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## Images of History through the Prism of National Consciousness

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### Abstract

One's people history is one of the most important sources that reproduce resources for the formation of ethnic subjectness. An appeal to history is accompanied by the formation of a certain image, both of a given ethnic community and of its historical development. Reconstruction of the experience of the previous development of an ethnos is accompanied by the construction of a special discourse in which the ethnic characteristics of this community, the system of its values, all the events of its historical past, often begin to be determined by subjective modality. The latter in its turn is determined by a variety of functions needed within the given discourse to construct this image. The image of history of people existing in the national consciousness, representing a unity of the objective and subjective, can also be viewed as a unity of continuity and, at the same time, development of the self-consciousness of the ethnos, since the past and history are the most important conditions for construction of the present and the future of the nation. The image of the history of a given nation existing in the national consciousness, representing a unity of the objective and subjective, can also be viewed as the unity of continuity and at the same time as the development of the self-consciousness of the ethnos, since the past and history are the most important conditions for the construction of the present and the future of the nation. Reproducing the national memory in the image of history, the ethnic community preserves the core of its culture, its spiritual wealth and at the same time creates internal sources of dynamics for its further development. At the same time, the image of history performs various functions in the structure of the national consciousness.

**Keywords:** Image, History, Ethnos, Functions, Objective, Subjective, Historical memory.

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## **1. Introduction**

Today it becomes obvious that the comprehension of the modern historical process is possible only by taking into account the influence on the course of history by the most diverse social groups and communities. However, probably the most profound transformational changes both in the society and in its public consciousness are carried out under the influence of the changing configuration of national relations and the interaction of national cultures. Therefore, the representation of modern society, the analysis of its hotbeds of tension, its historical development is possible only within a multipronged attack on the problem which necessarily includes a comprehension of the social activity of ethnic communities, historical features of the development of national cultures. This is also due to the fact that, as noted by many social theorists, modern national-cultural movements inevitably acquire the form of ethnopolitical movements. D.V. Dragunsky defines an ethnopolitical process as "the process of interaction of sufficiently large groups of the population, each of which is characterized, on the one hand, by definitely articulated ethnic identity, on the other, - by certain (actually existing or desired) institutions of sovereignty. Thus, the ethnic demands expressed by these groups immediately become political (expansion of sovereignty), and political, economic or humanitarian demands acquire ethnic coloring, with the implementation of mechanisms of ethnic mobilization" (1995, p.40). Hence there is a need to analyze these phenomena on the socio-philosophical level, which allows to trace the genealogy of modern national-cultural processes within the unfolding globalization processes.

## **2. Methods**

When writing the article, different methods and approaches were used. The comparative approach allowed us to analyze the interaction of national cultures in the modern world. In addition, phenomenological, hermeneutic and historical approaches were used to adequately illuminate the formation of historical images in a modern multicultural world.

## **3. Results**

It should be noted that problems associated with the study of cultural differences, as well as peculiarities of their interaction, have received quite detailed coverage in scientific, primarily, cultural-anthropological literature. Much less attention is paid to issues related to the specificity of ethnicity, the peculiarities of the mobility of ethnicity boundaries, the mechanisms that contribute to the preservation of these borders and, accordingly, the reflection of these phenomena in the national consciousness, which is manifested in the formation of a specific discourse; and its attributive features have precisely ethnically colored socio-cultural dimensions.

In our opinion, the consideration of national and ethnic factors in the study of the main trends and contradictions of the contemporary historical process will allow us to reveal the deep regularities in the formation of many social phenomena, including cultural phenomena, while the consideration of the ethnos as a subject of the historical process has, in this sense, broad heuristic possibilities in the identification of fundamental social transformations.

A famous Norwegian social anthropologist F. Bart (2006) regards ethnicity as "a form of social organization of cultural differences." He emphasizes that ethnic and cultural characteristics do not represent a simple interaction, reducible to similarities and "objective" differences: top-priority among them are those differences that people themselves consider to be significant. It is ethnic signs that lie not only in the basis of formation of identity criteria, but also in the basis of structuring of interaction which ensures the preservation of cultural differences. Bart writes: "... Ethnic identity, viewed as a status, turns out to be superior to most other statuses or social personalities that an individual with this identity can

take upon himself ... It can thus be said that ethnic identity is an imperative, since other definitions of situation can not cause a carrier to ignore his identity or temporarily disregard it" (2006, p.20).

#### 4. Discussion

Within the framework of the postmodern concept of nations, another ontological and epistemological research platform develops, according to which ethnic communities, including nations, are "imaginary entities" whose goal of construction is reduced to purely political tasks (B. Anderson). A. Andreev writes: "Anderson argues that without conscious and intensified propaganda work in this sphere, ethnic communities would not be formed as active political units. At the same time, the organizer of national-ideological work (state or party, leader) in order to match the national idea, as a rule, manipulates historical facts, selecting from the past only what works for this idea" (1996). Thus, the very subjectivity of the ethnos is denied, the latter, as a certain community, in the opinion of postmodern theorists, is formed only as a result of ideological strategies, representing a situational ethno-cultural construct intended for solving temporary goals. A similar idea is presented by M. Foucault, who develops the idea that there is no single subject at all, "but there are polymorphic, spontaneously arising forms of subjectivity, ... there is a problem of describing those border zones in which contingent subjects arise from anonymous names and again dissolve in discursive practices" (See: Markov, 1999). In our opinion, such a denial of the subjectivity of ethnic communities leads to obvious relativism and reductionism, since in this case such important problems related to ethno-national phenomena as the boundaries of ethno-cultural entities, the mechanisms for their change, the contradictions of their interaction and a wide range of issues, connected with national and cultural identity, etc. remain beyond the discourse. In his doctoral dissertation, A. A. Dadashev reasonably notes: "The disclosure of the specifics of a nation as a social subject, is possible through the "immersion" of the subject in the social context and the identification in it of the specific quality of "sociality". The concept of sociality reveals the features, the goals of the practically active attitude of the nation to the surrounding world, as well as to the subjects participating in joint life activity and constituting the structure of society. A nation as a social subject can exist, representing a social formation determined by a system of causal, structural-functional, dynamic links, influencing the being and development of the social system as a whole ..." (quoted in Gizatova & Ivanova, 2013, p.116). A well-known researcher of the nature of nations and national relations, professor of the London School of Economics, E. Smith, defines an ethnic group as "a type of cultural community that emphasizes the role of myths about origins and historical memory and is viewed as having one or more cultural differences, such as religion, traditions, language or institutions" (quoted in Eller, 1997).

We assume from the recognition of the multidimensionality of ethnic subjectness, reflecting the ambivalence of the existence of both an individual and an ethnic subject, taken in a wide meaning of this concept. Subjectivity is not primarily a psychological construct therefore its analysis involves the consideration of many factors: political, sociocultural, ethnospecific, etc. In a multicultural society, the problem of ethnic subjectness manifests itself primarily as a matter of national affiliation and interethnic interaction, however, the national narratives themselves change in the modern world, moreover, the dissonance of the latter is recorded, which is a manifestation of the significant transformational processes unfolding in society. The subject of national culture is inconceivable without an appeal to the cultural memory of its people, national roots, historical images, mythological storylines, all the richness of the spiritual heritage of its national community. Thus, a narrative, as a symbolic expression of the national and cultural identity necessary to maintain ethnic boundaries is formed (Gizatova & Ivanova, 2013, p.110).

People's own history is one of the most important sources that reproduce resources for the formation of ethnic subjectness. Appeal to history is accompanied by the formation of a certain image, both of a given ethnic community, and of its historical development. Reconstruction of the experience of the previous

development of an ethnos is accompanied by the construction of a special discourse in which the ethnic characteristics of this community, the system of its values, all the events of its historical past, often begin to be determined by subjective modality determined in its turn by a variety of functions needed within the given discourse to construct this image. Philosophy proceeds from the premise that the image is objective in its content and subjective in form of its existence. This subjectivity in the construction of the image of national history ceases to be by its nature exclusively or a "pure" epistemological phenomenon; it inevitably contains the estimated components, so it starts to carry a pragmatic load.

In this connection, the question formulated by the modern American theoretician F. Jamison (2017) in the process of his reflections on the nature of the interpretation is quite reasonable. Our understanding, he says, is colored by concepts and categories that we inherited from our cultural interpretative tradition ... Then how can the literature of other epochs be comprehended by the readers of the present time, which is so different from the past?

One of the most prominent founders of the "linguistic turn" in historical science H. White states that the functional model of discourse gives to the rational way of connecting events, poetics and rhetoric something similar to the status of "codes" by which various kinds of "semantic contents" can be transmitted ... for various purposes: communicative, expressive or conative ones. These goals are not mutually exclusive ... any discourse can perform all these three functions, and this is typical for factual discourse and for fiction ... This model allows you to see how modern discussions about the nature of narrative history lead to ignoring one or the other of these functions to preserve the narrative history "for science", on the one hand, ... or reduce it to the category of "ideology", on the other (1984, p.17).

German scientist M. Kunczik (2001) defines the image of the nation as a cognitive representation of a certain country, which the individual shares, basing on what he considers truthful about the nation and people. In the political aspect, particular importance in this representation is the positive or negative traits attributed to other nations, as well as the historical component of this image; an important role in this context belongs to emotional expectations about the future of the country. K. Boulding defines the image of a nation as "an integral cognitive, affective and evaluative behavioral structure or an "internal" image of oneself and the world around them." In general, he sees these images as generated by a process that he defines as a mixture of narrative history, memories of past events, stories, conversations, etc. plus a huge amount of inadequately interpreted and carelessly selected common information. If we add to this that this system reproduces such strong feelings as hatred, love, loyalty, betrayal and etc., it would be surprising if any of the constructed images even remotely resemble ... the described phenomena (quoted in Kunczik, 2001, p.9). In our opinion, such an interpretation of the image completely deprives it of an objective basis, reducing subjectivity to subjectivism.

## **5. Summary**

We believe that the image of the past of the people is built primarily on the basis of historical memory, which combines knowledge about the history of the nation; it is no accident that the term "historical memory" is often used as a synonym for the notion of "historical consciousness": in this sense, historical memory can be based on scientific- historiographical facts from the real past of the ethnos, contributing to the preservation in the memory of people of historical events of the past. Historical memory, as an integral element of the national culture, is considered by the ethnos as a valuable cultural heritage, providing historical roots that create the basis for national identity.

At the same time, the image of history in the representations of this ethnos, of course, assumes a subjective component, this image is created by a national narrative, within the framework of which the history of origin, past events, the determination of these events, etc., can be mythologized, thus acquiring

symbolic forms and meanings becoming an integral element of national consciousness and self-identification of the ethnos. So the idea that history has always been more than just the past, that it involves a relationship between past and present, perceived, on the one hand, as a temporal chain of events and, on the other, symbolically as an interpretation that gives meaning to these events through varying cultural orientations, charging it with norms and values, hopes and fears seems quite founded (See: Rüsen, 2007).

From this it follows that the image of the history of a given nation existing in the national consciousness, representing a unity of the objective and subjective, can also be viewed as the unity of continuity and at the same time as the development of the self-consciousness of the ethnos, since the past and history are the most important conditions for the construction of the present and the future of the nation. Reproducing the national memory in the image of history, the ethnic community preserves the core of its culture, its spiritual wealth and at the same time creates internal sources of dynamics for its further development. At the same time, the image of history performs various functions in the structure of the national consciousness. These are such functions as communicative, integral, selective, identification, adaptive, protective, etc.; the hierarchy of these functions varies depending on the socio-cultural and political context and those specific tasks that are prioritized for this ethnos at each particular stage of its development.

## **6. Conclusion**

The image of history created by national consciousness has the most important ontological, epistemological, axiological and existential significance. It is no coincidence that the very concept of "image", previously actively used only in philosophical and artistic discourses, is becoming more and more in demand in other areas of social and humanitarian knowledge. The image of history is the most important component of modernity. As K. Jaspers has expressed this thought: "History concerns directly us ... And everything that concerns us, that constitutes the problem of the present for the person" (1994, p.274).

The image of history, being the most important element of the nation's self-consciousness, serves as a kind of a "bridge" between the past and the present, "animating" this past for the present, thereby creating resources for constructing and maintaining the identity of the ethnos.

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