



# THE ROLE AND FUNCTIONS OF BELIEF IN HUMAN LIFE AND SOCIETY

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## ABSTRACT

*In this article, the role and functions of belief, its importance in the development of society were analyzed. The functions of belief are the ways in which belief influences people's lives. We adhere to one of the points of view according to which there are four main functions of belief. They are basic in the sense that they can be divided into subfunctions. The functions of belief differ from each other in the answer to the question through what (or - how) they influence the life of people. The article highlights the following functions, such as the worldview function, the political function, the culture-transmitting function and the moral function of belief is a way of influencing belief on people's lives through the promotion of moral norms.*

**KEYWORDS:** *faith, morality, religion, resocialization, humanization, gnoseology, ontology, background knowledge.*

## DISCUSSION

According to the dictionary of etymology, the word "belief" dates back to the late XII century, *bileave*, means "confidence reposed in a person or thing; faith in a belief," replacing Old English *geleafa* "belief, faith," from West Germanic "*ga-laubon*" to hold dear, esteem, trust. The prefix was altered on analogy of the verb *believe*. It means "conviction of the truth of a proposition or alleged fact without knowledge"; it is "sometimes used to include the absolute conviction or certainty which accompanies knowledge".

*Belief* means "trust in God," while faith meant "loyalty to a person based on promise or duty" (a sense preserved in *keep one's faith, in good (or bad) faith*, and in common usage of *faithful, faithless*, which contain no notion of divinity). But *faith*, as cognate of Latin *fides*, took on the religious sense beginning in translations of XIV century, and *belief* had become limited to "mental acceptance of something as true," by XVI century, from the religious use in the sense of "things held to be true as a matter of religious doctrine." [4]

Belief in society implements some important functions, filled with norms and acts as one of the regulators of social behavior. Belief fosters certain qualities in a person. Often these qualities

characterize a believer very positively. We are talking about such qualities as kindness, love, devotion, mercy, etc.

*The comforting and compensatory function* of belief means that belief is able to help a person find new stimuli for life, find new guidelines and ideals in his life. Belief is able to support a person, give him hope and faith.

*The communicative function* of belief is expressed in the ability to expand a person's social circle, thereby saving him from loneliness. Belief is capable of both integrating masses of people and disintegrating.

Belief is a special type of social consciousness, will and being. As a social consciousness, it acts as a collective belief, belief in the supernatural, primarily in God (Gods). As a public will, it acts in the form of certain norms and rules of behavior, partly moral, partly legal, partly purely religious. As a form of social life, it appears in the form of a system of rituals and religious actions (prayers, the sign of the cross, fasting, etc.).

It is difficult to underestimate the role of belief in the life of mankind. Moreover, the history of our species with you can be regarded as the history of belief and the attitude of people towards them, it is not for nothing that there is a definition of man as a



“being who worships the gods.” And although at the “moments of the storm” this definition is subject to substantial doubt.

It is impossible to unequivocally assess the influence of belief on the development of society, since at any moment of time it is possible to identify both positive and negative aspects of belief as a phenomenon and belief as an institution.

## FUNCTIONS OF BELIEF

Having considered the deviations from the “norm”, it is worth going to the norm, that is, to consider the “functions” of belief. The functions of belief are the ways in which belief influences people’s lives. How many functions a belief has and how they are called is not yet a subject of discussion. We adhere to one of the points of view according to which there are four main functions of belief. They are basic in the sense that they can be divided into subfunctions. The functions of belief differ from each other in the answer to the question through what (or - how) they influence the life of people.

**The worldview function** of belief is a way of influencing belief on people’s lives through worldview ideas that are included in the content of belief.

**The political function** of belief is a way of influencing belief on people’s lives through political ideas and political actions of religious organizations.

**The culture-transmitting function** of belief is a way of influencing belief on people’s lives through the attitude of religious organizations to culture.

**The moral function** of belief is a way of influencing belief on people’s lives through the promotion of moral norms.

To be honest, this division is rather arbitrary, since one and the same division or idea can be interpreted as reflecting two, or even all, functions of belief at once. It is especially difficult to distinguish in this context the ideological and moral functions of belief, but an attempt will be made.

In all cases, the functions of belief bring both positive and negative results into peoples lives. Or figuratively speaking, they give rise to both pluses and minuses.

Belief exists not only as a system of ideas, perception and explanation of the world. The power and significance of belief in the life of society is so great that belief, or rather, religious practice, functions as the most important social institution that ensures the appropriate behavior of people. Thanks to institutionalization, belief has become a powerful element of the socio-cultural organization of public life, having played a huge role in the development of mankind.

By uniting supporters into a single social group, belief is an important social organization in any society.

Belief endowed a person with an understanding of the ultimate truths of life, therefore, everyone needed (it was subject to it), regardless of class, place in society. Thus, belief actually formed the basic ideas of people, constituted the sociocultural spiritual fundamental principle of the functioning of all strata of society - the fundamental principle, but no more.

Of the leading social functions of belief, first of all, we must note the integrative one.

We can say that belief played a huge role in the formation and development of most modern, well-integrated societies, because it endowed each member of this society with unified ideas about the ultimate forces of being, unified initial criteria, and rules of the game. Thus, in belief, society found a developed system of generalized ideas that made predictable the behavior of any person in a given system of interactions. Belief as a socio-cultural basis for the integration of society is complemented by national elements formed under the influence of the pre- and non-religious experience of a given people, the characteristics of its historical experience, etc.

The role of belief as a factor in the integration of society, the maintenance and preservation of its stability and integrity has repeatedly manifested itself in history.

In this respect, the relationship between belief and the state is interesting and indicative as a system of institutions of secular power, which, among other things, ensures stability and the value of society.

Any state, especially a developing one, is interested in the approval and insurance of certain values, norms in society that would not only ensure the loyalty of citizens to the state, the established order, but, more importantly, fasten people together, introduce orderliness in their interactions, and contribute to their organization.

Without the integration of society around certain indisputable values, it was difficult and even impossible to carry out the functions of power. That is why the adoption of belief, its introduction, dissemination and, on the other hand, the establishment of state power are closely interrelated.

The role of belief as an integrator of society, the preservation of its integrity and originality is also indicated by the role of the religious factor in the national liberation movement of a particular people. At the time of the heyday of its public authority and influence, belief acted as a universal, all-encompassing regulatory system, introducing its principles and criteria in the regulation of political, economic, artistic, aesthetic, and scientific and educational life of society.

Belief is the reality of human life, in fact, this is how you need to perceive it. The meaning of belief in the life of certain people, societies and states is different. One has only to compare two people: one - adhering to the canons of some strict and closed sect,



and the other - leading a secular lifestyle and completely indifferent to belief.

The same can be applied to various societies and states: some live according to the strict laws of belief (for example, Islam), others give their citizens complete freedom in matters of faith and do not interfere in the religious sphere at all, while others keep belief banned. In the course of history, the issue of belief in the same country can change.

Beliefs can unite people or separate them, inspire them to creative work, to feats, call for inaction, real estate and observation, help the spread of bookishness and the development of art and at the same time limit any spheres of culture, impose bans on certain types of activity, science and so on. The meaning of belief should always be considered specifically in a particular society and in a given period. Its role for the entire community, for a particular group of people, or for a particular person may be different.

In some sources, belief is seen at the same degree as a religion, as in the structural-functional approach. The structural-functional approach to religion has its roots in Emile Durkheim's work on religion. Durkheim argued that religion is, in a sense, the celebration and even (self-) worship of human society. Given this approach, Durkheim proposed that religion has three major functions in society: it provides social cohesion to help maintain social solidarity through shared rituals and beliefs, social control to enforce religious-based morals and norms to help maintain conformity and control in society, and it offers meaning and purpose to answer any existential questions. Further, Durkheim placed himself in the positivist tradition, meaning that he thought of his study of society as dispassionate and scientific. He was deeply interested in the problem of what held complex modern societies together. Religion, he argued, was an expression of social cohesion. [5]

Religion, for Durkheim, is not imaginary, although he does deprive it of what many believers find essential. Religion is very real; it is an expression of society itself, and indeed, there is no society that does not have religion. We perceive as individuals a force greater than ourselves and give that perception a supernatural face. We then express ourselves religiously in groups, which for Durkheim makes the symbolic power greater. Religion is an expression of our collective consciousness, which is the fusion of all of our individual consciousness, which then creates a reality of its own.

The more complex a particular society is, the more complex the religious system. As societies come in contact with other societies, there is a tendency for religious systems to emphasize universalism to a greater and greater extent. However, as the division of labor makes the individual seem more important, religious systems

increasingly focus on individual salvation and conscience.[5]

The primary criticism of the structural-functional approach to religion is that it overlooks religion's dysfunctions. For instance, religion can be used to justify terrorism and violence. Religion has often been the justification of, and motivation for, war. In one sense, this still fits the structural-functional approach as it provides social cohesion among the members of one party in a conflict. For instance, the social cohesion among the members of a terrorist group is high, but in a broader sense, religion is obviously resulting in conflict without questioning its actions against other members of society.[5]

In conclusion, it can be said that it is usually characteristic of beliefs to perform certain functions in relation to society and individuals.

1. Belief, representing itself as a worldview, that is, the concept of principles, views, ideals shows a person the structure of the world, concretizes his place in this world, shows him what the meaning of life is.

2. Belief is a consolation, hope, spiritual satisfaction, support to people. It is no coincidence that people tend to turn to belief in difficult moments in their lives.

3. A person, possessing some kind of religious ideal, is internally reborn and becomes able to carry the ideas of his belief, to establish good and justice (as dictated by this teaching), resigning himself to hardships, not paying attention to those who ridicule or offend him .

4. Belief controls a person's actions through its system of values, spiritual attitudes and prohibitions. It can very strongly affect large communities and entire states that live according to the rules of a given belief.

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