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Cuvinte cheie: fapte religioase, cunoaștere, interpretare a lumii, coeziune socială, raționalitatea științei moderne.

Câteva repere ale antropologiei religiei

Rezumat

Istoria dezbaterii asupra naturii faptelor religioase a început încă din secolul al – XVII-lea când John Locke susținea că ideile umane sunt inspirate de către Dumnezeu. După mai bine de o jumătate de secol David Hume aduce numeroase critici la adresa teoriei ideilor înnăscute, el susținând că izvorul cunoașterii îl găsim în experiență, iar senzația stimulează reflecția. Începe de atunci o nesfârșită dezbateri asupra naturii faptelor religioase obiectivul fiind acela de a răspunde la întrebarea dacă religia este utilă funcționării sociale sau constituie doar un instrument de interpretare a lumii.

Din această lungă și fecundă dezbateri, ce durează de peste trei veacuri, vom detalia în lucrarea de față pozițiile a doi gânditori de marcă de la sfârșitul secolului al XIX-lea și începutul secolului XX, gânditori care au influențat profund abordările ulterioare cu privire la această dispută. Este vorba de Émile Durkheim, antropolog și sociolog francez, cel care își propune să demonstreze că religia, considerată ca fiind indispensabilă coeziunii sociale, nu este, contrar aparențelor, incompatibilă cu raționalitatea științei moderne. Cel de al doilea autor luat în discuție este sociologul și filosoful german Max Weber, unul dintre marii teoreticieni care au contribuit major la înțelegerea proceselor de raționalizare și secularizare ale modernității.

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Some Points of Reference Concerning the Anthropology of Religion

Summary

The history of the debate on the nature of religious facts had already begun in the 17th century, when John Locke sustained that human ideas are inspired by God. After more than half a century, David Hume made several critical observations about inborn ideas, sustaining that the source of knowledge is experience, while sensation stimulates reflection. Since then, an unending debate on the nature of religious facts has been going on, the objective being to answer the question whether religion is useful in the social functioning or it constitutes only an instrument for the interpretation of the world.

Out of this long and fruitful debate lasting for over three centuries, the present paper intends to deal in detail with the positions of two important thinkers from the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, thinkers who had a profound influence on the subsequent approaches regarding this dispute. The first is the French anthropologist and sociologist Émile Durkheim who intended to demonstrate that religion, considered indispensable to social cohesion, contrary to appearances, is not incompatible with the rationality of modern science. The second author under discussion is the German sociologist and philosopher Max Weber, one of the great theorists who had a major contribution to the understanding of the rationalization and secularization of modernity.

Some Points of Reference Concerning the Anthropology of Religion

The declared objective of the anthropology of religion is to research and analyze both the unity and the diversity of religious phenomena and, in the same time, to establish their relationship to different fields of the social. In a wider sense, the study of religion implies the research of the beliefs and practices of a certain culture or civilization, and both senses can be associated observing that according to the current meaning in western religions, practice is nothing else than the putting into application of a belief. Nevertheless, it has to be remarked that in some instances ritual practice is strengthened by a certain dogma that imposes a meaning or a belief, while in other instances the ritual practice seems to lack any meaning. The term “belief” could be understood also as belief in a divine creature or in the sense of an act of faith of a person who has established a relation of piety with a transcendental divinity. From a wider perspective, belief could mean also belief in certain entities and trust in their power. This concerns the assembly of representations between a community and certain divinities, but also spirits, dead persons etc.

The analysis of rites demonstrates that more ways of recognizing this force can be identified, respectively the transcendence of these entities or confirming their interdependence with human beings who at times could even constrain them.

If we direct our attention in a concrete way towards the Christian world or respectively to the world of the Greek and Roman antiquity, we would observe the overwhelming relationship of piety concerning the former, while the ritual practices are essential for the latter. This means that it is necessary to understand in what measure this opposition has to be extended through the analysis of the religions of different societies on the whole, or whether other ways of combining dogma and ritual practices have to be identified in order to analyze them.

Mile Durkheim formulates a possible answer starting from the premise that religion is real in the sense that it does not express anything that wouldn't be in nature.² The question that arises is to which realm of nature belong the religious facts. The conclusion would be that religion is born inside the social groups, that it is simultaneously the production and the reproduction of the society.

E. Durkheim's demonstration imposes a break in relation to historical evolutionism, the author considering that evolution is not situated in time, but in the elaboration that goes from the simple to the complex, meaning that all subsequent developments are contained in the origin. Thus, the study of religion in the simplest society would offer logically the image of the religious phenomenon in its entirety.

Durkheim redefines the religious fact as a category of the sacred: the world is divided between the sacred and the profane, between the transcendent and whatever belongs to

² Durkheim, É., *Formele elementare ale vieții religioase / The elementary forms of religious life*. Trans. Magda Jeanrenaud and Silviu Lupescu, Ed. Polirom, Iași, 1995

everyday life. And in this oppositions the profane plays different roles: the sacred being the center of force, of an energy that acts upon the profane. Religious life implies the action of a force that elevates man over himself, that is to say transcendence. The difficulty resides in finding the origin of this force. Such a force cannot issue from the individual because it is superior and since it is real it has, no doubt, a natural origin. The only force superior to the individual's force in the world is the collective force belonging to society, thinks Durkheim. Religious force is the feeling the collectivity inspires its members but projected outside consciousness and objectified through the fixation on an element from the environment that becomes thus sacred. The phenomena of very powerful emotions, with paroxysmic accents recorded during the performance of rites exemplify the psycho-social process due to which religions are born. The social origin of religion supports the explanation of the human nature's dualism: the human nature's dualism is nothing else than a particular case of the division between the sacred and the profane at the basis of all religions.



Biserica din Copalnic - Mănăstur; foto: Florin Pop

Understanding religious facts as emanation and authority of regularizing society that facilitates the integration of the individual in the group, the author succeeds to construct a universal conception about the soul and the body.

Archaic societies are so much imbued with the supernatural that it is extremely difficult to separate sacrality from sociality itself. One could say that these societies have

no religion since their way of conceiving the sacred is intrinsically religious. In the case that the study of religions requires the existence of a specific term and a religious institution different from the other institutions, the result is that only the main monotheistic religions can be the object of such an approach. The question that arises is whether one can still speak



Cimitir Ariniș; foto: Felician Săteanu

of religion in societies and cultures where sacrality and sociality cannot be separated.

The answer is given by Durkheim who considers that society is not only the source of religion, but it is also at the origin of the human mind's ordering of things in the world. He takes over from neo-Kantian philosophy the idea of an homology between categories of thought and social categories, and sustains that science is nothing else than a perfect "form of religious thought". Thus, for Durkheim society is not only the source of religion, but also of any classifying and logical thought.

In opposition with Durkheim (who thinks that complex systems can be analyzed starting with elementary forms), Max Weber tackles directly certain extremely elaborate

configurations, that is the religions in the world. He starts from the idea of the study of their relationship with other fields of the social, thus giving his approach an evidently ethnographic intention. He sustains that if the interpretation of social facts starting with the relations of production is an extremely successful method, this cannot explain completely an extremely complicated reality in which the economy is only an instance, undoubtedly essential, but in no way unique or the last. Ultimately, for the German sociologist religious facts have to be regarded as intellectual facts which influence reality and especially the economic condition, and man's or the community's any symbolic attempt or action have meaning only when adopting a global vision of the world.

The difficulty to live, man's continuous suffering, thinks Weber, was the resort that imposed and supported any type of religious elaboration. But this suffering has not only a pure economical basis and does not constitute a kind of resentment, but it is connected to the wish to give a meaning to human suffering. Anxiety seems to have appeared exactly inside the primitive cults. Finding himself in a limit situation the member of archaic communities appealed individually to the magician, the character who was thought to be able to make the connection with the ancestors' spirits. Some magicians' fame generated the formation around them of certain communitarian groups, many times independent from the ethnic groups, so that the magician metamorphosed into a mystagog, promising to help people in sickness, protect them from dangers or various menaces. For Weber, the essential mechanism of religious elaboration is the wish to impose a meaning to the distribution of benefits), an unappeasable wish that matches the increasing rationality of the vision of the world. It is what he calls „theodicy”. Though one should understand by this not only “divine justice” but more than that: suffering through the divine. The three most rational answers to these problems would be the Hindu doctrine of karma, the Zoroastrian dualism and, in a greater measure, the double predestination of the Calvinists' god. The intense process of rationalization imposed by religious elaboration would generate in a great measure the rationalization of all spheres of life, especially scientific rationalization, and this, at its turn, would force the slant of religious dogmas toward the sphere of the irrational.

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