

The Phenomenon of Marginality in the Middle Ages

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Abstract: *The article considers the phenomenon of marginalization as the ability of the subject to activate the internal processes of worldview in the process of overcoming the fear of contemplation of alternative coordinate systems, inconsistent worlds of values and various cultural programs. It is stated that being in a marginal state is a conscious choice, which is dictated by the need of the subject to take an active position in life. It is determined that the main feature of the medieval world is social statics, which ensured the stability of the world. In conditions of non-reflexive self-perception, the processes of self-identification are not activated. At the same time, marginality is positioned as a difference in relation to the inviolability of the universe of social hierarchy in a conformal and comfortable social structure, as a deviation from the stable state of the system.*

The study used such methods: analytical - to determine the conceptual approaches to the study of the idea of marginality in cultural studies, systemic - to determine the integrity of the phenomenon of marginality in Western European culture; historical - in the reconstruction of the process of formation of the core of culture in each historical period of Western European culture.

It is determined that the marginal groups that opposed their way of life and system of values to the medieval society are the early Christian community, the monastic order, the heretical sect, and so on. Their common features are: the equality of group members, anonymity, external equality, the absence of clearly defined private property, the maximization of a virtuous lifestyle both in spiritual programs and in their implementation. Physical or spiritual searches as the basis of self-organization, being chosen by God, distancing from secular institutions

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have become one of the determining factors of the cultural marginality of modernity in the Middle Ages.

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Introduction

For almost a century, sociology has studied marginal subjects and processes just like social psychology has studied the marginal state. In recent decades, the trend of scientific interest of cultural theorists to study marginality in the cultural field has been determined. However, this issue in culturology has not yet been substantively approved.

The first explicit studies of marginality in the perspective of the conflict of values were the subject of study of the Chicago School of Sociology in the early 20th century (R. Park, E. Stonequist). The structural approach in sociology has shed light on the phenomenon of marginality in the context of socio-political and economic transformations (A. Farge, A. Touraine). Phenomenological sociology (A. Schutz) and social psychology (T. Shibutani) expanded the problematic field of research of marginality and outlined the way out in culturological issues in the 60's of the 20th century.

The importance of Christian communities in defining the first marginal groups of the Middle Ages

The Middle Ages occupy a special position in the Western European cultural space. On the one hand, it clearly fits into traditional culture, demonstrating the classic invariants of the pre-modern world. On the other hand, we can say in the words of modern Italian scientist U. Eco, "all the problems of modern Europe are formed, in its current form, all the experience of the Middle Ages: democratic society, banking, national monarchies, independent cities, technological renewal, the uprising of the poor"¹.

"Conformism" and "inclusion" were one of the most significant invariants of Western European spiritual culture in the Middle Ages. Conformism is a complete agreement with the generally accepted norms of culture, inclusion, and solubility in those forms of culture that are dominant in a certain sociocultural space. The millennia of Western European civilization have shown the "convenience" of such a position. In the Middle Ages, each individual tried to live within the walls of a city, castle, monastery, town, etc., but not outside them. Life outside the team was death, not only physical, but also spiritual. The man was dissolved in his lineage, in his family, and eventually in the universe. Therefore, the person did not feel the need for self-identification. "I" was perceived not in itself, but only in the context of involvement, and coverage by society (surrounding people as certain forms of

¹ Umberto Eco, *The Name of the Rose*, Vintage, London, UK, 2004, p. 464.

the team). In traditional culture, change has come very slowly. From birth, the position of the individual was clearly defined, and the program of his behavior was determined accordingly – a system of connections with relatives, neighbors, rulers, and spiritual authorities, inherited along with property from parents. "The alpha and omega of every individual was the social and religious community to which he belonged. From the super personal, authoritarian and absolute instance, any separation from the crowd was derived - and returned to it"².

The self-perception of the individual was based on the recognition by the collectives of the statuses he received in accordance with his social status. Even when an individual had several statuses at the same time (father, blacksmith, subject, parishioner), the transitions in them were clearly oriented by initiation procedures, so that the individual's life career consisted of discrete biographical particles, each of which the individual was completely identical. The comfort of existence, the inviolable guarantee of the stability of the world, and man's place in it were the basis of human existence. It is not characterized by reflectivity - the objects of this world, as well as the actual self, were self-evident and not problematic. Individual identity was inseparable from group identity.

Marginality in the Middle Ages should be considered in both individual (individual) and group incarnations. And if the invariant was the social life of the individual, expressed in the absorption of his group, the more important is the study of modes of existence of marginal groups in the public space of Europe, those groups that opposed themselves and their value systems to the dominant social integrity.

One of the historically first marginal groups of the Middle Ages was the early Christian communities that formed on the border of antiquity and the Middle Ages.

The phenomenon of the early Christian community becomes an example of a group culture of marginality. The spiritual unity of the Christian community, which opposes itself to the world, is immersed in vice and sin, and demonstrates the integrity of worldviews, moral principles, practices different from the official Roman world of spiritual values, presents itself as a group.

Nowhere in Svetsytska's work is it directly stated that the early Christian community in the Roman Empire of the I-II centuries was marginal. But the whole description of the organization of her life is imbued with the spirit of cultural marginality. This triggers, firstly, the fixation of the social component in the formation of the Christian community, secondly - the self-perception of its members, and thirdly - the content of the spiritual

² Leonid Batkin, *Yevropeyskiy chelovek na yedine s soboy. Ocherki o kul'turno-istoricheskikh osnovaniyakh i predelakh lichnogo samosoznaniya*, [European man alone with himself. Essays on the cultural and historical foundations and limits of personal self-consciousness], Moscow, 2000, p. 11.

program that the community actively practiced in relation to itself (outlining the circle of "their") and to the surrounding infidels (delimiting the circle of "strangers").

The first Christian communities formed in the Roman Empire in the 1st-2nd centuries, mostly in the eastern provinces, consisted of people who did not have the status of citizens. These were the poor, foreigners from other lands, very often private or public slaves, prostitutes, the sick, the crippled - all those who were rejected by official society. In addition, "a number of scholars believe it is possible to say that Christian communities from the beginning included more or less rich people who for one reason or another fell out of society and felt deep spiritual dissatisfaction"³

Christian preaching was addressed to all who felt suffering, physically and / or spiritually in imperial society, who felt uncontrollable mental anxiety from the official system of values, which left a person helpless in the spiritual search. Christianity directed this kind of topic: all the dissatisfied and suffering in a sinful and unstable world were promised the Kingdom of Heaven, and the equality of all, rich and poor, before God. The sermon emphasized that such a world immersed in sin and debauchery would soon come to an end, so the early Christians waited for the end of the world (such expectations are reflected in the Apocalypse). The life of the community was closed to itself, but it did not cease to be rich, both socially and spiritually. On the basis of a sermon that promised salvation and God's grace, the self-perception of the members of the Christian community was appropriate.

The spiritual world of the Christian community is filled with the fulfillment of moral requirements, which are based on something objective, only the law and the example of Christ. Based on the preaching and example of Christ, on the subjective achievements of the apostles, their exemplary life lived in poverty, religious individualism preached by the Gospel is combined with religious society.

Ecclesia as a form of Christian communities

The early Christian community was called "ecclesia", i.e. assembly. "The word" ecclesia "in Greek cities meant" people's assembly "... Christians seemed to oppose their assembly - the ecclesia of the faithful, the true assembly - the earthly ecclesia, which has lost all meaning"⁴. The main function of the ecclesia was to give spiritual consolation to the "brothers and sisters," as Christians called each other, to listen to the apostles together, and to discuss what they heard.

From the beginning, the spirit of the Christian mystical religion was cultivated in the ecclesia, striving in the language of mystery, a symbol to

³ Iryna Svetsitskaya, *Ranneye khristianstvo: stranitsy istorii. [Early Christianity: pages of history]*, Politizdat, Moscow, 1987, p.86.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 101.

express the relationship between the eternal and the changing, almighty God and the finiteness of an unworthy man.

At the beginning of its existence, the ecclesia (this Greek term is often translated into Russian and Ukrainian as "church") did not have a vertical hierarchy, the horizontal equality of brothers and sisters and their worship of the apostles who personally listened to Christ's sermons were the only form of self-) organizations. But this was possible only in the early stages of Christianity when each ecclesia lived quite isolated from the outside world.

In this aspect of the spiritual life of the early Christian church, it is appropriate to rely on the study of F. Tönnies, who introduced a transliteration of the Latin word "community" - "communitas" (communitas) to denote a spontaneously formed group in which there is horizontal equality: spontaneity, arbitrariness, and unpredictability of the organization is a fundamental attribute of the community, and the duration of its existence - "phase, moment", and "not a permanent condition"⁵.

Describing communitas as spontaneity and borderline, «In spontaneous communitas there is something magical. Subjectively, she has a sense of infinite power and authority". He further adds: "However, if this force is not transformed, it cannot be used immediately in relation to the organizational facts of social life"⁶.

In addition to the introduction of spiritual assistance, the ecclesia performed the social function of providing "bread" to its members. As the poor people came to the community first of all, material assistance to the needy was very acute on the agenda. Helping one's neighbor was one of the important missions of the early community. But it is noteworthy that many Christians understood their neighbors primarily as their fellow believers or those who sympathized with them.

The rejection of non-believers, people from other religious groups or the civilian population of the cities was uncompromising. On the one hand, this may be explained by the fact that the revelation revealed to Christians by the good news of Christ was unattainable to others, and the very realization of this fact placed them in an exceptional position in relation to imperial society. On the other hand, from the beginning, Christians were so spiritually distant from the world, continuing to live in it, that the official Roman authorities perceived them as the most dangerous criminals. This may explain the mystery of the first Christian congregation, first, to prevent contact with the pagan outside world and, second, to prevent persecution by the Roman authorities.

The inexpediency of using the spiritual energy of community, or ecclesia (as a more common term), is manifested in the fact that community

⁵ Ferdinand Tönnies, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, Profil-Verlag, München, Wien 2017, p. 209.

⁶ Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, Macmillan, New York, 1931, p. 208.

accumulates the energy of such force that it is sufficient for the existence of this form. The hierarchical organization that will take the place of community (ecclesia) retains its name - the Church of the Faithful.

The German scholar E. Troeltsch highlights the differences between two types of organizations, the church and the sect. It is worthwhile to dwell on the individual provisions of this study, as it allows us to trace the differences between them and the shift of emphasis in the transformation of the sect (ecclesia, community) into the church as a permanent, hierarchical organization. Among the essential characteristics of the church as an organization, Troeltsch includes the following: conservatism. Based on a stable and recognized tradition; worldliness and immersion in secular affairs; universality. The desire to guide the whole life of the believer⁷.

Unlike the church as a stable structural organization of a sect in general, the early Christian community as its variety, in particular, can be characterized by the following features: the presence of innovative value orientation; the spiritual connection between its members; distancing from the world and secular institutions (such as law, property, war, power). Considering the historical perspective of the socio-cultural dynamics of the sect and the church, it is necessary to indicate that in the first centuries of its existence, Christianity fluctuated between these two types of organization and only with the development of the doctrine of the priesthood and sacraments, it, in the process of institutionalization, established in the church.

That is, sects behaved towards the world, the state and society either indifferently, tolerantly, or hostilely because they did not seek to join them. It is noteworthy that the so-stated idea of the group did not interfere with the cultivation of individual parameters of a virtuous life, ideally - ascetically oriented. At the same time, it is important, that the asceticism of the (early Christian) sect differed significantly from the asceticism represented by later forms of medieval culture.

It is clear that Christianity took a dominant position in the spiritual world of medieval Europe. It formulated the church organization and was the spiritual content of the doctrine, its transcendence. "The reformist spirit of the XI century, substantiating and implementing the world-simplifying ideal in its extreme manifestations, called and led the masses to the time of the Apostolic Church" ⁸.

Monasticism as a self-realization of a marginal person of the medieval world

In the 11th-12th centuries, monastic orders appeared that preached evangelical values and appealed to the ideals of the early Christian

⁷ *Ibidem*, pp.227-229.

⁸ Lev Karsavin, *Kul'tura srednikh vekov [Culture of the Middle Ages]*, Simbol&AirLand, Kyiv, 1995, p.143.

communities. The emphasis on the preferences of the poor in the kingdom of heaven resulted in an ideological justification - an apology for poverty. This phenomenon was evident in the XI century in an effort to return to evangelical simplicity, which led to "the reform of the clergy and the renewal of the canonical institution", and the movement flourished in the late 11th- early 12th centuries"⁹.

New monastic orders are emerging, which have argued the need to leave the world in order to acquire in solitude the true values that the Western world seemed to be losing more and more.

The monastery gathered under its shadow desperate poor, helpless bystanders, fugitives from the battlefield of life, who sometimes did not have a pronounced religious motivation and vocation to moral self-improvement. And yet, the profile of medieval monasticism clearly shows the features of restless ascetics who tried to embody the ideal of holiness and lead others, to capture them with the romance of holiness and moral purity.

Poverty as a "spiritual value" in the 12th century was a religious concept. "As the number of the hungry, the poor, the outcasts increase markedly, poverty becomes a social concept, an awareness of injustice comes, and the complaints of the poor become political demands. Demands are expressed in the language of religious reforms, in a quasi-religious way and are accompanied by extraordinary religious exaltation and the pursuit of piety, simple and honest life.

Thus, a socio-cultural space is formed, in which the marginality of the subject is built, as an active life position in overcoming external circumstances. The main thing in the life of this subject is focus on maximizing the spiritual and value component in the intentions of life implementation.

The role of marginal groups in the culture of the Middle Ages

Marginal groups were formed mainly on the sidelines of the dominant socio-cultural system, on the socio-cultural periphery, despite the unparalleled spiritual orientation that they set for the further development of Western European culture. Marginal groups, represented mainly by religious communities that opposed the social order of the European Middle Ages, have common features: equality of community members ("all equal before God"), anonymity, abolition of all external differences, lack of private property. The condition for joining the community was the introduction of their own property in joint ownership and use to eliminate external differences between members), partially identical clothing, sometimes even without distinction by gender, emphasizing the similarities / similarities between them, sexual abstinence, which in extreme manifestations reaches the elimination of the institution of

⁹ Jacques Le Goff, *La civilisation de l'Occident médiéval*, Arthaud, Paris, 1964, p. 81.

family and marriage, the termination of family and kinship rights and responsibilities (all are brothers and sisters or comrades), the maximization of a virtuous lifestyle, expressed in pious behavior.

However, the socially charged socio-cultural dominants of the Middle Ages do not rule out the presence of people at that time who stood out for their extraordinary qualities. Personal dimensions of marginality are also available at that time. It should be noted that in the traditional (pre-modern) Western European culture, the marginality of the person almost never acted as its autonomy and independence, ie in a purely modern perception of the meanings embedded in these symbols. Traditional culture has known rebels, cultural outsiders who, consciously or unconsciously (but more importantly for this study, when the intentions were conscious) came into conflict with generally accepted norms.

The marginality was not provoked artificially - it could not arise outside of all sorts of real or imaginary, clashes with the outside world. The marginal state in traditional culture has always meant breaking the usual ties and creating one's own, nonconformist world. Being in the border areas, on the border of the generally accepted and the impermissible required from the individual an active life position. This activity often involved a struggle, first of all, with superstitions and rigidity, sometimes - with circumstances.

The first model of self-realization of a marginal person of the medieval world, who accumulated all the most desirable and best features of the conventional, was the path of a martyr, saint, monk, i.e. people who imitated Christ. Monasticism as the embodiment of the Christian ideal of a perfect life is the most inspiring, albeit inaccessible due to the strictness of the ideal ascetic norms.

Monasticism was born as an ethical movement, seeking to create space for living subjectivity, to prove the reality of a sublime worldview, personal beliefs, and so on.

Pointing to the ethical parameters of the monastic movement, which emerged as an aristocratically removed from everyday life ideal way of life, we should underline that asceticism, work and prayer have become the life ideal of the intelligentsia, which has always valued contemplative life and shared the inherent antiquity and contempt.

This model is marginal only insofar as the path of virtue, the best and most dreamed of, is open only to some, the best, the worthiest of it. There were two types of engines for this - external and internal. And if the internal factors were described above and related to the motivation for freedom of choice and adherence to spiritual practices in the routine of everyday life, then the external ones were trivial and, as such, almost irresistible in weight and content: "This is the realization of personal freedom with freedom of perception of the

world”¹⁰. That is, in addition to exceptional moral qualities, a “marginal monk” could also be a free person, for whom the primary is “moral duty”, “symbolic life”, “social metaphors, not the prose of events”¹¹.

Thus, the first approval was found by individuals, prominent people who stood out for their super personal service, a kind of exemplary. And they were valued by their contemporaries as the first among the first, the best of the best.

But the marginal perspective in the culture of the Middle Ages is not limited to the presence of such bright figures. Although indeed, become known or those individuals whose behavior and ideas became exemplary in subsequent eras, or those who gain notoriety as examples of illusory achievements. Most border processes often go unnoticed in the cultural-historical process. However, their cultural and historical significance cannot be underestimated. These "little-known hermits, representatives of the Christian world, hid in the forests where they were besieged by visitors or settled in places where they could help travelers find a road, bridge or ford", "became mentors to the poor." and rich, sad and in love" "because they were not "corrupted by the politics of the official clergy"¹².

Scientific interest is also a purely sociological dimension of the marginality of the Middle Ages, identified and analyzed, in particular in its cultural explications. But we should be aware that these characteristics of the day worked to consolidate the *status quo* of all social strata, the gaps between which before and after that time were not so severe and insurmountable. J. Le Goff noted that "the medieval Christian world committed the desire to break with his condition a mortal sin. As father, as son - this is the law of the Western Middle Ages"¹³. Sustainability and stability were the norm and, as such, resisted any change.

Conclusions

Thus, the Middle Ages world was purely static, where the inviolable guarantee of the stability of the world and its place in it was the basis of human existence. The inviolability of the universe was reflected in the social hierarchy, where the place of the individual was predetermined from birth, and the individual was dissolved in their social roles and statuses. The coverage of society, the dissolution of the team formed a comfortable and conformist spiritual world of the individual.

¹⁰ Everett Stonequist, *The Marginal Man: A Study in Personality and Culture Conflict*, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1937, p. 228.

¹¹ *Ibidem*.

¹² Janusz Sztumski, *Kilka uwag na temat społeczny konsekwencji marginalizacji*, Praca socjalna i polityka społeczna, Bydgoszcz: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytet Kazimierza Wielkiego, 2008, p. 29.

¹³ Jacques Le Goff, *La civilisation de l'Occident médiéval*, Arthaud, Paris, 1964, p. 29.

Marginal groups that opposed their way of life and value systems to the dominant social universe in the Middle Ages were the early Christian community, the monastic order etc.. Studies of the social composition of members of marginal groups, the content of their spiritual programs and their practice, the analysis of procedures for distinguishing members of marginal groups "their" and "others" suggest that common features for them were equality of group members, their anonymity, external uniformity and gender, lack of clearly defined private property, maximization of a virtuous way of life both in spiritual programs and in their implementation.

Physical and spiritual travel on the basis of self-organization and the need to quench the spiritual morally determined thirst, God's election, the distancing from the hustle and bustle of the world and secular institutions were among the determining factors of cultural marginality of the day. Asceticism was the result of separation from the ruling social hierarchy and at the same time a means of preventing persecution by the authorities. Marginal groups were formed mainly on the periphery of the dominant socio-cultural system, despite the extraordinary spiritual strength with which they influenced the further development of Western European culture.

The extraordinary qualities of individuals of the Middle Ages testify regarding the marginalized persons of the day. These were rebels, cultural outsiders who, by nature or force of circumstance, came into conflict with the social world. The cultural marginals were the righteous, the monk, the hermit, and so on. Internal drivers before falling into a marginal state were dissimilarity to others in certain significant parameters (such as appearance), a high intellectual level of personal development. The alienation caused by this had to be reconciled with the general intentions (matrices of the epoch) of the day. The very presence of a marginal subject gave the standard schemes, the matrices of the era a peculiar sound. Spiritual work to reconcile one's own worldview with the cultural matrices of the day set such a personality horizon, which became the criterion of cultural marginality in pre-modern Europe.

Thus, marginality was not provoked artificially and was not purposefully constructed. In traditional culture, marginality meant breaking the usual ties between the universe and the social world and forming a new, nonconformist world. Being on the verge of the generally accepted and the impermissible and moving beyond this frontier into a new, own world requires an active position of life from the marginal subject. This activity involved the fight against superstitions and rigidity, as well as external circumstances.

The marginal cultures operating on the periphery of the nuclear processes of culture of the epoch are the driving force of sociocultural change. They bring a new understanding of invariants and new models of self-realization.

It is determined that in socio-cultural dynamics, marginality differs in content and form. Marginal content, subject to the response in the core of

culture, is gradually absorbed by it, joining the invariants, and the form (periphery, marginalia) is always present as part of the mechanism of socio-cultural dynamics.

The collective subjects of marginality in the Middle Ages were the early Christian community and the monastic order. The clarifying of the social composition of the members of marginalized groups, the content of their spiritual programs and their practice, and the analysis of procedures for distinguishing members of marginalized groups as "their" and "foreign" allowed us to determine that the common features for the marginalized groups of the Middle Ages were equality, anonymity, external equality, lack of clearly defined private property, maximization of a virtuous way of life (to asceticism) both at the level of spiritual programs and in their implementation in practice. Taking into account these factors, marginalized groups distanced themselves physically, spiritually, and intellectually from worldly life. Marginal groups were formed and functioned mainly on the sidelines/periphery of the sociocultural space of the day, despite the extraordinary spiritual impetus they gave to the modern world and future generations.

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