). On the other hand, it is also remarkable that when a civil religion crushes, its former adherents can seek a new spiritual soil under their feet in true religions, although their mastering is most often not more than formal or superficial (for example, in respect of the 'revival' of Orthodox Christianity in post-Soviet Russia see, among others, Bondarenko *et al.* 2007).

It is remarkable that only the Industrial Revolution of the 18th – 19th centuries put an end to the epoch of power sacralization in the global scale (Gundlach 1992; Bondarenko *et al.* 2005), as well as that Reformation although undermined, but did not destroy the sacral backgrounds of the monarchs' power in the popular consciousness (even in such 'progressive' countries of the Early Modern Time as England and furthermore France: see, *e.g.*, Bloch 1924; Lowie 1948: 187; Zaller 1998). For power's being sacral the whole society must be 'sacral', truly religious in terms of its members' worldview. In the world where the transcendental beginning allocates all real, the power, its institutions and holders cannot but be allocated by it, too. Reformation was unable to destroy these backgrounds just because the Protestant societies remained Christian, that is truly religious. '...[S]ecularization of political and social life of the European nations became a distant in time result of Reformation, but Reformation itself was "the second baptizing of Europe", the transition to a new quality of religiosity' (Andreeva *et al.* 2005b: 225). Indeed, '[t]he Reformations, Protestant and Catholic, ... set out to sacralize the whole

of society, and ended up creating the long-term conditions for its secularization' (Marshall 2009: 133).

Only in the end of the 18th century, when in a specific historical and cultural situation the values of Protestantism were *de facto* transformed from religious and sacral into ethical to a decisive degree, 'the state really limited to the profane goals appeared in the USA...' for the first time in history in 1776 (Spieker 2001: 39). Characteristically, at the same time (during the 1760–1780s) the transition from religious toleration to religious pluralism took place in the North American colonies and then the young independent state (Beneke 2006). The direct connection between consolidation of democracy and desacralization of power is evident: the final reason for the sacralized power's existence is the ensuring of 'proper' relations between the humans and the supernatural forces, while under democracy the power must serve the society directly and immediately. 'Sacralization' of totalitarian rulers in modern and contemporary cultures is a quasisacralization to the same degree and due to the same reasons as civil religions are quasireligions and in fact the rejection of, and substitution for true religions; in Europe it was an outcome of its gradual dechristianization in the 18th – 20th centuries (see Andreeva *et al.* 2005a: 13–14).

Christianity, the AAI, and Globalization: Chronology and Geography

The above very brief and sketchy historical observation can inform us about not only the nature but also the chronology and geography of the AAI. Even if we do not accept Jaspers's idealism and do not consider the processes in the sphere of the spiritual, particularly religion, as primary, we cannot but recognize the fact that changes in this sphere at least mark people's comprehension of changes in their life as society members. Thus, we can see the period of qualitative changes in the sphere of the spiritual as that of the decisive, irreversible step on the way to a new culture (in the broadest meaning of the word).

The AAI cultures are those inspired by universalistic (indifferent to the adherents' ethnicity) religions. So, the end of the AAI cultures should be marked by those religions decay down to the point at which they lose the role of cultures' inspirers; a great difference between the two Axial Ages is just that while the AAI transformations strengthened religious worldview, the transformations of the AAI led to the religious worldview's gradual decline. As has already been mentioned, Jaspers postulated transition to the rational culture in Early Modern Europe, but he constantly underlined that it was much closer to the axial traditional culture than the latter was to the archaic culture that had preceded it; just that is why he saw precisely the Axial Age that separated the periods of global dominance of archaic and traditional cultures as the most important watershed in history. Indeed, Jaspers was completely right: the Early Modern European culture was still religious *par excellence*, Christian, although secularizing. Once again we should stress the fundamental difference between secularization launched by Protestant Reformation (but that in specific forms took place in the Catholic and Orthodox societies of the Modern Time either [see, *e.g.*, Chartier 1990; Kley 1996; Rosa 1996; Roudometoff 1998; Andreeva 2009; Bergin 2009; Kalkandjieva 2010]) and atheization that can legitimately be seen as its logical continuation but should not be virtually equated to it. Protestantism is a form (or rather a set of forms) of the Christian religion, and its adherents' world outlook is religious: they recognize the transcendent and salvation as the main goal and meaning of life, although they follow a specific, 'secular' way of achiev-

ing it. Atheism rejects the transcendent and makes people's world outlook, goals and meanings really 'terrestrial', materialistic.

Unfortunately, the basic difference between secularization and atheization is usually shaded by researchers, including those who rightly formulate the idea of the AAI but refer its beginning to the 15th – 16th centuries (Lambert 1999: 304–307; Landon 2010: 38–44, 307–390). From the perspective described above the Early Modern Time is rather the final period of the AAI cultures epoch than the opening phase of the AAI. However, this was also the time of rise of the new social and political order in Europe, of rapid technical and scientific progress (just this was considered by Jaspers [1949] as the reason for arguing that in one area – Europe – the 'traditional' culture was substituted by 'rational' in the 16th century), and, naturally, of simultaneous beginning of search for its ideological (mainly in the religious form) grounding, as people try to comprehend the changes as soon as they begin to feel their influence on their lives. However, it takes people quite a lot of time to conceptualize their initially embarrassed and chaotic vision of the changes; in the case we are discussing it took the European consciousness about 300 years to pass through several stages (the first of which was the formation of the glorious Renaissance culture) and eventually to elaborate a basically new, not religious but 'scientific', worldview and picture of the universe. This way the socio-political, economic, and technical changes that resulted in the transition from the Middle Ages to the Modern Time had finally been comprehended by the mid-18th century. So, the period from the mid-15th to mid-18th century can legally be seen as both the final stage of the AAI culture and the initial stage of the AAI, that is as transitional (one can recall at this point Johan Huizinga's [1919] treatment of the 15th century as the 'autumn of the Middle Ages' to not a less degree than as the spring of the Modern Time).

From the historical and cultural standpoints, one of the most significant and far-reaching by its outcomes differences between the two Axial Ages is that contrary to the AAI that disseminated its achievements from several centers, the second great watershed in history began in one center which remains its main stronghold up to now – the Western culture area, when the Christian religion stopped inspiring its cultures, that is when the process of Christian secularization outgrew in the process of atheist dechristianization, *i.e.* in the middle – second part of the 18th century. The creation of the United States of America and Great French revolution were the most prominent markers of this transition in the political realm while the industrial revolution promoted meaningful changes in the economic, social, and ideological spheres. As it is well known, Jaspers defined the Axial Age as a long historical period from 800 to 200 BCE with the culmination point in about 500 BCE. As for the AAI, we can say that its first stage, transitional from the AAI culture, embraced the mid-15th – mid-18th centuries, the second covered the time from the mid-18th to the early 20th century; at the latter historical point its culmination period started being marked by the world's beginning to lose its certainty in people's minds: that was WWI that shook the bases of Modern European world outlook and value system more radically than any other event before or after it; just due to that war the world began to fall apart, lose internal 'objective' integrity and unilinear 'progressive' direction of evolution for the people of originally Christian culture. This culmination period is lasting up to now, while the closing date of this age is unpredictable today; it will come to its end when basic elements and characteristics of

the new culture and world outlook crystallize completely and become realized clearly by people as radically different from those of the preceding era.

The AAI began locally in Western Europe, but has eventually become global. It can be argued that globalization is not a recent process but almost incipient for human history (*vide stricto* Bondarenko 1997; 2009: 20–21; Gills and Thompson 2006), and while both Axial Ages were important steps on the way to the global world, the difference between them in terms of their results is that, contrary to those decisive of the AAI undertaken by the West (the Great Geographic Discoveries, colonization, the establishment of transnational market, *etc.*), the results achieved on this way by representatives of different civilizations of the AAI type (the Hellenic, medieval Arab and quite a lot of others) turned out reversible. Only from the era of the Great Geographic Discoveries, the time of ‘the heroic deed of the West’, as Fernand Braudel (1986, 1: 428–440) called it, the intercivilization interactions of various kinds involved practically the whole universe. The impact of those interactions on absolutely all their participants has increased many times. The immanent smoothing effect of the newly-born capitalism has also significantly contributed to the respective processes. As a result, the changing of the civilizational map has been quickened due to the absorption of some civilizations by others. Since then, new civilizations have appeared only as a synthesis of different older civilizations, and quite a few such syntheses have appeared; the formation of the Latin American civilization being the most significant event of that sort. Thus, the process of globalization can be seen as not a completely recent and purely economic phenomenon, but as stemming from the formation of global civilization due to the long-lasting and multidirectional intercivilization interaction. From a definite standpoint, a global civilization is not emerging nowadays, but rather the whole human history is that of gradual and up to the AAI's start slow process of the global civilization's revealing as the common background for the local civilizations' existence.

Christianity in the Postreligious Civilization

It would be a great mistake to understand atheization only as a growth in number of those who consciously refuse to believe in God. Its major aspect is that even a great part of those who continue to regard themselves as believers, in reality now base their thoughts and deeds on especially non-transcendental, profane values and goals, departing from the non-religious picture of the universe. Nowadays the level of formal religiosity (also gradually dropping in most of the historically Christian countries [Dogan 2003]) exceeds considerably that of real religiosity, that is there are much more those who regard themselves as religious people than those who are truly religious, that is of those whose world outlook and way of life are determined by the faith. For sociologists a clear mark of this is the discrepancy between the numbers of those who declare themselves as religious and those who observe religious rites and behave in accordance with dogmas that embody transcendental values of life on which any religion as outlook and lifestyle caused by it is based. For example, in Europe in 2000 71 % of a survey participants recognized themselves as believers while only 31 % attended church at least once a month (Kaariainen and Furman 2007, 2: 81–82; see also Martin 2005: 86; Streich 2009). In Russia during a survey undertaken in 2005 79 % of its participants declared themselves Orthodox Christians while only 45 % answered that they believed in divine creation of the world, 31 % believed in the afterlife and 15 % in revival of the dead (Kaariainen and Furman 2007, 2: 79, 81; for more details and examples see Bondarenko

et al. 2007). More and more people recognize as normal such growing phenomena rejected by the Church as births outside of marriage, the use of contraceptives, abortions, same-sex marriages, preference of career success to family life, and so forth (for statistics see Bondarenko *et al.* 2007; Aldecoa 2009, 2010). Of course, these processes are not completely recent; they started yet in Modern Time alongside with the processes of socio-economic modernization and, especially, development of secular (rational, 'objective' scientific knowledge-based) education that in the course of time became affordable for wider and wider social layers.

The spread of secular education promotes secularization of consciousness and through it – the growth of religious tolerance on the one hand, and some decrease in ethnoracial tolerance, on the other. Secularization, and subsequent atheization furthermore, lead to decrease in significance of adherence to a religion as a factor of self-identification and defining attitude to other people, while by transferring the value system's centre of gravity from transcendental and universal values of a universalistic religion on terrestrial and local values, secularization and atheization emphasize particularly the ethnocultural component of self- and others identification (see Bondarenko 2008b). It is worth recalling how tightly intertwined the processes of secularization, growth of national consciousness, and development of the system of education (especially at the university level) were in Europe in the Modern Time.

In the time of secularization, '[f]or most people in the 16th and 17th centuries, daily life was heavily sacralized and religion was thoroughly secularized – it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to strain off "religion" from separate notions of "social", "political", or "economic" behaviour and motivation' (Marshall 2009: 9). By now, in the time of atheization, in the world traditionally called Christian, the religion as world outlook has lost its main pillar: most people have stopped feeling the presence of God in their life; as a matter of fact, for many of those who still declare themselves religious religion has reduced to especially 'terrestrial', 'practical', and 'applied' role of a marker (but not determinant) of ethnocultural identity. Equating of religion and ethnicity with respect to the state (national) identity's background is typical of present-day nationalism worldwide and in fact testifies to the secular trends' power: 'Religion can, and does, function as a facilitating factor in defining national identity ... Modern nationalism, however, also contains an important component of ... ethical secularisation. ... In ... [the] process of national coalescence and the redefinition of the "I" and the "other", religion shifts from a concept of a sacred cosmic order to one element of many in the collective identity' (Hatina 2004: 126–127).

As the ethical background of individual and social life, the historically Christian values undoubtedly continue playing implicit but yet the paramount role in the countries of Europe and Europeanized parts of the planet, but ethics is not a belief, as well as philosophy with its most important part – gnoseology – is not a religion. Today even in the West itself the civilization unity of its peoples and cultures is perceived most often as based on the commonality not of religion (Christianity) but of secular (social and political) values, such as individualism, democracy and so forth (while particularly these values, as well as others, have as their by no means only but immediate sources the Protestant idea of individual relations between the person and God, and organization of Protestant religious communities, respectively). It is not occasional that many scholars consider Christianity as not more than a cultural-and-religious source and spiritual-and-historical context of formation of the contemporary Western world's values (see,

e.g., Cottier 1991). Clearly, the contemporary societies of historically Christian countries can be safely called secular in most cases; even those of them (mostly Catholic as well as some Orthodox Christian), in which religion and the Church still play a relatively large role in individual and socio-political life, are moving, in a more or less rapid pace, in the same direction (see, *e.g.*, Tabone 1994; Voyé 2000; Martin 2005: 47–90; Molokotos-Liederman 2009; Fisher 2010; Thiebaut 2010).

However, dechristianization can result not only out of secularization but also out of individual's departure from his/her 'prescribed' faith at preservation of orientation to the supernatural. It is symptomatic that from the mid-20th century on some members of traditionally Christian societies have not only joined numerous non-religious subcultures but have also converted to Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, the 'New Age' denominations or become 'neopagans'. This happens not just because '...during the twentieth century, the West has experienced a phenomenon it has not encountered since the reign of Constantine: the growth of and significant visible presence of a variety of non-Christian and non-orthodox Christian bodies competing for the religious allegiance of the public' (Melton 1998: 594) but, first of all, due to significant and dramatic changes in the people of the Christian tradition's worldview, related to sociopolitical transformations and historical perturbations. The contemporary situation of constant uncertainty of meanings conducts permanent washing out of the picture of the universe. In its turn, loss of a complete image of the world provokes mythmaking as an act of indemnification. In the meantime, the Christian religiosity flows more and more to the Third World where it very often acquires forms that can seem freakish to Europeans, frequently syncretic with autochthonous beliefs: spiritual (originality of teachings), institutional (specific organization of communities and the religious life in them), and artistic (the specificity of religious architecture, sculpture, and painting) (Jenkins 2002, 2006; Sanneh 2003; Akinade 2010).

What is now accepted to call 'universal values', as a matter of fact, is an expression of the moral and particularly socio-political values rooted in Christianity but rethought in categories of the atheistic anthropocentric liberal discourse that has been forming in the West since the second half of the 18th century. In their understanding which has affirmed today the universal values is a mythological construct generated by atheization of the Western Christian society and ethization of its values. In the liberal atheistic context this construct has inevitably come into contradiction with the backgrounds of Christianity as a religion just owing to the insuperable distinction between religion and ethics, even though in this case the latter had once been generated by the former. It is noteworthy that in reality to a considerable degree it is a question not of values as such but rather of the forms of their embodiment. For example, it is difficult to imagine a culture in which freedom is not a value, but in different cultures the meaning of what freedom is can well be specific. However, in the context of the universal values not substantial but the formally-institutional aspect turns out to matter: the democratic political order combined with the market economy (for details see Bondarenko 1997: 26–28). It is characteristic that this case reveals clearly the postreligious (postchristian) nature of this discourse: while Christianity understands freedom as an essentially spiritual category, here it is seen as social and legal, and just this way freedom was treated in the time of classical, prechristian Antiquity (for details see: Golubtsova 1985: 8, 14–16, 23, 26–29, 58–86, 102–105, 184–186, 193–198, 207–209; Nersesjants 1985: 209–211, 262–267, 288–291; Levêque 1989: 158–160).

The complex of values called 'political correctness' is essentially liberal-atheistic, too. For example, which axial religion can accept such norms of political correctness as total social and political equality of men and women or recognition as natural of sexual minorities and their rights? As it is well known, the hot discussions around these issues (particularly, on the possibility of erection in a curacy of women and homosexuals) in a number of Catholic and Protestant (and even Muslim) congregations in Europe and America have already resulted in splits of churches, judicial claims, bankruptcies of arrivals and whole dioceses, transitions of congregations under jurisdiction of other episcopates *etc.* All this reflects deep controversy between the religious norms and secular tolerance demands.

Religious tolerance as a part of the political correctness value complex is not an exception to the rule. Today liberal states, the majority of which are traditionally (historically) and originally (spiritually) Christian, emphasize their secular nature and stress their non-discriminative and non-favoring attitude to all religions and equal treatment of all citizens notwithstanding their religion. This has become especially important in view of not only the growth of secularism and atheism but also because contemporaneity is the time of mass transnational migrations. Until the 20th century the majority of nation-states could use the religions traditional for them as an ideological pillar aimed at national consolidation, as religion was perceived as the backbone of national culture. In the present-day conditions the state has to include and emphasize in ideology the supra- and non-religious elements, what can be seen as a display of crisis of the original model of the nation-state and as an attempt to transform it in order to bring into accord with new realities. Nowadays state Churches are in decay even in many of those countries where they officially still hold this status (Filatov 2005: 14–15).

Not only state secularism but even Ecumenism, a less radical – not atheistic but moderate secular-religious version of religious tolerance – is criticized severely by many religious leaders of different Christian denominations as a dangerous heresy born by democracy, globalization, and consolidation of the universal values (see Bondarenko *et al.* 2007). For a true monotheist believer, including Christian, only his/her God can be true. Even if such a person calls for the humane relation to adherents of different creeds, s/he will never recognize the equivalence and equality of religions on the premise that all of them preach the same moral values and thus differ in form, not in essence: just in the 'road' they suggest following on the way to the same 'temple'. For such a person this is the question of differences in the backgrounds and symbols of faith and not in cultural traditions, while in the words of a Russian Orthodox Church hierarch, the Metropolitan of Minsk and Slutsk Philareth, 'the contemporary world perceives Christianity as a "subculture" and the Church as a "religious organization", as a "cultural tradition"' (quoted in Siloviev 2005: 50). In the truly religious context the fact that for Christians Jesus is God's Son while for Muslims He is just one of prophets, is incommensurably more important than that in holy books of both religions one can find some similar moral precepts (for recent examples related to Catholicism and Orthodox Christianity, as well as to Islam, see Bondarenko 2004: 446; Bondarenko *et al.* 2007). There is no abstract general morality for a true believer: for him/her morality is determined by the faith, 'true' or not, and the norms of political correctness that are consolidating in the liberal discourse framework are unacceptable.

There is a paradox in Jaspers's thinking and analysis. He looked at the values expressed in different Axial Age teachings as such, considering them as the substance and

paying little attention to the variety of shapes they were given from one culture to another, evidently regarding it as not so important as the common (as he believed) substance. In the situation of post-world war not only economic and political but also intellectual and spiritual ruin and confusion, the humanist Jaspers was seeking universal values that once had made history global and could give hope for pacification and integration of the world of his time. However, in real history the shape turned out more important than substance: for many centuries the differences in religions separated people just because for the bearers of the Axial Age-type consciousness the immediately religious is more significant than the abstract universal beginnings in which the religious is partly rooted. In the exemplary instructive way this was explained by Prophet Mohammed when he called to make clear distinction between the Muslims (true believers), Christians and Jews – non-true believers who are yet Abrahamithic monotheists too, and pagans (in the Christian world the line between other monotheists and pagans was drawn much later, in the 13th century due to the Mongolian conquests; before that all non-Christians were subsumed in non-true believers without distinction [Hodgen 1964: 87–89]). The creation and spread of the Caliphate and Ottoman Empire, the Crusades confirm the made above statement most convincingly and demonstrate in extreme forms that in reality the axial religions divided the humankind to a not less degree than the preaxial but on other premises. They divided the humanity in a smaller number of parts but opposed those parts to each other much sharper. The ‘universalistic’ axial religions turned out much less tolerant than local preaxial, as far as contrary to the former, the latter recognized different peoples’ ‘natural’ right to have their own deities and spirits, regarded the situation of religious variety of the world as normal. The (re)introduction and appreciation of religious pluralism in the modern world is really a clear sign of secularization (Martin 1978, 2005). In its turn, ‘... as a rule, mono-confessionalism is linked with higher levels of religiosity, and religious pluralism is linked with relatively *low* levels of religiosity’ (Kilp 2009: 227 [author's emphasis]; see also Norris and Inglehart 2004: 127).

It is not by chance that the present-day spread of the globalizing world values is met by representatives of different Christian Churches as a threat to traditional values and foundations of Christianity (for numerous and various examples see Bondarenko *et al.* 2007), although the very appearance and consolidation of the principle of tolerance (in general, not only religious) as a ‘global concept’ is connected just with the historical specific features of the Western civilization's development. ‘In three hundred years the European history passed the way from “toleration” – a high cultural achievement – to total relativism in the questions of religion. The discussion on the European Constitution (in the draft of which nothing was said about religious values and no particular religions especially singled out. – *D. B.*) has shown very clearly that multiculturalism is the contemporary politics’ new religion (Siloviev 2005: 51). That ‘religious neutrality’ is a position of principle for the European Union became clear once again during the recent scandal that followed the confession of the creator of the European Council (the EU's predecessor) flag that he had just copied it from an icon of Virgin Mary with a star wreath on a blue background. Indeed, religious tolerance (relativism, neutrality) are synonyms of religious indifference rather than toleration. The principle of tolerance in all its aspects, religious among others, is seen as the fundamental all-embracing ‘general denominator’ of the globalizing world's variety. Clearly, this principle is completely secular and transnational (transcultural).

It is remarkable that at this point the contemporary postreligious consciousness demonstrates its similarity to premonotheistic pagan once again. Conservative Christian hierarchs see it clearly and, of course, oppose this trend. The Catholic Cardinal G. Biffi asserts directly that substitution of Christian values by universal will lead to 'idolatry', and arrival of Antichrist to the world is possible not necessarily in shape of a person, but also as 'reduction of Christianity to ideology', that is by means of its losing of the religious background and transformation in a set of secular norms (see Owen 2007). The current head of the Russian Orthodox Church, the Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus Kirill while being the Metropolitan of Smolensk and Kaliningrad in his speech in the Parliament of Greece in 2004 criticized Western Christianity for 'accepting the postulate on freedom of the person as the supreme value of his/her terrestrial life as a socio-cultural fact' in a way 'consecrated the union of the neopagan doctrine with Christian ethics' (quoted in Krasikov 2005: 55–56).

Indeed, paganism is a very convenient 'religious philosophy for a pluralistic, multicultural society' (Jones and Pennick 1997: 220). Contemporary rise of neopaganism as a form of religion and displays of 'implicit quasipaganism' in mass consciousness definitely have not only spiritual but also sociopolitical roots. Cultural anthropologists and specialists in ancient history know very well that the adherents of non-monotheistic beliefs usually do see nothing 'unnatural' or 'illegal' in the 'fact' that their deities patronize them while other peoples are patronized by other, their own deities. Evidently, the number of examples of the contemporary postreligious consciousness' similarity to pre-axial, archaic can be multiplied. Probably, some similarities between the preaxial pagan and postaxial (AII) atheistic consciousness can be explained by the fact that neither in the former nor in the latter there is a rigid opposition of the sacral and the profane ('celestial' and 'terrestrial') in the worldview, so typical of the axial religions and their adherents (Eisenstadt 1982, 1986a). However, the fundamental differences between paganism and atheism should not be ignored: paganism does not consider the transcendental, sacral as the antithesis to the profane but definitely recognizes its existence (and just that is why paganism is a form of religious beliefs), while atheism eliminates it.

Activization of the archaic, or more correctly – nearchaic, elements in the contemporary culture is to some extent related to the destruction of not only many rational (or used to be seen as such) values and norms but also of the settled system of symbols and stereotypes that found an embodiment in substantive provisions of the Christian religion, although the sphere of symbols yet decoupled from their spiritual content still remains the last bastion of religion. We shall argue that it is so primarily not '...because of the adaptation of the great religions to modernity, of fundamentalist reactions, and of the spread of new religious forms' (Lambert 1999: 303) but due to a radical change of their role: from relating people to God to marking their 'terrestrial' cultural identities. The archaic elements activization can reveal itself in the development (as a matter of fact, invention in most cases) of non-traditional cults including 'neochristian' and neopagan, mystical and spiritualistic practices, escapist subcultural communities, in the statement of fundamentalist values and settings, activization of the authoritative-charismatic type of consciousness (see, *e.g.*, Hunt 2003), as well as in the rise of radical nationalist movements and groups, strengthening of ethnoseparatist and totalitarian moods.

Indeed, human consciousness cannot be either completely rational or completely irrational. What Freud (1913) really showed by the comparison of 'primitive' people with his patients sick of neurosis, is, of course, not the 'resemblances between the mental

lives of savages and neurotics' but precisely the preservation of archaic (most ancient, initial) elements in human mentality; these elements are now covered with layers of contemporary culture-born conditionalities but dispose themselves vividly in the situation of crisis, social or individual (including nervous disease) when the protective force of culture weakens. The key to understanding of activation of the archaic bases of culture in the modern society is in recognition of the fact that the sociocultural crisis (the conflict of values in the situation when the world is seen as highly uncertain and fragmentary) takes the form of identification crisis of the personality. The identification crisis grows out of gradual destruction of the representations underlying self-identification of the personality: about own complete, steady 'I', about the continuity of his/her existence in time and space due to the disappearance of distinctive representations of both – time and space are shrinking and destructuring. It is symptomatic that this is typical of both secular and contemporary (from the 1970s on) Christian evangelical discourses (Guyer 2007). The destruction of the personal meanings system is taking place too, what results in the loss of meaning of life other than just individual existence and survival in the world, while 'the quest for meaning' was 'perhaps the most typical engagement of eternity ... throughout the period of the Axial Age', and particularly in Christianity the meaning was found in the person's relation to God (Neville 2002: 104–105).

Postnewtonian irrationality (or postrationality?) becomes a symbol of individual existence because the whole world is now seen as deprived of any rational background, any comprehensive structure, and the old means of explaining the world (by voluntary divine will or objective natural laws) are rejected as unacceptable and even ridiculous. The world cannot be explained in any universally valid way, it can only be experienced individually by means of intuition and spiritual exaltation; it cannot even be described in objective terms but only as an image, imprint in an individual's mind. Indeed, in the preaxial, archaic, cultures spiritualist, particularly magic, practices and respective ideas were the main means of penetration into secrets of the universe, too. The crucial differences are that in those cultures the world was perceived as having a definite structure quite explorable and explainable by means of such practices that resulted from not individual but collective quest and experience, and thus formed the world outlook and explanation model shared by the whole community, not shaking but strengthening the bases of its integrity. Magic, religion, and science are the three means of explaining the world, making it meaningful that are known for already thousands of years and that compete with each other (see Tambiah 1995). Different approaches to their interrelation have been employed, in particular by the coryphaeus of social (cultural) anthropology J. G. Frazer (1922) and B. K. Malinowski (1925): for the evolutionist Frazer they tended to change each other in the global scale; for the functionalist Malinowski they co-existed in every particular culture. However, not these differences in the classics' views are important for us at the moment; what is significant is that while religion and science are discredited in contemporary postrational consciousness and magic is employed being inevitably reinterpreted in another social and cultural context, no new means of explaining the world is proposed as the world is seen as having no objective universal background – magic, divine, or natural; now everyone even does not explain but imagines and 'invents' the world for him/herself. Each of the three previous periods of culture history – archaic, traditional, and modern proposed an integral explanation of reality; the contemporary age has not done the same at least by now, and in this respect the AAI cultures differ from those of AAI more than the latter differ from the preaxial cultures.

As people believe that the world is not organized rationally, it is incomprehensible by means of human reason and the person can find his/her way in this dangerous dark forest of life only by means of individual spiritual quest, as now there is no God to lead him to a proper path while reason is misleading even more so. One cannot be sure in anything because nothing can be understood objectively, s/he can only interpret the reality by representing personal views of it (the idea from which, particularly, postmodernist scholars depart in their writings on different cultures; see, *e.g.*, Foucault 1966; Geertz 1973; Lyotard 1979; Marcus and Fisher 1986). Indeed, 'it appears plausible to assume that the number of values capable of regulating human behavior is unlimited. Our imagination permits the construction of an infinite number of customs and laws. Norms, *i.e.*, socially established values, are therefore always a selection from the universe of possible established values' (Dahrendorf 1970: 20). However, only the state of the world outlook uncertainty when the prescribed religious values are not interiorized automatically any longer, does incline people to make a choice which becomes more and more individual and in some sense occasional, as far as all values of all cultures look like equal and virtually nothing can be given one and only explanation and interpretation: in the world of value relativism no values are seen as obviously true or false more than others. In the social realm the uncertainty of the value system and the picture of the universe that appeared as a result of Christianity's losing the role of their pivot, lead to corruption and calling into question of the social norms that once seemed uniquely true and firm, as they were sanctified by religion whose postulates were accepted without doubt. In its turn, this results in blasting of internal integrity and stability of society.

The relativization of values, including religious, reflects a more inclusive process of world outlook's gradual heterarchization (transition from homoarchic to heterarchic) in the 'Christian civilization's' realm. Crumley (*e.g.*, 2005: 39) defines the heterarchy '...as the relation of elements to one another when they are unranked or when they possess the potential for being ranked in a number of different ways'. Respectively, homoarchy may be coined as 'the relation of elements to one another when they are rigidly ranked one way only, and thus possess no (or not more than very limited) potential for being unranked or ranked in another or a number of different ways' (*e.g.*, Bondarenko 2007: 187). Both notions, 'heterarchy' and 'homoarchy', can be applied to a great variety of phenomena, including those of the natural world (and just from the natural sciences they originate). Particularly, a world outlook can be considered as homoarchic when there is one central, all-embracing and all-penetrable value that not only integrates but also arranges in pyramidal order all others, secondary to it, 'encompasses' them in Dumont's (1966, 1983) sense. On the contrary, when 'there is a multiplicity of "hierarchical" or asymmetrical oppositions, none of which are reducible to any of the others or to a single master opposition or value, ... the ... case immediately departs from the Dumontian formulation' (Mosko 1994: 214): a system with such characteristics is heterarchic.

The medieval European world outlook was markedly homoarchic being theocentric, determined by the universalistic Christian faith as the incontestable supreme value. The world was seen as a pyramid going from the subterrestrial Hell through this terrestrial world up to the celestial Paradise, and everything in the terrestrial world, including peoples and individuals, was arranged in accordance with the degree of its proximity to Christian God, closeness to the Christian norms and ideals. The Modern European world outlook was already generally heterarchic but yet it was still 'centric': its center

was the individual, but not as such but as an integral part of society (in accordance with the Renaissance and especially Reformation religious teachings of the relations between the person, society, and God and their social doctrine of society as in fact a corporation). Thus, the outlook center was dualistic: the focus was on the individual and the society at one time, as they were seen inseparable. During that historical period the human reason, believed to be capable of understanding the divine plan of the universe as now it was seen as not voluntary but logical, implemented in the objective and universal laws of natural and social world, was the supreme value that shaped the paradigmatic world outlook: *Cogito ergo sum*, as Descartes formulated it exhaustively.

The contemporary postreligious and postrational world outlook is completely heterarchic, up to becoming eclectic, fragmentary, and chaotic. It is 'nothingcentric' in the sense that it does not contain any supreme value, or truly individualistic (what can resemble but is significantly different in nature from preaxial world outlook's polycentrism under which, particularly, it was perceived as natural that every cultural unit – ethnic group, community, state, *etc.* – has its own supernatural protectors). In the situation of disappointment in both the divine will and human reason's ability to comprehend the laws of life (rather than give out for them their rational constructions) and hence to organize the world along better lines, more and more people undertake individual spiritual odysseys. Everyone becomes the center of the universe and *raison d'être* for him/herself, at the same time understanding (if the person is not insane) that his/her individualistic model is valid for him/her only, and believing that there are no supreme values, or higher sense or basic principles of existence common for the whole humankind or at least his/her society (nation) members.

In previous time when a world outlook based on one pivot appeared in crisis, it was changed by another world outlook, based on another pivot. This way the archaic world outlook based on the so-called 'primitive beliefs' was changed by traditional that had universalistic religions as its pivot, and the latter was changed by the rational outlook with the idea of 'natural laws' as the pivotal one. The contemporary heterarchic world outlook has no pivot that could be common for all: everyone is looking for a personal pivot for his own, individual worldview. People have lost the feeling of presence in the world of an absolute which, whatever it was: ancestor spirits, God, or the laws of nature, was stronger, above individuals, was seen as the only true, influencing each and every, and equally actual and valid for them all. This situation gives us another good reason to ascertain that the AAI cultures differ from the AII cultures at least as much as, and in some respects even more than the traditional AAI cultures differed from the preaxial archaic cultures. We can also look in perspective at the modern (rational, Newtonian) culture as at historically and logically transitional from the AAI to AII: from theocentrism through secularization to atheism, skepticism, and agnosticism (in this respect the ideas and writings of such 18th century philosophers as figures of Enlightenment [especially of the open materialists and atheists Diderot, Helvétius, Holbach], Berkeley, and Hume are not less indicative as those of Leibniz, Descartes, Spinoza, or Locke for the time of rationalism [compare, *e.g.*, Parkinson 1993; Brown 1996]).

Naturally, the spiritual processes go hand in hand with historical and socio-political transformations (with respect to interrelation of socio-political and spiritual homoarchy and heterarchy see Bondarenko 2006: 10–12; 2007: 189–190). Like the rise of rationalism with its belief in cognoscibility of the world was the response to religious wars of the 17th century, the contemporary shift in world outlook and value system was triggered

by two unprecedented World Wars that posed not only the old question: 'How God can admit the such?', but also new ones: 'How the humankind, so proud of its reason, bragging of understanding the laws of the universe and progress achieved due to it can admit the such?', 'Are people really able to understand the way the world is organized, and is there any regularity, any logic in its organization at all?' Existentialist philosophy that started forming already in the pre-WWI time in the works of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche but eventually formed in the interwar period and remained popular and powerful after 1945 is a perfect reflection of this shift. Existentialism considers the person as a final being, 'thrown in the world', constantly facing problematic and even absurd situations; the person is not the moment of all-comprehending Reason, not a part or derivative of a certain System, while the reality cannot be identified with rationality. The person is not something 'objective' but what s/he has decided to be, what s/he has constructed out of him/herself (see, e.g. Cooper 1999; Solomon 2005; Appignanesi 2006). What is symptomatic is an attempt to combine existentialism with Christianity (again, basing on the ideas of Kierkegaard) within 'Christian existentialism' (see Miller *et al.* 2009).

Now the world appears chaotic, deprived of sense, internal organizing and integrating beginnings of any sort, unpredictable, in which the individual is given to him/herself. Today, when neither religious, nor social values expressed and fixed in norms are perceived as supreme and undoubtedly true, hence compulsory and binding, directing people's goals and behavior, integration of individuals in a true society whose members recognize their unity by sharing basic tenets of world outlook and common values becomes really problematic. While people of the Newtonian culture saw society logically organized as they perceived it as a part of wider logically organized universe, contemporary people lose the feeling of social unity as the whole world is chaotic and unsystematic in their view. This poses serious questions about the future of such AAI-born or inspired phenomena as the nation-state and civil society, about their adequacy and ability to adapt to the demands of the new Axial Age and its both postreligious and postrational culture that is forming in the world of postnewtonian uncertainty.

All these 'posts' are actually negations of the previous. What positive characteristics will come in their stead and will be typical of the AAI when its culture finally forms, that is when the AAI passes its culmination period which is still in full blast? It seems too speculative to make exact predictions yet; what is possible to ascertain is that the world is becoming more and more networked, that is more and more unstable and unpredictable, but at the same time more flexible and hence (potentially) adaptive to changes. Concluding, we should also note a paradox the meaning of which definitely can become the main topic of a separate article: while globalization is making the world more and more integrated economically, politically, and culturally, the dechristianized atheistic consciousness of those who belong to the civilization that heads the globalization process represents the world as progressively fragmentary and unsystematic.

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