

Journal for the Study of Religions & Ideologies

**Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies is the first
Romanian journal selected for coverage in Arts & Humanities
Citation Index and Current Contents: Arts & Humanities, ISI data-
bases.**

Edited by
S.C.I.R.I. & S.A.C.R.I.

ISSN: 1583-0039

EDITORIAL BOARD

EDITOR:

Sandu Frunza, Babes-Bolyai University

EXECUTIVE-EDITORS:

Michael Jones, Liberty University, USA

Mihaela Frunza, BBU

MEMBERS:

Catalin Vasile BOBB, BBU

Adrian COSTACHE, BBU

Diana COTRAU, BBU

Horatiu CRISAN, European Research Institute, BBU

Codruta CUCEU, Researcher, Gh. Barit Institute

Nicu GAVRILUTA, Al. I Cuza, University

Peter ISTVAN, Faculty of Reformed Theology, BBU

Mihaela PARASCHIVESCU, University of Bucharest

Andreia SCHINDLER, Al. I Cuza University, Iasi

Theodora-Eliza VACARESCU, Bucharest University

MANUSCRIPT EDITOR:

Liviu POP, BBU

ADVISORY BOARD

Aziz AL-AZMEH, CEU Budapest

Ioan BIRIS, West University Timisoara

Recep BOZTEMUR, Middle-East Technical University of Ankara

Ioan CHIRILA, Faculty of Orthodox Theology, BBU

Aurel CODOBAN, Department of Systematic Philosophy, BBU

Teodor DIMA, Al. I Cuza University, Iasi

Michael FINKENTHAL, Johns Hopkins University, USA

Linda FISHER, Department of Gender Studies, CEU Budapest

Mircea FLONTA, University of Bucharest

Warren ZEV HARVEY, Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Ladislau GYEMANT, Faculty of European Studies, BBU

Moshe IDEL, Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Adrian-Paul ILIESCU, University of Bucharest

Marius JUCAN, Faculty of European Studies, BBU

Ioan-Vasile LEB, Faculty of Orthodox Theology, BBU

Boris KAPUSTIN, Yale University and Moscow School of Social and Economic Science

Mircea MICLEA, Faculty of Psychology, BBU

Camil MURESANU, Institute of History, Romanian Academy

Dorothy NOYES, Ohio State University, Columbus, USA

Dan RATIU, Department of Systematic Philosophy, BBU

Traian ROTARIU, Faculty of Sociology and Social Work, BBU

Johannes Michael SCHNARRER, University of Karlsburg

Leonard SWIDLER, Temple University, USA

VERESS Carol, Department of Systematic Philosophy, BBU

Leon VOLOVICI, Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Contents

Religious Studies as Academic Field

Moshe Idel

Abordări metodologice în studiile religioase (Methodological Approaches in Religious Studies) • p. 5

Yehuda Bar Shalom, Yonatan Glaser

Jewish Pastoral Counseling: a window of opportunity for Israeli Academia • p. 21

Zoltán Ambrus

Applying Alfred Adler's Principles And Ideas To Religious Studies • p. 30

Ion Cordoneanu

Experience and hermeneutics in the history of religions – a hypothesis on Mircea Eliade's work • p. 40

Codruța Cuceu, Horațiu Crișan

Birth and Hindering of Religious Studies at the University of Cluj. A Historical Overview. • p. 47

Current topics in Religious Studies

Corin Braga

"Imagination", "imaginaire", "imaginal". Three concepts for defining creative fantasy • p. 59

Andreea-Tereza Nițșor

Speaking the Despicable: Blasphemy in Literature • p. 69

Tudor Pitulac, Sebastian Năstută

Choosing to be Stigmatized: Rational calculus in religious conversion • p. 80

Constanța Mihăescu, Miruna Mazurencu Marinescu, Ileana Gabriela Niculescu-Aron

Who is afraid of the big bad "ring"? Gender differences when considering couple formation in a newfangled EU capital • p. 98

Claudiu Herteliu

Statistical Indicators System regarding Religious Phenomena • p. 115

Miscellanea

Leonard Swidler

Club modernity for reluctant believers • p. 132

SCIRI Conferences

Michael Shafir

Conu' Shafirida față cu reacțiunea: Joseph de Maistre sau Fandacsia Descătușată (Master Shafirida Stands Up to Reaction: Joseph De Maistre or Unleashing Unreason) • p. 147

Book Reviews

Vianu Mureșan

Delia Popa, Emmanuel Levinas, Les aventures de l'économie subjective et son ouverture a l'alterite Emmanuel Levinas (The adventures of the subjective economy and its opening towards alterity) • p. 159

Mihaela Paraschivescu

Nicu Gavriluță - România în Starea Bardo: publicistică și dialoguri culturale (Romania in the Bardo State: Journalistic Writings and Cultural Dialogs) • p. 169

Cătălin Vasile Bobb

Adrian-Paul Iliescu, Anatomia Răului Politic (Anatomy of the Political Evil) • p. 171

Sandu Frunză

Ron Geaves, Religious Studies, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam • p. 174

Iulia Grad

Sebastian Șebu, Monica Opreș, Dorin Opreș Metodica predării religiei (Methodology of Teaching Religion) • p. 177

Mihaela Frunză

Christopher Partridge, The Re-Enchantment of the West. Volume II. Alternative Spiritualities, Sacralization, Popular Culture, and Occulture • p. 179

MOSHE IDEL

Abordări metodologice în studiile religioase Methodological Approaches in Religious Studies

Abstract:

“Religion” is a conglomerate of ideas, cosmologies, beliefs, institutions, hierarchies, elites and rites that vary with time and place, even when one “single” religion is concerned. The methodologies available take one or two of these numerous aspects into consideration, reducing religion’s complexity to a rather simplistic unity. In order to avoid this situation, the ensuing conclusion is a recommendation for methodological eclecticism. The text attempts to characterize not specific scholars or schools but major concerns that define the specificity of particular styles. I propose that they may be grouped in eight main categories of approaches: the theological approach, the historical approach, the psychological approach, the textual-literary approach, the comparative approach, the ritualistic-technical approach, the phenomenological approach and the cognitive approach. This proposal for methodological eclecticism is supplemented with another concept: perspectivism. The last part of the article deals mainly with topics found in a vast literature designated by the umbrella term “Kabbalah”, addressing especially the approach proposed by Gershom Scholem.

1. Studiarea religiei*

Nu există o singură metodă cu care se poate aborda comprehensiv “religia”¹. Toate metodele generează aproximări bazate pe intuiții, pe psihologii, uneori chiar pe teologii și ideologii explicite. Toate acestea ne asistă în înțelegerea unuia sau a mai multor aspecte ale unui fenomen complex care, în sine, nu poate fi explicat printr-o singură metodă. “Religia” este un conglomerat de idei, cosmologii, credințe, instituții, ierarhii, elite și rituri care variază în funcție de timp și spațiu, chiar și atunci când se referă la o “singură” religie. Metodologiile disponibile iau în considerare unul sau două dintre aceste numeroase aspecte, reducând complexitatea religiei la o unitate mai degrabă simplistă.

**Prof.
Moshe
Idel**
Hebrew
University
of
Jerusalem,
Israel.
**Author
of the
books:**



Abraham Abulafia's Works and Doctrines (1976), The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia (1988), Cabala: Noi Perspective (2000), Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah (1988), Language, Torah and Hermeneutics in Abraham Abulafia (1989), Golem (2003), Maimonide și mistica evreiască (2001), Hasidism - între extaz și magie (2001), Mesianism și mistică (1997), Messianic Mystics (1998), Perfecțiuni care absorb: Cabala și interpretare (2004), Cabala și Eros (2005).

Key words:

religious studies, methodological eclecticism, perspectivism, different approaches to religion, Kabbalah, Gershom Scholem, Jewish mysticism.

Concluzia care reiese este recomandarea unui eclecticism metodologic. Această recomandare este făcută nu doar datorită complexității unui fenomen evaziv (el însuși, într-o mare măsură rezultatul unei anumite definiții), dar și ca un mod de a corecta greșelile și neînțelegerile la care se ajunge datorită folosirii unei singure metode. Cel puțin în principiu, lipsurile inerente unei singure metode pot fi depășite prin recurgerea la o alta. Deoarece religia nu poate fi reificată ca o entitate independentă, ar fi înțelept să nu fie supusă unei analize bazată pe o singură metodologie.

Aceasta nu înseamnă că propun reducerea religiei la “momente” disparate și fără legătură între ele. Dar, de exemplu, prin accentuarea diferențelor dintre religia elitei și cea populară, s-ar putea presupune că idei religioase specifice sunt preponderente în cazul unei elite decât în cel al alteia sau al maselor. Instrumentele sociale - sociologia religiei sau a cunoașterii - ar putea ajuta la identificarea fondului exponenților unui anumit set de idei, care ar putea fi apoi comparat cu fondul social al unei alte elite. În ambele cazuri, există totuși nevoia de a explora ideile religioase, care ar putea să își piardă afinitatea originară cu o anumită elită și ar putea migra, social și geografic, spre alte elite, în alte centre culturale. În asemenea cazuri, teoriile asupra receptării, istoria ideilor, istoria intelectuală sau istoria culturală ar putea fi mai utile în contabilizarea acestor dezvoltări. Sau, pentru a da un alt exemplu, emergența ideilor, conceptelor sau credințelor poate fi investigată ca rezultatul experiențelor, cerând folosirea teoriilor psihologice, însă încercările de a studia indivizii în contextele schimbătoare ale mediului lor ar ajuta de asemenea la explicarea acestor procese. În plus, abordările cognitiviste ar putea elucida apariția unui set specific de idei, credințe și ritualuri religioase din șirul de posibilități spirituale umane. În orice caz, religia este și un sistem filosofic care nu rămâne în mod necesar în patrimoniul unui număr redus de persoane sau a unui grup social. O mare parte din ceea ce constituie religia se leagă de procesele de transmitere și receptare, de adaptare, de includere și excludere care au loc atât în grupurile omogene, cât și în cele eterogene. Acesta este motivul pentru care, de exemplu, metode legate de cultura scrisă sau orală, ezoterism și exoterism, inițiere și reglare socială a comportamentului pot fi de ajutor în descrierea religiei ca fenomen social. Fiecare abordare poate ilumina un moment al vieții religioase, în timp ce celelalte rămân departe de acest obiectiv.

Varietatea de probleme și metode este mai pertinentă, fără îndoială, în cazul anumitor forme de religie decât în cel al altora. Religiiile arhaice, care s-au dezvoltat în cadrul grupurilor omogene, în arii geografice și culturale izolate, fără complexitatea introdusă de interacțiunile cu alte religii sau culturi și fără problemele specifice introduse de transmiterea scrisă și de importanța textualității, pot reclama instrumente întrucâtva mai puțin complexe. Și asta nu pentru că aceste religii sunt mai simple: unele sunt unități de cunoaștere și acțiuni destul de complexe. În orice caz, în circumstanțe stabile se petrec mai puține interacțiuni și schimbări dinamice; limitate la o anumită arie geografică, procesele sincretice care complică analiza ar putea fi mai puțin pertinente. Astfel, de exemplu, conținutul conceptual, istoria și diseminarea maniheismului - o religie mondială care s-a dezvoltat în diverse locuri, implicând interacțiuni și sincretism și ale cărei texte sunt scrise în douăsprezece limbi (aramaică, coptă, chineză, turcă, persană, greacă, latină etc.) - pun probleme necunoscute celor care studiază protestantismul puritan, mormonismul sau quakerismul. În termeni mai generali, religiile cosmopolite, prin chiar natura expansiunii și receptării lor sunt mai pestrițe și diferă sociologic de religiile triburilor particulare. Abilitățile lingvistice și istorice necesare înțelegerii unei religii cosmopolite diferă dramatic de cele cerute de înțelegerea uneia particulară, cum este mormonismul sau comunitatea amish. Complexitatea religiilor cosmopolite este atât de mare, încât mă întreb în

ce măsoară termeni generali ca iudaism, creștinism și hinduism, folosiți pentru a desemna religii care s-au răspândit în atâtea regiuni și au interacționat cu atâtea culturi, sunt viabili. Mă întreb dacă nu ar fi mai bine să fie împărțite în segmente mai mici, cum ar fi regiuni geografice, perioade istorice sau tendințe specifice.

Totuși, aceste probleme ating doar un set de întrebări. Altele intră în sfera studiului religiei datorită caracteristicilor cercetătorului, mai degrabă decât datorită celor ale fenomenului. Pentru a clarifica de la bun început această problemă, trebuie să spunem că studiul erudit al religiei este rareori o întreprindere inocentă și detașată. Cercetătorii, și uneori întregi școli academice, sunt entități active în istorie, spațiu și circumstanțe sociale și politice specifice, fapt care le afectează abordările și uneori le dictează direcția și chiar rezultatele cercetării. Acest lucru este adevărat mai ales în cazurile extreme, cum ar fi sub comunism sau sub alte forme de dictatură. Este de ajuns să comparăm interesul lui Henry Corbin față de formele sincretismului religios evident în studiile sale despre Sufism și Ismailiyah realizate în timpul regimului șahului iranian cu cercetarea iraniană care accentuează ortodoxia șiiită puristă. Chiar și în cazurile mai puțin extreme, cercetătorii lucrează într-o anumită societate sau trib, în care tabuurile există, însă nu depind în mod necesar de regimul politic. Orice încercare de a chestiona unicitatea Coranului (Qur'an-ului) de către un cercetător universitar musulman, chiar și într-o societate democratică, precum Israelul, va duce la o puternică respingere a cercetătorului de către grupul său religios musulman, iar această exemplu nu e deloc unul teoretic. Cercetarea, în special gândirea critică și istorică, depinde de dezvoltarea societală care permite emergența criticilor interne care ating chiar și valorile sacrosancte ale acelei societăți. Ca atare, evoluția cercetării privind religia se manifestă puternic în formele de societate, regimuri sau religii cu un grad mai mare de libertate.

Dincolo de circumstanțele variate în care operează cercetătorul preocupat de religie, trebuie, de asemenea, luate în considerare caracteristicile individuale și deseori idiosincratice. Cercetătorii, chiar când sunt complet liberi să aleagă o temă și să o abordeze într-un mediu non-inhibitor, hotărâsc ce parte din materialul disponibil va fi analizată și ce date sunt mai importante, relevante sau reprezentative. Astfel de decizii selective și subiective sunt cruciale pentru natura imaginii produse de cercetător. Chiar și cel mai important cercetător identifică un set de probleme care îi reflectă propriile preocupări de bază. Gama de probleme tratate este deci, deseori, destul de limitată și mulți cercetători pot fi identificați doar prin concentrarea asupra planului general al analizelor anumitor fenomene sau texte.

Deși repertoriul unui cercetător este determinat individual, el poate, de asemenea, să fie influențat de audiența pentru care sunt menite studiile. Pentru a da un exemplu celebru, conferința Eranos organizată sub egida lui Carl G. Jung în Ascona a inclus o gamă largă de excelenți savanți care abordau o mare varietate de religii și fenomene. Totuși, nu este exagerat să se vorbească despre o anumită problemă impusă participanților: mituri, simboluri și arhetipuri sunt teme care apar mai frecvent în discuții decât subiecte sociologice sau intelectual-istorice.² Acesta este și cazul școlii critico-istorice de cercetare a Cabalei fondate de Gershom Scholem, unde problemele legate de mesianismul apocaliptic sunt mai evidente decât în studiile timpurii ale acestei tradiții mistice. Școala lui Mircea Eliade este caracterizată de setul său definit de probleme, așa cum sunt școlile Cambridge și Scandinavă ale mitului și ritualului. Agendele indivizilor și ale școlilor sunt chestiuni legate nu numai de natura materialului, dar și de predilecția specifică anumitor tipuri de probleme.

2. Opt abordări ale religiei

În cele ce urmează voi încerca să caracterizez nu anumiți savanți sau școli, ci mai degrabă preocupările majore care definesc stilurile particulare ale cercetării lor. Sau, pentru a reformula problema într-un mod mai pătrunzător, putem identifica problemele majore care îi preocupă pe cercetătorii religiei? Consider că ei pot fi grupați în opt categorii principale; pentru discuția care urmează, le voi enumera pe scurt.

Prima este abordarea teologică, prin care textele sunt analizate înainte de toate pentru a ilumina aspectele teologice, plecând de la care sunt organizate alte caracteristici ale religiei. Religia este concepută de către propunătorii acestei abordări ca oglinda cu ajutorul căreia se poate înțelege entitatea supremă. Sau, altfel spus, materialul investigat poate reflecta idiosincraziile unei anumite religii, experiențe sau grup, dar totuși dezvăluie ceva despre natura sursei sau surselor divine. Aceasta este abordarea adoptată, de exemplu, de către una dintre figurile importante din rândul cercetătorilor religiei din secolul al XX-lea, Rudolph Otto. În urma analizei unei varietăți de texte religioase, el concluzionează că două elemente teologice esențiale sunt regăsite în proporții diferite în toate religiile: raționalul și ceea ce poate fi numit iraționalul. Experiențele umane, reacțiile la întâlnirea cu divinitatea transcendentală sau immanentă, reflectă ceva din natura ființei supreme. Otto chiar evaluează natura unei anumite religii cu ajutorul echilibrului dintre cele două.³ Acest tip de orientare teologică a avut un impact puternic nu doar asupra cercetătorilor ca Friedrich Heiler, dar și asupra percepției religiei printre cercetători necreștini, ca Scholem și câțiva dintre adepții săi.⁴

O altă orientare teologică se discerne în studiile erudite asupra misticismului ale cercetătorului de la Oxford, Robert Zaehner. Deși este un cunoscător remarcabil al multor forme de religie, abordarea lui Zaehner este surprinzător de ortodoxă; el presupune că doar un tip de teologie creștină – și anume teismul – este capabil să furnizeze cadrul pentru experiența mistică reală. El abordează critic cadrele panteiste ale hinduismului și islamului și forma de teism pe care o atribuie iudaismului, datorită incapacității acestora de a oferi condițiile pentru ceea ce în opinia sa se constituie ca experiențe mistice valide.⁵ La polul conceptual opus lui Zaehner se află Eliade, care nu subscrie la o religie teistă, ci mai degrabă accentuează importanța uneia cosmice, oarecum panteiste. Totuși, la fel ca Zaehner, el emite judecăți asupra religiilor în funcție de “cosmicitatea” lor, problemă la care voi reveni mai târziu.⁶

Un al treilea tip de orientare teologică se bazează pe asumția că materialul religios este strâns legat de teologie, chiar dacă cercetătorul nu caută în textele religioase informații despre o entitate exterioară. Astfel, un cercetător laic poate aparține acestei abordări teologice datorită centralității acestei teme în sistemele și textele analizate. Această subcategorie va fi explorată în profunzime mai târziu în acest eseu.

A doua abordare majoră este cea istorică, care, în formele ei variate, înțelege religia, ca orice alt tip de activitate umană, ca reflectând și fiind determinată de circumstanțele istorice ale unui individ sau grup. Unele abordări antropologice sau sociale pot fi de asemenea situate în această categorie.

Urmează abordarea psihologică, prin care documentele religioase sunt analizate ca reflectând o formă specifică de psihologie, cum ar fi psihanaliza. O reverberație a acestei abordări este feminismul care se ocupă cu psihologia represivă masculină ca o chestiune care inspiră discursurile religioase. Aceste trei abordări majore accentuează puternic câteva aspecte ale studiului religiei, minimalizând importanța altora.

Destul de diferită este a patra abordare: cea textual-literară. Dezvoltată o dată cu Renașterea, pentru a analiza textele clasice antice, ea este importantă pentru studiul religiilor orientate către text. Instrumentele sale filologice sunt esențiale pentru o abordare pertinentă a textelor religioase. Accentul principal se pune pe aspectele lingvistice ale documentelor religioase, pe transmiterea lor și pe statutul lor în canonul unei anumite structuri religioase. În această abordare sunt incluse și discuțiile privind paternitatea textuală și fundalul, însă, spre deosebire de abordarea istorică, recurgerea la metode istorice, în acest caz, nu înseamnă că cercetătorii care adoptă aceste instrumente ar căuta în texte reflectarea unei forme de istorie independentă externă. Alte forme de abordări textual-literare sunt mai puțin orientate istoric și accentuează semantica limbajului religios sau problemele de traducere.

Mulți cercetători importanți ai religiei au adoptat o abordare comparativă, al cărui scop, după părerea mea, nu este să facă referiri sporadice la influențe istorice paralele, ci mai degrabă, să se angajeze într-un efort susținut de a compara structuri comprehensive care se găsesc în diferite forme de religie. Această abordare este evidentă în unele din scrierile lui Otto sau Zaehner. Fiind foarte familiarizați cu limbajele și textele mai multor religii, amândoi au trasat liniile comparațiilor pe baza analizei filologice a textelor. Eforturi de a adopta o atitudine comparativă se regăsesc și în scrierile lui Jung, Eliade și Corbin, însă asumțiile lor se bazează pe un fel de omogenitate a noțiunii de religie. În majoritatea cazurilor, comparațiile sunt aplicate având anumite presupoziiții teologice în minte, și, într-un fel sau altul, se poate distinge triumfalismul.

Destul de diferită este a șasea abordare: cea ritualistico-tehnică. Deși religiile prezintă aspecte cognitive importante (credințe, cosmologii, simbolisme), unele poziții accentuează faptele ca fiind elementele esențiale. Ritualurile, pelerinajele, practicile magice și tehnicile mistice pot să aibă un rol mai important într-o religie decât în alta. Deci, experiențele religioase pot fi induse, în unele cazuri, de factori legați de aspectele cognitive ale religiei, cum ar fi o entitate externă sau impactul credințelor teologice, sau, în alte cazuri, de recurgerea la exerciții corporale prescrise pentru a atinge aceste experiențe. În principalele sale monografii, *Yoga și Shamanismul*, Eliade a contribuit mult la analiza a două forme de religiozitate care recurg, într-o manieră dramatică, la astfel de tehnici. Aceste lucrări reprezintă un progres metodologic major în studiul istoriei religiei, datorită deplasării centrului de interes de la viziunile și credințele teoretice, la modalitățile de a atinge experiențele religioase. Importanța tehnicii este de asemenea evidențiată în lucrarea lui Ioan P. Culianu *Eros și magie...*, unde tehnicile magice sunt prezentate ca fiind centrale pentru viziunea lui Giordano Bruno asupra lumii. Ritualul este, de asemenea, subiectul studiilor din domeniul antropologic, pe de-o parte, și, pe de altă parte, al diferitelor forme de abordări mitico-ritualice.⁷ În ultima vreme, cercetătorii folosesc și dezvoltările moderne din medicină în încercările de a măsura efectele fiziologice ale unor acțiuni asupra funcționării corpului, în special a creierului.⁸ Dintr-un punct de vedere mai analitic, Peter Moore a contribuit la înțelegerea experiențelor mistice prin observațiile sale interesante asupra importanței tehnicii.⁹ Recent, am făcut precizări asupra nevoii de coerență între tehnici, experiențele induse de aceste tehnici și viziunile teologice regăsite în anumite sisteme. Aceasta este o abordare sistemică încă neobișnuită, care presupune o anumită formă de organizare a aspectelor performative, experimentale și teologice ale noilor structuri, într-o încercare de a elimina discrepanțele și de a permite o relaționare omogenă a acestor trei elemente.¹⁰

Abordările fenomenologice constau în încercări de a extrapola, plecând de la documente religioase, categoriile religioase specifice care organizează discursurile religioase

majore. Derivând într-o oarecare măsură din abordarea filosofică a lui Edmund Husserl, în special nevoia de a pune în paranteză propriile presupuziții cu scopul de a permite întâlnirea cu fenomenul, acestea sunt cele mai non-reducționiste abordări, deoarece nu presupun faptul că o structură teologică, istorică sau psihologică este reflectată în documentele religioase. Reprezentantul principal al acestei școli este G. van der Leeuw. Într-o oarecare măsură, efortul de a izola categoriile și de a introduce o abordare specifică religiei este, de asemenea, prezentă în studiile lui Eliade. Efortul de a discerne categoriile principale regăsite într-o așa de mare varietate de texte religioase de-a lungul secolelor ar putea, într-adevăr, să ofere o imagine generală a conceptului evaziv de religie, dar ar putea afecta, în același timp, înțelegerea oricărei religii specifice. Problema apare atunci când cercetătorul se confruntă cu un text, o școală sau o religie și trebuie să decidă ce este prezent și ce este absent, ce este mai important și ce nu, într-un efort de a defini aceste categorii principale. Într-adevăr, putem vorbi despre forme fundamentale de ordini sau modele găsite într-o religie sau alta, de aplicări și adaptări, ca reflectând caracteristicile principale ale unei anumite religii, mișcări religioase sau școli. În plus, multe din fenomenologiile clasice ale religiei problematizează analize mai profunde ale textelor sau ale fenomenelor specifice, impunând categorii generale materialului, care este doar rareori supus unei analize serioase. Unele fenomenologii pot fi descrise ca telescopice, deoarece iau imagini generale ale religiei sau ale anumitor religii și le obiectivează ca reprezentând esența acestora.

Ultima, dar nu cea din urmă, este abordarea cognitivă. Spre deosebire de presupuziția că religia este un tip special de experiență umană care trebuie analizat cu ajutorul unor instrumente specifice acestui domeniu, abordările cognitive susțin că religia este una din multele creații umane, și ca atare, ar trebui încorporată în studiul creativității umane. Deși, în principiu, similare teoriilor psihanalitice, teoriile cognitive se ocupă mult mai mult de maniera în care funcționează mintea și imaginația omului sau sufletul omenesc, accentuând natura sistemică a creației umane. Aceasta este tendința majoră în cercetare, asociată cu structuralismul, cu imaginarul și cu dezvoltările combinatorice. Prima direcție este reprezentată de studiile lui Claude Levi Strauss, iar a doua este vizibilă în scrierile lui Corbin, a cărui influență se distinge în opera lui Gilbert Durand și în școala sa, inclusiv la istorici precum Jacques Le Goff, Jean Claude Schmidt și Lucian Boia.¹¹ Majoritatea acestor cercetători sunt interesați mai puțin de structurile ontologice, cât de modul în care oamenii își construiesc realitățile și uneori societățile. Viziunea lui Culianu asupra religiei – și, în principiu, asupra creativității umane – ca bazându-se pe diferite combinații ale unor elemente de bază este independentă de abordarea imaginarului și relevă anumite trăsături ale structuralismului. Într-un fel, unele abordări neokantene pot fi de asemenea considerate cognitive, deoarece ele susțin că este posibil să se identifice categorii găsite în mintea umană care condiționează înțelegerea experiențelor sau a revelațiilor. Două exemple ilustrative pentru această categorie sunt, pe de o parte, celebra carte a lui Otto, *Sacral* și pe de altă parte, numeroasele studii ale lui Ernst Cassirer și ale discipolilor săi. Ambii gânditori neokantieni afirmă că există categorii cognitive specifice religiei. Ultima, dar nu cea din urmă, după părerea mea, una dintre cele mai interesante controverse ale ultimei generații, cea dintre așa-numita abordare a „conștiinței pure” și cea „constructivistă”, aparține și ea categoriei cognitive.¹²

Trebuie spus că rareori se poate întâlni cazul în care un cercetător ar subscrie doar la una din aceste metode. Exceptându-i pe cei care au fondat fiecare metodă, cercetătorii, în special cei excepționali, sunt mai puțin înclinați să reducă fenomene atât de complexe la una din dimensiunile lor. Un cercetător trebuie să înțeleagă că adoptarea prea riguroasă

a unei singure metode poate duce la rezultate simpliste. Cercetătorii importanți au mai degrabă tendința de a utiliza mai mult decât o singură metodă, în proporții variabile.

Analizând ordinea temporală în care aceste abordări au apărut, putem vorbi despre o evoluție de la formele transcendente de explicație, la cele imanente. Pornind de la abordarea teologică, explicațiile istorice care au succedat au dat prioritate mai întâi abordărilor sociologice, mai apoi celor psihologice și cognitiviste, iar cele mai recente fiind cele postmoderne, care acordă întâietate textelor asupra intențiilor autorului. Această dezvoltare de la transcendental la immanent nu este, după părerea mea, nici progresivă, nici regresivă.

După cum am spus mai sus, propun o abordare generală, amplă, numită eclectism metodologic, care recurge la diferite metodologii atunci când se ocupă de aspecte variate ale religiei. Această propunere nu diferă drastic de viziunea lui Wendy Doniger asupra setului de unelte pe care un cercetător trebuie să îl utilizeze în analiza pe care o face miturilor sau de sugestia lui Culianu de a aplica mai multe metodologii aceluiași fenomen, dată fiind complexitatea multidimensională a acestuia.¹³ Desigur, aceasta nu este o recomandare nouă; mulți dintre cercetătorii amintiți mai sus au folosit o asemenea abordare. Cu toate acestea, chiar cercetători importanți ca Eliade sau Scholem, care au adoptat mai degrabă jocuri complexe, decât să subscrie unei singure abordări, au refuzat explicit să adopte unele metode descrise mai sus. Niciunul, de exemplu, nu a fost interesat de abordarea psihologică. Eliade a cercetat mari teorii despre religie ca și categorii universale, în timp ce Scholem nu a fost interesat de astfel de generalizări. Eliade nu a pus accent pe analizele textuale, în timp ce Otto și Zaehner au fost interesați de analize textuale detaliate și de filiația istorică a influențelor; comparatiști, ei nu au evitat niciodată întrebările teologice, dar, în același timp, au fost mai puțin interesați de tehnici și ritualuri. Datorită faptului că au subscris la un anumit tip de înțelegere a istoriei și la o viziune mai degrabă monolitică a fenomenului, a fost dificil pentru ei să accepte înțelegeri diferite ale aceluiași fenomen, înțelegeri care relativizează istoria sau fenomenologia.¹⁴

Deoarece sunt înclinat să accept viziunea aproape postmodernă a ilustrului istoric Marc Bloch, care afirma că „În istorie, adevăratul realism este de a ști că realitatea umană este multiplă”¹⁵, nu pot lucra cu o viziune monolitică a fenomenului religios. Dacă această afirmație este adevărată în cazul istoriei, ea este cu atât mai pertinentă în ceea ce privește conglomeratul de aspecte personale și publice ale evenimentelor și experiențelor religioase. Dat fiind faptul că mulți cabaliști operează cu concepte de infinitate în ceea ce privește natura Bibliei și a divinității, o multiplicitate de metode ar constitui o abordare potrivită în cercetarea viziunilor acestora.¹⁶ Chiar și cea mai modestă abordare midraș, care a avut un impact profund asupra gândirii evreiești subsecvente, a permis misticilor evrei să adune laolaltă viziuni diferite și chiar conflictuale privind aceeași temă, în aceeași operă. Acest fapt cere teorii ale organizării cunoașterii care pot justifica importanța acestui fenomen.

Deși sunt mai puțin entuziasmat de abordarea teologică, religia se ocupă cu divinul și diferitele moduri de a-l concepe pe Dumnezeu ar trebui luate în considerare atunci când se oferă o imagine mai generală. Mai mult, teologia este nu numai o problemă de credință, dar și, în unele cazuri, de concepere a naturii experienței religioase. În unele forme ale religiei, cu precădere în creștinism, revelația unui anumit tip de divinitate ține de grație, ceea ce înseamnă că aspectele tehnice sunt mai puțin importante. În alte cazuri, tehnicile sunt folosite pentru a induce o astfel de experiență, care poate fi interpretată ca fiind modelată atât de tehnici cât și de conceptele despre domeniul divinului. Propun,

pentru ultimul exemplu, să vorbesc despre anumite forme de consonanță sau coerență între detaliile tehnicii și tipul corespunzător de teologie.¹⁷ Sau, pentru a descrie o altă combinație posibilă de abordări, cea ritualo-tehnică ar putea fi aplicată între granițele doar ale unei anumite religii, însă cea comparativă poate oferi date importante despre diferitele structuri ale variatelor religii.¹⁸

Pentru a încheia această secțiune, aș vrea să spun că dezvoltarea diferitelor abordări nu este, cu siguranță, o chestiune de evoluție. Abordările recente nu oferă, după părerea mea, un mod mai bun de înțelegere, din moment ce fiecare metodă acordă atenție unui anumit aspect, ignorat de o alta. Totuși, se poate vorbi despre o dezvoltare pozitivă, deoarece diferite abordări se desfășoară colectiv sau în combinație una cu cealaltă, oferind explicații mai complexe ale fenomenului, care inițial erau descrise în maniere mult mai simple.

Ceea ce susțin este faptul că cel mai bine este să nu se respingă nici una dintre aceste abordări, deși trebuie să fim conștienți de limitele fiecăreia. Cercetătorii care asumă doar una din aceste metode, de fapt - și într-un mod destul de superficial - au tendința de a le respinge pe celelalte. În majoritatea cazurilor, critica repetată a uneia sau mai multor abordări provine din lipsa dorinței sau a capacității de a se schimba învățând ceva nou. De o importanță crucială este investigarea contribuțiilor potențiale ale fiecărei abordări și utilizarea aplicării atente a acestor contribuții, mai degrabă decât limitarea în a subscrie la o singură metodă în tot.

3. O abordare suplimentară: perspectivismul

Suplimentez propunerea de mai sus în favoarea eclecticismului metodologic cu un alt concept: perspectivismul. Prin acest concept desemnez posibilitatea interogării unei anumite literaturi religioase din perspectiva contactului cu o altă literatură religioasă. Aceasta nu este o comparație între figuri și sisteme religioase, cum este cazul monografiilor lui Otto despre ideile individuale ale lui Eckhart și Shankara, nici un caz de filiație istorică între două grupuri de scrieri sau gândiri. Mai degrabă, este o încercare de a înțelege mai bine logica sistemelor, comparându-le pe cele substanțial diferite și învățând despre una, de la cealaltă. Subiacent acestei asumții este principiul conform căruia există lecturi științifice multiple asupra aceleiași religii care pot fi fructuoase - deși nu totdeauna în aceeași măsură. De exemplu, cunoașterea religiilor rurale poate ridica întrebări care pot fi aplicate religiilor urbane sau vice versa, iar religii în care scrierea este dominantă pot fi abordate din perspectiva unei religii dominate de oralitate. Această metodă poate fi, de asemenea, aplicată diferitelor faze de dezvoltare ale aceleiași religii: o fază poate fi mai urbană, o alta mai rurală; una poate fi dominată de scriere, alta de oralitate. Or, dintr-o perspectivă globală, o anumită religie nu este doar ceea ce adepții ei acceptă, cred și practică, ci și modul în care este percepută de către străini. Pentru a adopta teoria receptării, o anumită religie este înțeleasă diferit - și, din când în când, chiar greșit înțeleasă - din diferite perspective. Istoria neînțelegerilor este la fel de importantă ca și teoriile înțelegerii. Numeroase cazuri de anti-semitism religios demonstrează că, fără a lua în considerare neînțelegerile, este dificil să se înțeleagă complet nu doar istoria evreilor, dar și istoria iudaismului, ambele răspunzând acuzațiilor și adaptându-se condițiilor create de variate (ne)înțelegeri perspective. Pentru a da un alt exemplu, dezbaterile despre spinozism conținează nu numai istoria filosofiei europene pre-moderne și moderne, ci și structura anumitor forme de iudaism, mai ales în Europa Centrală, care au reacționat la provocările

spinoziste. Spinozismul conține principiile schițate în scrierile specifice ale lui Barukh - sau Benedict - Spinoza, dar și utilizările, neînțelegerile și criticile provocate de acestea. Dacă pentru marxiști și gânditorii laici Spinoza a fost precursorul secularismului, pentru alții, după cum vom vedea, el a influențat modul în care Cabala a fost percepută, atunci când a fost descrisă ca spinozism extins. Acestea sunt, mai degrabă, viziuni conflictuale asupra lui Spinoza, dar amândouă sunt emise de cititori informați ai lucrărilor sale și amândouă sunt părți ale fenomenului spinozist ca întreg.

Pe scurt, dintr-un punct de vedere științific, complexitatea unei anumite religii sau a uneia din fazele sau școlile sale este generată nu numai de conținutul specific al scrierilor sale sau de credințele și practicile aderenților ei. Mai degrabă, specificitatea unei religii este și rezultatul modului particular în care a fost înțeleasă de străini, oricât de problematice și deformate ar fi aceste percepții. Fără îndoială, percepțiile exterioare nu trebuie să fie acceptate sau adoptate de membri; de cele mai multe ori, aceștia le resping, din motive întemeiate. Ca să fiu bine înțeles, nu presupun că înțelegerea interioară a unei religii ar trebui să ia automat în considerare perspectivele exterioare. Totuși, atunci când se urmărește o înțelegere științifică, situația este diferită. Un cercetător serios trebuie să fie capabil să abordeze un subiect din diferite unghiuri, inclusiv cele negative, pentru a înțelege complexitatea fenomenului, ceea ce include și criticile și deformările. Religia este o parte a istoriei în care acționează o multitudine de factori. În principiu, fiecare critică și deformare poate să facă vizibile, într-o anumită literatură religioasă, umbrele prezente, ori structurile ignorate sau reprimite de membri; acestea trebuie examinate pentru a înțelege un fenomen religios dat, așa cum funcționa el în diferite perioade istorice.

În fine, perspectivismul poate fi conceput ca parte a nevoii de distanțare de fenomenul investigat, distanțare care este obținută, *inter alia*, prin cunoașterea profundă a altor sisteme religioase și prin posibilitatea de a le aborda din perspectiva unei alte culturi. Totuși, această distanțare nu trebuie să însemne o aderare totală la structurile "străine", cum este cazul aplicării unor forme variate de psihologie sau feminism la Cabala. Ea mai degrabă presupune utilizarea unei abordări flexibile care poate să modifice atât analiza Cabalei, cât și "metoda" rezultată atât din întâlnirea cu un material diferit cât și din procedeul analitic aplicat acestuia. După cum vom vedea în continuare, investigarea temelor referitoare la literatura mistică iudaică prin intermediul problemelor și structurilor manifestate de un tip rural de religiozitate, așa cum este analizat de Eliade, nu încearcă să demonstreze că misticismul iudaic ar fi la rîndul său rural sau arhaic. Dimpotrivă, își propune să arate diferențele dintre categoriile religioase prezente în misticismul iudaic și religia arhaică în înțelegerea pe care i-o dă Eliade, precum și să sugereze nevoia de a o revizui pe cea din urmă. Examinarea unui subiect dintr-o anumită perspectivă relativizează modul în care obiectul este înțeles și chiar perspectiva însăși. Metodele - inclusiv perspectivismul - nu sunt în mai mare măsură absolute decât obiectele sau subiectele lor.

4. Cabala ca teologie simbolică potrivit cercetării moderne

Deoarece următorul capitol se va ocupa în principal de teme regăsite într-o literatură vastă desemnată de termenul-umbrelă "Cabala", voi încerca să descriu aici o abordare a Cabalei adoptată de mulți cercetători moderni: cea teologică. Deși Scholem și adepții săi susțin că abordarea lor este de fapt istorică, ceea ce este adevărat, totuși, o altă abordare, mai profundă stă la baza investigațiilor lor privind sursele cabalistice. Ne vom

ocupa de natura cercetării moderne care, deși nu prezintă conținutul Cabalei în calitate de adevăruri teologice, este tentată să accentueze aspectele teologice ale acestei tradiții.

Mai întâi mă voi îndrepta către o abordare mai complexă a Cabalei care combină metode teologice și semiologice. Foarte răspândita descriere a Cabalei de la începutul secolului al XVI-lea a lui Johann Reuchlin spune: “Cabala este simplă (ca să folosim vocabularul pitagorean) teologie simbolică, în care cuvintele și literele sunt lucruri codate și aceste lucruri sunt, ele însele, coduri pentru alte lucruri. Aceasta ne atrage atenția asupra faptului că aproape întreg sistemul lui Pitagora derivă de la cabaliști și că în mod asemănător el a adus în Grecia folosirea simbolurilor ca mijloace de comunicare.”¹⁹ Scriind din perspectiva unui teolog care crede că a descoperit o veche teologie regăsită printre evrei, care a fost apoi adoptată de Pitagora și ulterior pierdută, Reuchlin accentuează atât teologia cât și simbolismul - o abordare folosită anterior de pitagoreeni în diferite faze ale acestei tradiții -, ceea ce este de înțeles și consonant cu abordarea florentină a cunoașterii religioase de la sfârșitul secolului al XV-lea, cunoscută ca *prisca theologia*. În *De verbo mirifico*, Reuchlin recurge la sintagma *divinitatis symbola*, “simbolurile divinității”.²⁰ În altă parte, el vorbește despre “filosofia simbolică a lui Pitagora și înțelepciunea Cabalei.”²¹ Simbolismul este evident și în alt pasaj important: “Cabala ține de revelația divină transmisă [spre] contemplarea lui Dumnezeu și a formelor separate, contemplările aducând salvarea. [Cabala] este o receptare simbolică”.²²

Oricât de eclectice și artificiale pot fi uneori discuțiile lor, putem spune că o credință *de facto* în acestea găsim la cabaliștii creștini. Este important să accentuăm centralitatea contemplării în descrierea lui Reuchlin și recurența acestui ideal în modul în care cercetătorii evrei, în special Scholem și Isaiah Tishby, au abordat Cabala. După cum am încercat să arăt și altundeva, interpretarea simbolică a Cabalei a rămas parte integrantă a abordărilor științifice moderne ale acestei tradiții sub impactul cărții lui Reuchlin.²³

Poziția lui Reuchlin a avut impact asupra abordării lui Scholem înainte de a deveni o percepție științifică unificată a unei tradiții variate. Într-o scrisoare către Zalman Schocken, scrisă în 1937, Scholem scria: “Am ajuns la intenția de a scrie nu istoria Cabalei, ci metafizica ei.”²⁴ Cum își imagina el calea către o “metafizică a Cabalei?” În aceeași scrisoare scria că dorea să decodeze Cabala pentru ca să “pătrundă prin câmpul simbolic și prin zidul istoriei. Pentru că muntele, corpul de fapte nu are nevoie de cheie; doar zidul ceșos al istoriei din jurul lui trebuie să fie penetrat. A pătrunde prin el este sarcina pe care mi-am propus-o.”²⁵ Conceptul de cheie și ineficiența ei indică posibilitatea înțelegerii substanțiale, precise a Cabalei.²⁶

Aceste planuri erau mai mult decât simple aspirații academice; este greu să nu se observe aspectele experiențiale ale programului imaginat pentru propria sa cercetare academică de Scholem în faza sa de maturitate. Cabala este, conform discuțiilor de mai sus, mai mult decât o literatură importantă pentru înțelegerea religiei, culturii și istoriei evreiești; este o cale spirituală spre atingerea realității de către cercetător. Conține realități (“muntele”) și are metafizică. Reies două componente principale care amintesc de poziția lui Reuchlin din fragmentul din scrisoarea amintită mai sus: simbolică și ontologică. Este important să observăm recursul lui Scholem la dublul singular, “o metafizică a Cabalei”: nu este un tip diversificat de literatură, ci una care constă într-un anumit tip de simbolism care, dacă este decodat corect, deschide porți către o viziune a unei realități non-simbolice.

Acest plan personal de cercetare, implicând o preocupare atât de intimă în 1937 (exprimată într-o scrisoare privată publicată patruzeci de ani mai târziu) a devenit, în 1941, o concepție academică despre Cabala: “În Cabala, [afirmă Scholem], se vorbește

despre o realitate care nu poate fi revelată sau exprimată decât prin referință simbolică. O realitate autentică ascunsă, care nu poate fi exprimată în ea însăși și conform propriilor sale legi, găsește expresie în simbolurile sale.”²⁷ După o altă declarație revelatoare, “chiar și numele lui Dumnezeu sunt numai reprezentări simbolice ale unei realități ultime care este neformată, amorfă.”²⁸ În aceste două afirmații, găsim o abordare a religiei care este mai mult în consonanță cu concepția lui Otto privind numinosul și cu alte abordări, cum ar fi cea a lui Ludwig Wittgenstein, care vede în religie “inexprimabilul”.²⁹ Într-un alt loc, Scholem descrie cabaliștii ca simboliști care exprimă inefabilul.³⁰ Deși fără îndoială, există elemente în textele cabalistice care reprezintă teologia negativă, cum ar fi unele discuții - dar nu toate - privind natura lui ‘*Ein Sof*, supoziția mea este că, în ansamblu, cabaliștii au fost mai puțin înclinați spre teologia negativă decât susține școala lui Scholem. În unele cazuri, limbajul teologic negativ era considerat o strategie exoterică ascunzând o înclinație antropomorfică esoterică, care poate fi concepută ca un fel de teologie pozitivă.³¹

Pentru a ne întoarce la pasajul lui Scholem, asumția unei realități ascunse și importanța simbolului sunt strâns legate. Din nou, singularul este destul de evident: în “Cabala” și în “o realitate”. Similară este și poziția ulterioară a lui Scholem, care celebrează simbolismul nu numai ca pe o temă foarte importantă în Cabala, dar în același timp ca mod de adaptare a Cabalei, ca “centru viu”, la circumstanțe istorice variate.³² Aici este implicată o atitudine constantă: Cabala, din nou la singular, este modificată în funcție de circumstanțele schimbătoare, dar centrul rămâne constant.³³ Această viziune monocromatică asupra Cabalei ca fenomen spiritual și asupra realității ultime ca o entitate ontologică reprezentată prin simboluri reverberează în scrierile discipolilor lui Scholem.³⁴ Pentru punctul de vedere pe care îl susținem este adecvat următorul pasaj, care elaborează o viziune simbolică a misticismului ca întreg:

“Ce anume este această dimensiune “secretă” sau “ascunsă” a limbajului, despre a cărei existență toți misticii din toate timpurile au căzut de acord în unanimitate, din India și de la misticii islamului, până la cabaliști și Jacob Boehme? Răspunsul este, fără urmă de ezitare, următorul: natura simbolică a limbajului este cea care definește această dimensiune. Teoriile lingvistice ale mysticilor deseori diferă atunci când este vorba de a determina această natură simbolică. Însă, toți misticii care caută secretul limbajului ajung să împărtășească o bază comună, și anume faptul că limbajul este folosit pentru a comunica ceva ce merge mult dincolo de sfera care ține seama de expresie și formare: faptul că un ceva inexprimabil, care se manifestă numai în simboluri, răsună în fiecare formă de exprimare.”³⁵

Pe scurt, cabaliștii erau - ca “toți misticii”, după cum afirmă Scholem - simboliști. În altă parte, el declară că aceștia erau “principalii simboliști ai iudaismului rabinic. Pentru Cabala, iudaismul, în toate aspectele sale, era un sistem de simboluri mistice care reflectă misterul lui Dumnezeu și universul, iar scopul cabaliștilor era acela de a descoperi și născoci chei către înțelegerea acestui simbolism”.³⁶

Din nou, termenul “Cabala” apare la singular, iar “cabaliștii” sunt descriși într-o manieră nedeterminată. Scholem se exprimă în aceste citate ca un istoric al unui tip specific de literatură care reflectă “mistere” latente în nucleul realității, și, în principiu, această descriere nu trebuie confundată cu o convingere personală. Totuși, se pare că în unele din confesiunile sale, Scholem reiterează supoziția unui mister prezent ca parte constitutivă a propriei sale viziuni asupra lumii.³⁷ Însă nu intenționez să discut teologia personală a lui Scholem, subiect care a fost tratat în altă parte.³⁸

Baza unei astfel de înțelegeri a afinității dintre simboluri și ceea ce ele simbolizează este, în final, nu doar opera gânditorilor germani postkantieni, ci, în primul rând, teologia negativă a neoplatonismului, care, alături de gnosticism, era concepută drept componentă formativă a unui amestec specific de teosofie care a fost îmbrățișată de majoritatea cabaliștilor.³⁹ De fapt, Scholem și Tishby priveau întâlnirea dintre teologia negativă neoplatonică și pleromul gnostic, care a contribuit la aspectele pozitive ale teologiei cabaliste, ca fiind nașterea celui mai dominant aspect al Cabalei - teosofia ei. Astfel, nu doar speculațiile teologice, dar și maniera de rugăciune cabalistă specifică au fost concepute ca întâlnirea acestor două teologii non-iudaice. Ocupându-se de textele cabaliste timpurii, Scholem notează că: “modul gnostic de a vedea lucrurile în același fel a pătruns în misticismul rugăciunii lor [primii cabaliști istorici, Rabbi Jacob ha-Nazir și Rabbi Abraham ben David] fără a fi capabili să îl depășească în întregime.”⁴⁰ Acesta este un exemplu interesant de subordonare a componentei performative - în acest caz, rugăciunea - față de teologic, și anume pretinsa viziune gnostică a sefirot. Într-adevăr, așa cum afirmă Tishby, Scholem demonstrează convingător că:

„În ceea ce privește doctrina sefirot, se poate demonstra, fără îndoială, că există aici anumite reflecții ale unei tendințe gnostice clare, și că aceasta, de fapt, a apărut și s-a dezvoltat dintr-un contact istorico-literar cu rămășițe gnostice, care au fost păstrate de-a lungul mai multor generații în anumite cercuri evreiești, până si-au găsit drumul către cabaliștii timpurii, care au fost profund afectați de ele, atât spiritual cât și intelectual.”⁴¹

În altă parte, Scholem discută centrul de gravitație al Cabalei și afirmă despre cabaliști că:

„Ideile lor pornesc de la concepte și valori specifice iudaismului, adică, mai presus de toate, de la credința în unitatea lui Dumnezeu și de la înțelesul revelației Sale, așa cum apare în Tora, legea sfântă. Misticismul iudaic, în formele sale variate reprezintă o încercare de a interpreta valorile religioase ale iudaismului în termenii valorilor mistice. Se concentrează pe ideea Dumnezeului viu care se manifestă în actele de Creație, Revelație și Izbăvire. Dusă la extrem, meditația mistică asupra acestei idei dă naștere concepției de sferă, un întreg domeniu al divinității, care stă la baza lumii simțurilor noastre și care este prezentă și activă în tot ceea ce există.”⁴²

Într-adevăr, fenomenologia Cabalei în aceste cărți reflectă această afirmație generală. Al doilea capitol din cartea lui Scholem, *Major Trends*, despre Zohar este intitulat “Doctrina teosofică a Zoharului” și începe cu afirmația: “Zoharul este preocupat mai ales de obiectul meditației, adică, misterele lui *mundus intelligibilis*” și cu “Zoharul reprezintă teosofia iudaică.”⁴³

În ultimul citat al lui Scholem și în alte discuții care tratează contemplarea, problema meditației gravitează în jurul a ceea ce este descris ca o idee. Pornind de la ideea de unitate divină și credința în aceasta, s-a născut ideea de atribute divine. Conform unui alt text al lui Scholem, contemplarea atributelor divine, pe care el o numește “contemplare teosofică”, a dat naștere miturilor cabalistice.⁴⁴ Scholem vede în contemplare principalul tip de atitudine umană față de divin, care nu este teurgică, ancorată în forme performative Halakhice. În plus, această abordare mai cu seamă eidetică a Cabalei ca interpretare a unei chestiuni teologice este insuficientă pentru o experiență mistică esențială și prevalența ei în multe studii recente demonstrează tendința de a concepe această tradiție mistică mai degrabă în termeni teologici decât experiențiali.⁴⁵

În fine, ultimul citat se bazează pe un vector descendent; domeniu divin se reflectă asupra lumilor de jos și, conform altor texte, această reflecție este decodată prin

măsurarea valențelor simbolice ale realității. Într-adevăr, Scholem vorbește despre interpretarea mistică a valorilor iudaice, care este, după părerea mea, o manieră mai bună de a înțelege Cabala decât cea teosofică, dar această concepție asupra naturii literaturii Cabalei nu este acceptată pe scară largă. Abordarea interpretativă care a generat teosofia cabalistică este exprimată în aceeași carte: “interpretarea mistică a atributelor și unității lui Dumnezeu, în așa-numita doctrină a Sefirot, a constituit o problemă comună pentru toți cabaliștii, însă soluțiile date de diverse școli diferă unele de altele.”⁴⁶

În aceste ultime două pagini este evident rolul jucat de construcția mentală, de interpretare și de meditație, în vreme ce descrierile explicite ale practicilor și tehnicilor sunt absente din analiza misticismului iudaic întreprinsă de Scholem. Meditația menționată de Scholem și sfera creată de cabaliști sunt legate de cheștiunea simbolurilor, și acesta este motivul pentru care propun denumirea abordării lui Scholem și a școlii lui ca pansimbolică⁴⁷, deși consider că această accentuare este exagerată.⁴⁸ Există și definiții ale Cabalei date de cabaliști care nu ating deloc conceptul de simbolism.⁴⁹ Totuși, chiar când simbolurile - și aceasta este cu siguranță o cheștiune de definiție - sunt evidente, deseori sunt înrudite cu modurile de activitate care însoțesc moduri de cunoaștere. Marginalizarea acestor moduri de activitate - tehnică, rituală, lingvistică - crează un dezechilibru între legătura dintre teologic și simbolic, pe de-o parte, și aspectele active sau performative ale Cabalei, pe de altă parte. Consider că acest dezechilibru este rezultatul impactului accentului creștin pus pe teologie și credință - ca elemente centrale pentru înțelegerea religiei - asupra modului de concepere a misticismului iudaic de către învățații evrei.

În favoarea subordonării de către Scholem a numeroase probleme importante ale vieții iudaice în raport cu dimensiunea teologică a acestei religii, o mărturie importantă poate fi găsită într-un pasaj din autobiografia unuia din apropiații lui Scholem. Conform cărții lui George Steiner, *Errata*, “nici un aspect serios al problemei iudaice, al istoriei și vieții evreului nu poate fi rupt total de sursele teosofice-metafizice (adesea l-am auzit pe Gershom Scholem accentuând acest lucru). La o analiză finală, teologicul și metafizicul sunt elementele care denunță complicația tragică a faptelor.”⁵⁰ Contextul în care apare acest pasaj se caracterizează prin discriminarea și opresiunea evreilor în istorie. Totuși, nu sunt sigur că această lectură a istoriei, ce identifică sursa problemelor teologice care au influențat atitudinile față de iudaism în contextul apariției creștinismului și islamului, este singura temă implicată în trimiterea lui Steiner la Scholem. În orice caz, se potrivește cu ceea ce putem descrie drept teologizarea Cabalei în scrierile lui Scholem și ale discipolilor lui.⁵¹

Note:

* *Traducerea în limba română de Iulia Grad*. Textul a fost tradus după: Moshe Idel, *Ascensions on High in Jewish Mysticism: Pillars, Lines, Ladders*, Central European University Press, Budapest, 2005. Textul face parte din seria Prelegerilor Ion P. Culianu susținute de Moshe Idel în cadrul Pastis Incorporated: CEU Studies in the Humanities.

1 Despre cheștiuni legate de problematicile implicate de conceptul științific de religie, vezi Daniel Dubuisson, *L'Occident et la religion: Mythes, science et ideologie* (Brussels: Editions Complexes, 1998).

2 Vezi Steven Wasserstorm, *Religion after Religion: Gershom Scholem, Mircea Eliade and Henry Corbin at Eranos* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

3 Pentru această atitudine mai degrabă negativă față de islam, vezi Rudolph Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, trad. John W. Harvey (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1923), pg. 107. Vezi de asemenea Wasserstorm, *Religion after Religion*, pg. 90

4 Această temă merită un studiu separat.

5 Vezi *Enchanted Chains: Techniques and Rituals in Jewish Mysticism* (Los Angeles, 2005), pp. 3-30, în special, Robert Zaehner, *Hindu and Muslim Mysticism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1972), pp. 2-3 și 86-109. Pentru alte exemple, vezi Moshe Idel introducerea la *Enchanted Chains: Techniques and Rituals in Jewish Mysticism* (Los Angeles, 2005), pp. 3-30.

6 Vezi remarcile conclusive ale acestui studiu.

7 Vezi studii mai recente despre această problemă, găsite în , de exemplu, William G. Doty, *Mythography: A Study of Myths and Rituals*, ed. a 2-a, (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2000); Robert Segal, *The Myth and Ritual Theory: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Backwell: 1998); Bruce Lincoln, *Discourse and the Construction of Society: Comparative Studies of Myth, Ritual and Classification* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); și idem, *Myth, Cosmos, and Society: Indo-European Themes of Creation and Destruction* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986)

8 Vezi, de exemplu, numeroasele studii ale lui Charles Tart, Arthur Deikman și Stanislav Groff

9 Peter Moore, "Mystical Experience, Mystical Doctrine, Mystical Technique", în *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis*, ed. Steven T. Katz (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 112-14

10 Vezi conferințele ținute la College de France în februarie 2001, care vor fi publicate ca Idel, *Enchanted Chains*. Pentru o formulare anterioară asupra acestui subiect, vezi idem, în *Doors of Understanding: Conversations in Global Spirituality in Honor of Ewert Cousins*, ed. Steven Chase (Quincy: Franciscan Press, 1997), pp. 305-33.

11 În legătură cu opera lui Corbin, vezi capitolul I, n. 109; de asemenea, vezi mai ales discuțiile lui Gilbert Durand despre simbolismul ascensional în *Les structures anthropologiques de l'imaginaire* (Paris: Dunod, 1992), pp. 138-62.

12 Vezi Robert K. C. Forman, ed. , *The Problem of Pure Consciousness: Mysticism and Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); și seriile de cărți editate de Steven Katz la Oxford University Press. Vezi, de asemenea, de exemplu, Moore, "Mystical Experience", pp. 112-14.

13 Vezi, de exemplu, Weny Doniger, *Women, Androgynes, and Other Mythical Beasts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), pp. 5-7; și versiunea românească a lui Ioan Culianu, *Eros și Magie în Renaștere* (București, Nemira, 1999), pp. 371-72; Nicu Gavriluță, *Jocurile minții și lumile multidimensionale* (Iași: Polirom, 2000), pp. 79-84.

14 Vezi Mircea Eliade, "Methodological Remarks on the Study of Religious Symbolism" în *The History of Religions: Essays in Methodology*, eds. Mircea Eliade și J. M. Kitagawa (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), pp. 86-107.

15 "Le vrai réalisme en histoire, c'est de savoir que la réalité humaine est multiple" (în limba franceză în original - n.tr.)

16 Vezi Moshe Idel, *Absorbing Perfections: Kabbalah and Interpretation* (New Heaven: Yale University Press, 2002), pp. 80-110.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.

19 Vazi Johann Reuchlin, *On the Art of Kabbalah, De Arte Cabalistica*, trad. M. și S. Goodman (Lincon: Nebraska University Press, 1993), p. 241. Vezi, de asemenea, S. K.

Heninger, Jr., *Touches of Sweet Harmony: Pythagorean Cosmology and Renaissance Poetics* (San Marino, Cal.: Huntington Library, 1974), p. 245.

20 Pistorius, *De Verbo Mirifico*, ed. Johann Reuchlin (Basel, 1587), p. 947.

21 Reuchlin, *On the Art of Kabbalah*, p.357.

22 Ibid., p.63. Versiunea latină se găsește la pagina 62: "Est enim Cabala divinae revelationis, ad salutiferam Dei et formarum separatarum contemplationem traditae, symbolica receptio."

23 Vezi Moshe Idel, "Zur Funktion von Symbolen bei G. G. Scholem" în *Gershom Scholem, Literatur und Retorik*, ed. S. Moses și Weigel (Cologne, Weimar, Vienna: Boehlau Verlag, 2000), pp. 51-59. Pentru alte influențe ale înțelegerii Renașterii creștine a naturii Cabalei asupra cercetării moderne, vezi idem, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (New Heaven: Yale University Press, 1988), pp.5-6.

24 David Biale, *Gershom Scholem, Kabbalah and Counter-History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), p. 75.

25 Ibid., p.31.

26 Despre tema cheii în scrierile lui Scholem, vezi Moshe Idel, "Hieroglyphs, Keys, Enigmas: On G. G. Scholem's Vision of Kabbalah: Between Franz Molitor and Franz Kafka", în *Arche Noah, Die Idee der "Kultur" im deutsch- juedischen Diskurs*, ed. Benhard Greiner și Christoph Schmidt (Freiburg: Rombach, 2002), pp. 227-48.

27 Gershom Scholem, *On the Possibility of Jewish Mysticism in Our Time and Other Essays*, trad. Jonathan Chipman (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1997), p. 140. Vezi și idem, *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, trad. R. Manheim (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), pp. 22 și 36.

28 Scholem, *On the Kabbalah*, p. 8.

29 Vezi Otto, *Idea of the Holy*; și Thomas McPherson, "Religion as the Inexpressible", în *New Essays in Philosophical Theology*, ed. Antony Flew și Alastair MacIntyre (London: SCM Press, 1966), pp. 131-42.

30 Vezi Gershom Scholem, *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis*, ed. Werner J. Dannhauser (New York: Schocken Books, 1976), p. 48.

31 Vezi Moshe Idel, "Une figure d'homme au-dessous des sefirot (A propos de la doctrine des 'eclats' de R. David ben Yehouda he-Hasid et ses developpements)," trad. Charles Mopsik, *Pardes* 8 (1988): pp.131-50.

32 Vezi Scholem, *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis*, p. 46.

33 Pe această temă, vezi și Amos Funkenstein, "Gershom Scholem: Charisma, Kairos and the Messianic Dialectic," *History & Memory* 4: pp. 123-39.

34 Vezi, de exemplu, Joseph Dan, introducerea la *The Early Kabbalah*, trad. Ronald C. Kiener (New York: Paulist Press, 1986), pp. 9-13; și idem, *On Sanctity* (în ebraică) (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1997), pp. 45-57, 69-70, 383-84 etc.

35 Gershom Scholem, "The Name of God and the Linguistic Theory of Kabbalah," *Diogenes* 79 (1972): p. 60; vezi și pp. 62,165 și 193; idem, *On the Kabbalah*, p. 36; idem, *On Jews and Judaism*, p; 48; Isaiah Tishby, *Paths of Faith and Heresy* (în ebraică) (Ramat Gan: Massada, 1964), pp. 11-12; și Dan, *Early Kabbalah*, p. 13. Pentru discuții mai detaliate privind concepția lui Scholem despre simbolul cabalistic, vezi Susan Handelman, *Fragments of Redemption* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), pp. 82-84 și 93-114; Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, pp. 200-34; idem, "The Function of Symbols," în Reuchlin, *On The Art of Kabbalah*, pp. xv-xvi; și, mai recent, Andreas Kilcher, *Die Sprachtheorie der Kabbalah als Aesthetisches Paradigma* (Stuttgart, Weimar: Metzler, 1998), pp. 96-98.

36 Scholem, *On the Kabbalah*, pp. 5-6.

37 Vezi Scholem, *On Jews and Judaism*, pp. 47-48.

38 Vezi Gershom Weiler, "On the Theology of Gershom Scholem" (în ebraică), *Qeshet* 71 (1976): pp. 121-28; și Biale, *Gershom Scholem*, pp. 142-46.

39 Vezi, de exemplu, Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalah* (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1974), pp. 45 și 98; și idem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, ed. R. Z. J. Werblowaky, trad. A. Arkush (Philadelphia: Jewish Publishing Society and Princeton University Press, 1987), p. 98.

40 Scholem, *Origins*, p. 247. Vezi și idem, *Kabbalah*, p. 98. Compară, totuși cu Scholem, *Origins*, p. 148; și Moshe Idel, "Kabbalistic Prayer in Provence" (în ebraică), *Tarbiz* 62 (1993): pp. 265-86.

41 Isaiah Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar: An Anthology of Texts*, trad. D. Goldstein (London: Littman Library, 1991), vol. 1, p. 236 (inclusiv accentuările). Nota bene: Tishby consideră că Cabala ca atare a fost influențată de subiecte gnostice. Vezi mai multe despre această problemă în capitolul 3.

42 Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1967), pp. 10-11 (inclusiv accentuările).

43 Ibid., p. 205. Nu este de mirare că acesta este modul în care alți cercetători înțeleg Zoharul. Vezi, de exemplu, Antoine Faivre, *Theosophy, Imagination, Tradition: Studies in Western Esotericism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), pp. 32-33, n. 11. Vezi și ibidem, p. 58.

44 Vezi Scholem, *On the Kabbalah*, p. 99. Vezi și modul în care Reuchlin utilizează contemplarea ca centrală pentru înțelegerea Cabalei ca diferită de rabinism și comparo cu introducerea mea la cartea lui Reuchlin *On the Art of the Cabbalah*, pp. xxi-xxiii.

45 Vezi David Biale, "Jewish Mysticism in the Sixteen Century," în *An Introduction to the Medieval Mystics of Europe*, ed. Paul Szarmach (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), p. 314.

46 Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 13.

47 Vezi Idel, *Absorbing Perfections*, pp. 279-80. Pentru mai multe despre simbolism și Cabala, vezi Boaz Huss, "R. Joseph Gikatilla's Definiton of Symbolism and Its Vrsions in Kabbalistic Literature," în Rivakah Shatz-Uffenheimer Memorial Volume (în ebraică), ed. R. Elijor and J. Dan (Jerusalem, 1996), vol. 1, pp. 157-76; și Abraham Elkayam, "Between Referentialism and Performativism: Two Approaches in Understanding the Kabbalistic Symbol" (în ebraică), *Daat* 24 (1990): pp. 5-40.

48 Idel, *Absorbing Perfection*, pp. 272- 313; și idem, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, pp. 200-10.

49 Vezi, de exemplu, Moshe Idel, "Defining Kabbalah: The Kabbalah of the Divine Names", în *Mystics of the Book: Themes, Topics, Typology*, ed. R. A. Herrera (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), pp. 106-13.

50 George Steiner, *Errata* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1997), p. 57.

51 Pentru mai multe despre această temă, vezi Moshe Idel, "On the Theologization of Kabbalah in Modern Scholarship", în ed. Yossef Schwartz și Volkhard Krech, *Religious Apologetics - Philosophical Argumentation* (Tuebingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 2004), pp. 123-74.

YEHUDA BAR SHALOM
YONATAN GLASER

Jewish Pastoral Counseling: a window of opportunity for Israeli Academia

Abstract:

Following participation in Dr. Yair Caspi's "Psychology in Judaism" workshop, the writers contemplate whether the teaching of Caspi's model in academic settings could become simultaneously a fresh addition to interdisciplinary approaches to the teaching of Judaism in Israeli Academic life, and an academic addition to the contemporary trend to Jewish renewal in Israeli society. The model is based on weekly facilitated workshops in which participants both reflect on and discuss their lives and also explore unique interpretations of Jewish texts and ideas, constantly seeking the borderline where their lives inform the text and vice versa. The process leads to the re-enchantment of ancient Jewish concepts, the reinvention of the Jewish religious experience in a contemporary paradigm and idiom, and the possibility of deep transformative insight.

Introduction

In the Israeli context, treating religion as an academic subject necessitates taking a stand on the ever evolving disagreement about what Judaism is. Staunch advocates can be found for the alternative, even exclusive, claims that Judaism is variously a culture, a nationality, a religion, a civilization, the folkways of the Jewish People, a set of normatively binding sacred laws, or a form of consciousness. Adjudicating between, or navigating one's way through, the competing claims is a tricky enterprise.

We increasingly hear voices in Israeli universities, colleges and teacher training institutes that call for Israeli Jews to have greater Jewish knowledge. Yet when efforts are made to create a curriculum that "connects the Israeli with his roots and Jews in the Diaspora," the objectives, aims, and subjects that should be taught remain very ambigu-

**Dr.
Yehuda
Bar
Shalom**
Chair of
Education
Studies at
the David
Yellin
College in
Jerusalem.



**Author
of the book:**
**Educating Israel: Social
Entrepreneurship in Israel's
Multicultural Society (2006).**

**Yonatan
Glaser**
Founder of
B'Zedek
("in
Justice"),
an Israeli
initiative to
train and
activate
youth in
social change and social justice. He is
a graduate of Israel's prominent
School for Educational Leadership.



Key words:
religion, Judaism, Jewish pastoral
counseling, academia, religious studies,
Caspi's model

ous (Kopelowitz & Bar Shalom, 2004). As if this were not enough, there seems to be agreement among different thinkers that knowledge alone cannot instill a sense of belonging, purpose, celebration, values, holiness, or whatever it is that being Jewish involves. If Judaism is taught purely as a body of knowledge, no matter how inter-disciplinarily, it remains a classic “academic subject,” that is, detached from the learner and disembodied from her/his life. There is a broad consensus that having even a good knowledge of Jewish subject matter cannot, by itself, serve as a sufficient tool to socialize Israelis for Jewish belonging and commitment, help them feel and be at home in their own cultural heritage, or enable them to engage with the spiritual dimensions of life. Thinkers who support this view can be found among very different Jewish Israeli groups: Modern orthodox Jews, Jews from Liberal streams, and secular Israelis. Indeed, they believe that without a different kind of serious engagement with Jewish texts and meaning, Israel will increasingly see the creation of a generation of what is peremptorily termed “Hebrew speaking goys” (that is, Jews who are just like non-Jews except that they happen to speak Hebrew).

Critics of this line of thought, taking a postmodern view on the matter, argue that this accusation against secular Israelis stems from a misunderstanding of the dynamic nature of culture, with its many formal and informal institutions of socialization and meaning-creating mechanisms (Bekerman & Silverman, 1997). They say that there is no boundary, behavioral, value-related, or otherwise, beyond which the authenticity of the Jewishness experienced by the Jew is put in question. Just as an individual is held to maintain her/his identity even through radical changes, just as the individual need maintain no fidelity with what s/he once was to remain the same person, this school of thought says that what Jews do and become is what defines what Judaism is. Fidelity to the past through a study process that “loads the Jewish software” is not a condition for true Jewish flourishing.

Nonetheless there does seem to be a thirst among many Israeli Jews to find meaning in Jewish knowledge. The meaning they search for is expected to be relevant to their lives, not an accumulation of facts. More and more institutions, such as *Elul* (the first Israeli adult Jewish study center, founded in 1989), *Binah*, *Kolot*, and Jewish culture festivals such as *Hakhel* and the *Kfar Blum Festival* invite different kinds of Israelis to engage in Jewish dialogue, explore Jewish texts, and examine possible connections to existential dilemmas and the moral and spiritual dimensions of daily life. In Israeli academia, interdisciplinary approaches to Judaism, ones that connect the affective and cognitive domain in a search for new meaning, can be seen mostly in teacher training colleges (Bar Shalom, 2007). It seems, though, that the teachers in these institutions bring to their teaching their experiences from informal institutions such as those we just mentioned. In other words, they see their teaching as new, innovative, informal, and interdisciplinary (Bar Shalom, 2007).

A New institution in Israeli Academia: The Psychology in Judaism program as a model for “Jewish Pastoral counseling.”

Compared to teacher training institutions and colleges, universities are often bound by the traditional academic paradigm and are usually slower to incorporate experimental and innovative curriculum. The “Psychology in Judaism” program at Tel Aviv University is a very unusual program. It does something usually unthinkable for classic

academia, where psychology is for the psychology department and Judaism is for Judaic scholars and rabbis.¹ Ironically, the founder of the program, Yair Caspi, discovered this dichotomy at Yeshiva University, where he wanted to write a doctoral dissertation on “Jewish psychology”. He ended up writing on a different subject, because even in this Jewish orthodox institution, he found the subject matter split, both in the institutional philosophy and among the staff members themselves. He sensed that the staff felt that a hybridization of the subjects constituted a threat to the high academic standing of the institution as an academic leader in the social work profession and in research.

Caspi’s independent study and inquiry, in institutions such as Elul, helped him create a model of teaching in which psychological counseling and Judaism are connected, intertwined, and even morphed. There is no other program in Israel that tries to create such a unified field. In the Christian context, though, the pastoral counseling program seems to be an equivalent, in the sense that both approaches seem to create a synthesis between theology and psychology, putting theology in the senior position, and trying to avoid confusion or a split between both fields (Hunsinger, 1995).

Caspi invites Secular Israelis to reclaim God, that is, to speak to God and to live with God directly, with no intermediaries, and he turns to the Orthodox and the ultra-Orthodox believers and tells them that they are “are too busy observing obsolete mitzvot (religious commandments) and are not involved enough in experiencing the closeness and love of God” (Levi-Barzilai, 2007).

Caspi is not the first Israeli who has strived to create a Jewish psychology. Rottenberg, like Caspi, rejects the Freudian Oedipal myth, instead offering an opposite myth in which the father’s fantasy is to commit homicide against the child, like in the Abraham/Isaac story. Finding its (non-violent) resolution, the intergenerational crisis is solved and tradition is passed on to the next generation (Rotenberg, 1993). Rotenberg, in creating a psychological theology that is “other-centered” and communal by its nature, seems to be influenced by Buber’s dialogical approach.

Caspi’s Jewish theology has a simple mission built on several clear and simple assumptions. Each person’s fantasy is not to solve an oedipal complex, but rather to have an ongoing, meaningful relation and communion with God. He sees that as a basic human need, a universal truth that was first recognized by the Jewish people millennia ago and handed down as a gift from them to all nations. In other words, borrowing from Kleinian understanding of object relations (see Meltzer, 1998), Caspi states that in Jewish “object relations” the individual simply wants to be one with God. This communion seems to be different from what Maslow (1970) described in *Religions, Values, And Peak Experiences*, wherein religion is a “spiritual high”. For Caspi, religion, or living with God, is to cultivate one’s capacity to understanding “what is the right thing to do?” in almost every dilemma in life.

How does the model work?

Caspi’s works with groups is based around weekly meetings. The meetings start with the study of an eclectic range of core Jewish texts pre-arranged around a theme. This thematic exploration is followed by an analysis of a daily situation in which one or more of the participants present a life dilemma. Initially, the dilemmas are small and mundane. As the group develops the issues, participants become more serious and the inquiry becomes deeper and more intimate. There are several questionnaires that allow

the participant to explore the personal meaning of core Jewish ideas. Participants are required to think about the gifts they have received (*Chesed*), their desires (*Ratzon*), their bad/evil inclinations (*Yetzer Harah*), the locus of temptation to idolatry in this situation/dilemma (*Avodat Elilim*), their sacrifices (*Korbanot*), their sin (in Judaism, the term is *Het*, meaning 'to miss the mark', has a vastly different meaning from the Christian notion of 'sin'), what price they should pay for *Het* (*Onesh*), what lies they tell themselves to support their wrongful actions (*Sheker*), and what would be the right thing to do (*Mitzvah*). Idol worship is a very central subject, for Caspi claims that when we don't have God in our lives, we create a substitute by making other gods. That is, we elevate other aspects of our lives into the status and role of God – all powerful, all consuming, all determining. These gods include careers, ourselves ('me' as that which can give All, which can do Anything, or to which everything is Owed), wealth, our children, beauty, youth, consumer products, fame, authoritative figures, the nation Israel, the land of Israel, and the list goes on (Caspi 2001). Caspi monitors the group to try to differentiate between idol worship and true God, realizing that it is actually very difficult to get rid of our idols. "The world according to Yair Caspi is not divided between the Orthodox and the secular, but between those who have true gods and those who do not. Between those who recognize that they are idol worshipers and make an effort to part from their idols, and those who do not" (Levi-Barzilai, 2003). The focal point of the exercises and explorations is to answer the question: in this given dilemma, taking into consideration my relationship with God, what is the right thing to do?

Participants from all walks of life, secular and religious, seem to gain deep insights from this kind of work, as indicated by the testimony of this health care professional:

Psychiatrist Aliza Ring Rosenbaum, director of the adolescent department at the Abarbanel Mental Health Center in Bat Yam, is a graduate of the first year of the program. "The group experience was fascinating," she says. "I'm a secular woman, with a spiritual tendency. I liked his direction, that of a secular person who asks 'Why did they take God away from me?' and declares 'Nobody will determine my God for me.' Professionally speaking, I'm a clinician. It was interesting to discover a new way of seeing and relating to people's conflicts in terms of Judaism. It's entirely new to me. It's another language, another way to reach people" (Levi-Barzilai, 2003).

and that of an Orthodox Rabbi:

Rabbi Yair Ben Shetrit, from the settlement of Kochav Hashahar, head of the Aviv Institute in Tel Aviv and a graduate of the workshop, says: "I was enriched. The language he used was fascinating. As a religious person I study and teach, and I often sense the gap between the Jewish language in which I live and reality, the modern lifestyle. And here the man has made a very interesting connection between the two worlds" (Levi-Barzilai, 2003).

Rethinking the relationship between Religious Studies, religious experience, and the academic disciplines

The classic relationship of religion and the academy is one of unbearable tension, opposition, and rupture. The academic disciplines, in their role as the step-child of rationalism, seek to deconstruct, objectify, and explain away the religious experience. In Jewish studies, this process has a "glorious" history arguably starting with the *Wissenschaft des*

Judentums (“The Science of Judaism”), a nineteenth-century movement that set out to critically investigate Jewish literature and culture, including rabbinic literature, using scientific methods to analyze the origins of Jewish traditions. The polemic of the day was whether this school of scholars came to raise Judaism from its then pariah status in order to show it as containing the originality, profundity, and vitality it claimed for itself, or whether they in fact came to “bury” it. Samson Raphael Hirsch and others regarded the *Wissenschaft* movement as draining traditional Jewish knowledge of its “sacral power” (Mendes-Flohr, 1998), thereby undermining the possibility of maintaining a living Jewish community. In the non-Jewish realm, the pioneering work of writers like William James tried to put religious experience on a firmer footing by documenting the incontrovertible phenomenology of the religious experience itself. In the Jewish world, a long line of modern Jewish thinkers and philosophers grappled with the relationship between science, rationality, and universal truths on the one hand, and religion, spirituality, and the unique experience of the Jews on the other.

Within this search for a way for Judaism to fully enter the modern world, among the most prominent and influential thinkers are Martin Buber and Abraham Joshua Heschel. They are part of what might loosely be called the school of Jewish religious humanists. They eschewed the dichotomous approach to the science-religion question and, in their writings as in their lives, they argued for the critical importance of an existential engagement with Jewish texts; with seeing the real meaning of the text through the prism of life and the meanings of life through the prism of the text. Amongst others in this broad category, each it must be said with their own emphasis, are Franz Rosenzweig, Mordechai Kaplan, Eric Fromm and Viktor Frankl. This school of thought continues as a vital tradition today. There is, alongside it, a tradition that says that study is not enough, that only the revitalization of the Jewish tradition will enable it to remain a potent (religious) cultural force. This view is carried forward, among others, by the Jewish Historian Yosef Yerushalmi (Yerushalmi, 1982). Whereas Buber thinks that Jewish texts can be a gateway to a dialogue with the Divine, Yerushalmi thinks that recreating ancient Jewish forms and reimbuing them with religious intention will yield that result. This can be represented schematically thus:

Item →			
Thinker	What is happen- ing?	What is ‘remembered’?	How does it happen?
Buber	Reactualization	Living in relation with God through I-Thou relationships	Revelation through dialogic study of text and rituals that enable realization and find fulfillment in the lives of the participants.
Yerushalmi	Reactualization	The matrix of elemental meanings that are the ‘genetic code’ of the Jewish religious experience	Experiential reactualization through ritual, the Jewish Festivals (Chaggim) and the repetition of the Bible (Torah) in a cyclical manner ... liturgy, ritual and Jewish Law (Halacha) were experienced then with all their rich associations

However, within the realm that sees the right kind of textual study and exploration as a gateway to religious living, Heschel and Buber would support the thrust of Caspi's effort to realign academic and religious learning, or study, of Jewish texts. Heschel stresses that a real reading of the Bible is necessarily a religious reading, of which the Academy can become an excuse for avoidance.

Man of today resists the Scriptures because he cannot endure revelation. To endure revelation is to endure this moment full of possible decisions, to respond to and be responsible for every moment. Man of today resists scriptures because he no longer wants to accept responsibility (Heschel, 1959).

Yet Heschel does not advise us to rely on the Bible as a proof text. He requires a real engagement with the text:

Judaism is based on a minimum of revelation and a maximum of interpretation, upon the Will of God and the understanding of Israel (*meaning, the people called Israel, i.e. Jews*)... He gave us the text and we refine and complete it (Heschel, 1959).

If one had doubts about his desire to bring and integrate real academic scholarship in this undertaking, one need only read his magnum opus "The Prophets." Based in meticulous historical research through which he pieces together a phenomenology of the prophet's experience, he tells us that:

The prophet is human, yet he employs notes one octave too high for our ears. [S]he experiences moments that defy our understanding. He is neither 'a singing saint' nor 'a moralizing poet,' but an assaulter of the mind. Often [her] words begin to burn where conscience ends. The prophet is an iconoclast, challenging the apparently holy, revered, and awesome beliefs cherished as certainties, institutions endowed with supreme sanctity, he exposes as scandalous pretensions (Heschel, 1962).

Martin Buber similarly talks about the importance of the text and also stresses the importance of our lived experience. Our lives partake of creation, he explains, they are part of the unfolding, created world: "Creation is not a hurdle on the way to God, it is the road itself" (Martin Buber, 1979). From this standpoint, how could one only study the ancient Jewish texts without seeing how they resound in and are explained by our lives? Buber's Theology turns the usual direction of revelation on its head. Buber describes revelation as the experience in which God does not "show Itself," but rather one in which in and through the natural events and experiences of life, God "lets-Himself-be-seen." Buber tells us that theophany is not so much a "breaking through" of the Divine to the finite lives of those who live on earth, as it is the radical perception of ever-present holiness embedded in and refracted in the mundane, "And in seeing that which radiates from Him, they see Him" (Buber, 1958).

Again, put schematically, we can map the extreme secular and orthodox positions as seeing scientific/academic knowledge as (at best) irrelevant to the correct way to relate to the Biblical texts. Caspi stands in a long tradition of third-way, Jewish religious humanist interpreters: (see the table below.)

Caspi, like Buber and Heschel, brings to the interpretative table the full panoply

of academic disciplines; psychology, sociology, Jewish studies in their different forms, history, and more. Further, his approach, resting as it does on the intellectual spadework

	Extreme Secular and Orthodox		Buber, Heschel, Caspi	Other post/modern Jewish thinkers	
Is there a self-awareness of hermeneutic process by the reader?	No The text is as it appears, we should accept the obvious, straight-forward meaning		Yes & No We should enter into dialogue with the text	Yes The moment or truth the text describes, or constitutes a trace of, needs to be re/constructed	
	Hebrew term for that way of reading: Pshat		Hebrew terms for that way of reading: Pshat and Drash	Hebrew term for that way of reading: Drash	
Type of position (philosophically)	Secular	Orthodox	Experiential/existential phenomenological, narrative, historical, dialogical	A-historical, Positivist, Idealist,	Romantic, Literary, Ethical
A priori attitude about what to do with the text	Reject	Accept	Read in order to enter into dialogue with the text, in order to better live in dialogue with God in one's life	Reveal the light it sheds on the human condition and archetypal situations or experiences	Look for meaning
What is the nature of the text?	The text is archaic, based on lies or child-like misapprehensions	The text is an accurate and straightforward report	- An invitation to enter the 'stage' which the text evokes - A way to retrieve or access past theophanies - A way to re-actualize the memory of past dialogues with God	A portrayal of archetypal events, tensions, truths that are and have always been part of human life. Whether or not based on true events, the text tells us not (merely) what happened, but what always happens.	The fact that the text can speak to us today across time and place - using the devices of characterization, plot, symbol, metaphor and narrative (etc.) - shows that it is great literature.
Disciplines required to understand the text	None	None	Anthropology, History, Psychology, Linguistics, Critical Theory	Psychology, Literary Theory	Literary Theory
Does the text contain a normative content?	No	Yes	The normative content is that we must seek our own ultimate truth. The subjective is given objective significance.	Yes, if it can be unearthed.	No, only a content that may speak to us and our community

of the likes of Buber and Heschel, resonates with French philosopher Roland Barthes, who tells us that to read a text is necessarily an interactive, collaborative enterprise:

The Text² is largely a score of this type: it asks the reader for an active collaboration. This is a great innovation, because it compels us to ask “who *executes* the work?” (a question raised by Mallarme, who wanted the audience to *produce* the book). Today only the critic *executes* the work (in both senses). The reduction of reading to consumption is obviously responsible for the “boredom” that many people feel when confronting the modern (“unreadable”) text, or the avant-garde movie

or painting: to suffer from boredom means that one cannot produce the text, play it, open it out, *make it go* (Barthes R., 1971).

Caspi's approach is one that helps us "make Judaism go" through combining the insights and methods of the academic disciplines with a deeply religious gestalt.

Future possible developments for Caspi's model in Israeli Academia

We decided to write this article after personally experiencing Caspi's workshop model. Indeed, as in the above testimonies, we felt that the program offered new insights into the human condition and our own lives. Furthermore, the program allows and encourages groups to continue afterwards as small support groups, believing that the group has the wisdom to help the individual in areas where he or she is blind to his/her idols, his/her unnecessary sacrifices, and most importantly, to God.

It would be a daring but positive decision for academic institutions to incorporate the teaching of Caspi's approach as a model of pastoral counseling. In the United States, such programs are on the rise. In an AAPC commissioned study it was found that of people seeking counseling for a serious problem, more said they would prefer to see a religious counselor (29 percent) than a psychiatrist (27), psychologist (17) or family doctor (13) (Buckholtz, 2005). Members of the therapy mainstream appear to be taking notice: one of the American Psychological Association's best-selling books is "Integrating Spirituality into Treatment: Resources for Practitioners," published in 1999 (Buckholtz, 2005).

The integration of this approach into Israeli academia could create a small yet important contribution for the possibility of Jewish renewal in the deepest sense. Still, many difficulties are on the way. Pastoral counseling is legitimate in the United States, but virtually unknown in Israel. Health care professionals in Israel, who have not experienced the program personally, may be threatened by a model that bravely questions myths and assumptions that have been fostered for more than a century since the Freudian revolution.

Bibliography

- Barthes, R., *"From work to text", Image, Music, Text*, Fontana Press, London, 1971, p. 80.
- Buber, M., *Between Man and Man*, Collins, Great Britain, (1979), p. 73.
- Moses: *The Revelation and the Covenant*, Harper Torchbook, USA, 1958, p. 4-5. First published as Moses in 1946.
- Caspi, Y., *Lidrosh Elohim*. Yediot Aharonot Press, Israel, 2001, (Hebrew)
- Heschel, A., *Between God and Man*, The Free Press, USA, 1959, p. 248.
- The Prophets, *Harper and Row*, New York and Evanston, USA, 1962, p.10.
- Hunsinger, D., *Theology and Pastoral Counseling: A New Interdisciplinary Approach*. Eerdmans, USA, 1995.
- Maslow, A., *Religions, Values, and Peak Experiences*, The Viking Press. Published by Penguin Books Limited, USA, 1970.
- Meltzer, D., *The Kleinian Development*, Karnac Books, NY, USA, 1998.
- Mendes-Flohr, Paul, , "Jewish Scholarship as a Vocation", in Alfred L. Ivry, Elliot

R. Wolfson & Allan Arkush, *Perspectives on Jewish Thought and Mysticism: Proceedings of the International Conference held by The Institute of Jewish Studies, University College London, 1994, in Celebration of its Fortieth Anniversary*: Harwood Academic Publishers, Australia, 1998.

Rotenberg, M., *Dialogue With Deviance: The Hasidic Ethic and the Theory of Social Contraction*. University of Amherst Press, USA, 1993.

Yerushalmi, Y. H., *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*. University of Washington Press, USA, 1982.

Studies within a volume

Bar Shalom, Y., "The Gvanim Program in Three Teacher Colleges." In Zisenwine (ed.), *New trends in Jewish Education*. School of Education, Tel Aviv University, Israel, 2007 (Hebrew).

Kopelowitz, E, Bar Shalom, Y., "What Type of Consensus is Required to Train Educators on an Ambiguous Topic? The Case of 'Jewish Peoplehood Education' in Israel." Ami Bouganim (ed.), *Education and Training*, Eliner Library, Israel, 2004.

Studies in periodicals

Bekerman, Z., & Silverman, M., "Are non-observant Israeli Jews Hebrew speaking 'Goyim'?", *Constructivist Cultural Perspectives*, Journal of Jewish Education, 63 (1&2), 1997, pp. 41-50.

Electronic materials

Levi-Barzilai, V., "Divine Intervention", Ha'Aretz article, <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/pages/ShArt.jhtml?itemNo=331628&contrassID=2&subContrassID=14&sbSubContrassID=0&listSrc=Y>, 2003

Other

Buckholtz, A. "Help From Above: In Times of Trouble, Growing Numbers of People Take Comfort in Faith-Based Therapy." *The Washington Post*, (Dec 6, 2005)

Notes:

1 It's very important to mention that this is an informal, enrichment, external program, not a classic academic training program (yet).

2 For Barthes, the term "text" means something akin to "cultural artifact," anything that, in the broadest sense of the term, can be "read" as in "interpreted" or "understood."

ZOLTÁN AMBRUS

Applying Alfred Adler's Principles And Ideas To Religious Studies

Abstract:

By the integrative value-like approach to the idea of God and to the function of religion, A. Adler's individual psychology provides religious studies with considerable axiological and praxiological footings. Filling individual and societal needs within the contemporary world, religion is constituted as an essential factor in the growth and development of the sense of community as a foundation of democratic cohabitation. Adlerian psychology puts forward a holistic-integrative approach to the human being that can be applied to the area of religious studies.

The re-shaping of the table of values and of the socialization and education systems is necessary in the context of the crisis of values and discouraging influences specific to the globalized world. Feelings of inferiority are unavoidable realities of this world and, by avoiding becoming their victim and making use of a positive compensating effort, humans can convert them into facts of culture. We have a general responsibility to develop the innate potentiality of the community feeling, and to encourage it to manifest itself into desirable social behaviors.

1. The idea of God in Alfred Adler's conception

As an axiological psychology, Adler's individual psychology makes numerous references to religion and to the concept of God. We believe that, within religious studies, a methodical-scientific importance is given to the understanding and appreciation of the idea of God as well as to the significant importance this idea has for mankind, from the perspective of Adler's psychology.

In their systematic presentation of Adler's works, H. L. Ansbacher and R. R. Ansbacher (1993/1956, p. 460) state that God can be recognized and manifest only within a thinking process that moves toward the quality of height and greatness. Also, God can be evident only within feelings that experience greatness as a redemption from

Zoltán Ambrus

Ph. D.,
Associate
Professor,
Sapientia
University
of Cluj,
Romania,
and The
Faculty of

Technical and Social Sciences,
Miercurea Ciuc, Romania



Author of the books:

The Moral-Civic Education in Schools in the Context of Globalization and Transition (2004), Educational Programs: Group Activities and Methods Used for the Formation of the Students' Morality and Civism (2004), The Psychology of Managerial and Organizational Communication (2004), The Psychopedagogy of Encouragement. Value-like and Actional Perspectives (2005).

Email: z_ambrus@yahoo.com

Key words:

community feeling, function of religion, social equality, democratic practice, religion for democracy, holistic perspective

oppressing tensions and feelings of inferiority.

Starting with the principle that claims that, in the view of individual psychology, aim is the essence of life, mankind aspires to the remote goal of perfection understood as the right direction to be followed in spite of the fact that it cannot be reached. Thus, God, as the ultimate aim of mankind, indicates the way to be followed, attuning his efforts in the direction of the authentic purpose. Within this value-like approach, man's endeavor to gain force from the divine aim springs from a constant feeling of insecurity and inferiority.

As Adler (1938/1933) notices in his synthesis work about the sense of life, mankind's ultimate representation is constituted by the idea of God, which embodies the supreme purpose of perfection. Every human being, due to his/her own personal lifestyle, represents God in a different way, and the image created in this manner is certainly not the same as this "perfection principle." Instead, s/he is just "the concrete successful variant of the perfection target" (p. 194). We may conclude that the most significant step in the development of a human being was made when s/he realized that, by unification with God and avoidance of evil, s/he can become better and come closer to the desired perfection.

2. Religion and individual and societal needs

Researching life's significance, Adler (1958/1931) states that the meaning of life is serving mankind as a whole by developing the sense of community and love between people. The development and strengthening of the sense of community, of the feeling of solidarity and closeness between human beings are related to the essence of religion.

The sense of community, which relies on the individual's need of belonging, represents an inviolable constituent of human nature, an innate disposition that needs to be encouraged, developed, and cultivated. Individual psychology as a social science approaches this matter in a scientific manner, promoting a set of principles and methods aiming to the same purpose, namely, developing cooperation and solidarity among people, encouraging the individual to act and contribute to the welfare of humanity.

The individual's needs as a social being can be filled only within the group, and successful social integration requires social-emotional stimulation and social-emotional answers. Such stimulation, frequently labeled "spiritual," has more than a divine connotation, as it involves the highest intellectual and moral aspirations that the human being is capable of having (R. Dreikurs, 2000/1971, p. 216).

Analyzing the function of religion, R. Dreikurs (2000/1971), a close colleague of Adler, notices that, in the course of human history, religion has proved to be the most significant instrument to fill man's spiritual needs. Religious experience has provided man with strong feelings of cohesion and belonging. Through religion, man has succeeded in placing himself above the hardships of every-day life, and thus to direct his attention towards a wider life perspective.

Religion also has a crucial importance in social practice, since religious regulations have a significant influence on the thoughts and actions of community members. Nowadays, in the context of a more comprehensive globalization defined by strong competition and selfish individualism, religion gains a meaningful importance.

The contemporary world lacks solidarity and authentic social interest. Religious studies can and must fully contribute to the development of "the intellectual and moral

solidarity of mankind" proclaimed by the UNESCO Constitution. They should also add to the promotion of common values that would lay the foundations for a new humanism, for the development of the feeling of a common destiny. This involves knowledge and respect for the culture and spiritual values of different civilizations (Delors et al., 2000, p. 37).

According to Adler (1933), the fact that a large number of people oppose religion is not due to the essential nature of religion. Instead, it is due to the contradictions between the actions of the religious power structures and their essential nature, and probably to frequent abuse.

Thus, within the circumstances of a lesser influence of organized religion, without an orientation to some values, many people feel lost, lacking purpose in life. Disagreeing with the values of western culture, some people direct their attention towards oriental religions, in search of a community feeling and in order to fill their need for new religious experiences. Others take refuge in religion without altering their behaviors in a productive way, without taking personal responsibility for their own actions. As Adler (1946/1927) notices, "they approach their God just as they approach their fellowmen, complainingly, whining, yet never lifting a hand to help themselves or better their circumstances. Cooperation, they feel, is an obligation only for others."

This is why religious studies must take into consideration both the specific needs of democracy as a functional social equality and the wider aspects of religious experience. Moreover, considering the fact that religion has changed its meaning and content during the history of cultures, every cultural epoch having its specific religion, historical perspective becomes necessary. Within this context, we can state that "the cultural epoch of democracy" must also find its own religious expression (R. Dreikurs, 2000/1971, p. 220).

3. Religion and democracy

In Adler's individual psychology, democracy is understood as social interest in action, assuming functional inter-personal equality (T. B. Beames, 1992/1984). In his opinion, democracy means acknowledgement of the equal value of all human beings, as an axiological basis for providing the human being's fundamental rights. In this respect, all citizens have the intangible but universal right to personal dignity.

Many times, the concept of democracy is exported to different parts of the world, without a proper explanation of what democracy actually represents. Many people believe that democracy gives them the freedom to do whatever they want, as long as they don't adversely affect other people's freedom.

Acting in the spirit of democracy involves the forming of a democratic personality by encouraging the free development of each person's belief system and set of values, laying the foundations for the constructive path of life, all in an atmosphere of democratic dialogue. Within this framework of democratic practice, tolerance, respect for personal dignity, social equality, and mutual support should not remain mere concepts, but must be authentic democratic experiences in the spirit of a plurality of values (Z. Ambrus, 2004a, p. 29).

The transition to a democratic system relying on the principles of liberal democracy as well as the development of a pluralist civil society requires a systematic promotion of democratic values and practices in daily life. In experiencing authentic democrat-

ic practice in an encouraging climate, citizens must be allowed to interpret the particular events and actions that have a decisive influence on their future and on the future of the entire society. They should be allowed to build the conviction that they can influence the quality of their own lives and bear considerable responsibility for them.

Within the frameworks of Adler's psychology, man is not perceived as a victim of internal (psychological) or external (social-economic) conditions. Instead, man is seen as an agent responsible for his own as well as mankind's destiny. Through "the creative ego," every human being builds his own life, dealing with the fundamental matters of life that relate to work, inter-personal relationships, and community life. Each and every one of us is the master of his actions, and by interpreting life as cooperation between autonomous individuals, one will fully contribute to the democratic progress of the world (Adler, 1958/1931, p. 24).

At the same time, every one of us is entitled to define democracy in his/her own manner, according to his/her lifestyle. Today many people declare themselves democratic, although they strongly disagree with any concept of social equality.

As R. Dreikurs (2000/1971, p. 198) notes, the concept of equal rights is generally accepted, whereas assuming the equal value of all people generates controversial reactions. Many people strongly believe that an equality of values, and thus real democracy, is an impossible objective, since such equality has never existed in the history of mankind. Still, early Christians and many other religious groups have practiced this human equality.

R. Dreikurs (2000/1971, p. 219) pleads for a religion for democracy. In this conception, religion must be, first and foremost, humanist, focusing on man's problems and encouraging the use of internal forces to the benefit of individual and community. Also, religion must promote the empirical search for truth, encouraging scientific research based on an ethics which is pre-eminently religious. Personal ambition, the sense of justice, the sense of duty, conformity, and perfectionism are no longer sufficient for being good and successful. Living in peace and harmony with others and with oneself, enthusiasm, empathic understanding, friendly attitude, compassion, solidarity with those in need, mutual support, feelings of belonging, involvement, and courage constitute essential components of this moral code.

The religious symbols and rituals must be sources that encourage pro-active and pro-social behaviors and stimulate mutual help and devotion to the welfare of mankind.

4. The holistic perspective of man – a value-like foundation in approaching the human matter

Considering the consequences of the contemporary world, defined by complexity, universality, and globalization, it is necessary to adopt a humanist and holistic-integrative approach to all spheres of human activity, including religious studies. According to the holistic-integrative conceptions of Adler and to the principles of humanist psychology promoted by A. Maslow and C. Rogers, the human being is:

- a whole in-dividuuus entity, capable of holistic knowledge (cognitive, emotional, and volitional), due to the human brain's holistic-integrative tendency (the use of both brain hemispheres) (B. Wurtz, cf. C. Cucos, 1996);
- a social being, with an innate need of belonging that transforms the community feeling (social interest, sense of solidarity) into an evaluating life attitude and an

important indicator of the individual's mental health;

- an equal being, of similar value to his fellows, having the same rights to self-determination and human dignity (according to Adler, social equality is "the iron logic" of the democratic community);
- an goal-oriented entity, human behavior having conscious and unconscious, close and distant objectives that are individually structured in a so-called lifestyle, defined as one's own way of living, shaped by one's decisions and responsibilities;
- an individuality responsible for its self-achievement, for self determination and its own destiny. Despite his weakness and imperfection, the human being is not a victim, since he can choose his attitude and behaviors in any circumstances, according to one's individual system of values.

5. The discouraging effects of the crisis of values

The alarming increase of dissocial and antisocial subcultures and of the proportion of individuals with counterproductive behaviors who are "socialized" in inactive, destructive, or self-destructive directions, is present in the contemporary world in a discouraging climate induced by the deep crisis of values. Traditional institutions, such as, family, school, or church, are losing their roles as values mediators, and are being replaced by the public opinion shaped by a media that promotes money, success, and power as exclusive values (Z. Ambrus, 2005, p.9).

Due to discouragement and growing resignation, the individual often experiences deep feelings of inability to deal with life matters, showing incapacity and incompetence when faced with hardships. The present world of ultra rapid changes, characterized by the ruthless battle for power, by immorality, competition, selfishness, cynicism, and brutality, frequently produces a marked growth of feelings of inferiority and uncertainty, of crisis of identity followed by anger reactions, destructive behaviors, and acts of vandalism. The increasing manifestation of such undesired and extremely harmful phenomena prove that a considerable number of persons, even young ones, feel deeply discouraged and are not prepared to deal with the changes and challenges of the contemporary world.

This undesirable psycho-behavioral progression is unavoidable, especially with youth, as long as society does not provide its members with the joy and safety of belonging to a community with human equality and respect for dignity and emotional warmth. In fact, those who turn to delinquency need inter-human relationships and wish to belong to a community, but paradoxically they refuse to have productive interactions and to cooperate with others. Organized violence fills this emptiness by giving to them the opportunity to find their own place among others, to gain in importance within a social group, and to enjoy its support and security.

Thus, these individuals feel entitled to take revenge on this indifferent and insensitive world that promotes exclusion, discrimination, humiliation of human dignity, and brutal violence, and even feel that they have a right to destroy it. Focusing only on the "magic," on the exclusive attraction of immediate experience, makes violence, destruction, and terrorism become for some people a "compensation" for these destructive negative feelings, and represents a kind of completely false and destructive religious feeling.

In the context of a deep political and ethical crisis of the globalized world, a job is no longer the source of professional identity, of esteem, or of stable relationships. On the contrary, it is transformed into a source of tensions, discouragement, and dissatisfaction.

tion, exerting a negative influence on the family and on community life.

Liberal democratic education is frequently confronted with unlimited tolerance, with a lack of norms, and with a general moral relativism that, in fact, emphasizes young people's conflicts and dilemmas, leading to maladapted behaviors. As a behavioral manifestation of youth discouragement, deviance is also increased by a significant reduction of family influence in shaping a child's social behavior. Changing family lifestyle, hardships in providing for basic needs, and the increasing divorce rate and rate of abandonment make an enormous contribution towards the weakening or even to the disappearance of traditional family and educational values (Z. Ambrus, 2004a).

Also, secondary socialization influences, exterior to educational institutions (written and electronic media, cinema, associations, clubs, religious sects, civic organizations, etc.), often emphasize material values and false values in place of the authentic humanist ones. As a consequence, youth adopt a variety of undesirable behaviors. In this context of rejection of authentic humanist values, it is obvious that individual estrangement and discouragement will continue to grow and the humanity crisis will worsen.

6. The feeling of inferiority and the effort of compensation

In Adler's psychology, feelings of inferiority are generated by negative psychodynamics, representing erroneous self-evaluations that are manifest in experiencing, more or less intensely, imperfection, deficiency, weakness, uncertainty, frustration, or a low valorization of the self. Feelings of inferiority are universal, so they can be viewed as normal, natural for the human condition. According to Adler (1958/1931, p. 49), "it seems that our entire human culture relies on feelings of inferiority." Thus, feelings of inferiority represent a challenge, an opportunity, even a propulsive force that stimulates the individual to productive self-fulfillment.

At the same time, feelings of inferiority constitute a driving force to some of the most varied forms of undesirable, antisocial behavior. The destructive impulses directed against the community are reduced and even disappear when feelings of inferiority are diminished and the individual learns to appreciate his own values (E. D. Ferguson, 1999/1984).

R. Dreikurs (1989/1953, p. 23) draws attention to the fact that neither the absence nor the presence of feelings of inferiority indicate the individual's real value. Thus, many people who are extremely valuable and accomplish important achievements experience deep feelings of inferiority. On the other hand, it is possible that no trace of feelings of inferiority will be found among persons with mental disabilities. Feelings of inferiority can be perceived as "erroneous feelings" or "prejudice" and occur in a relational environment that favors their appearance and maintenance, thus generating a faulty appreciation of oneself.

Reaching the maturity of his theoretical formulations, Adler admits that, if young people would be raised in a cooperative and egalitarian climate and not in one driven by competition and vertical ambitions, feelings of inferiority would be avoidable. These sentiments would be replaced with those of belonging, of holding a secure and appreciated position within the group, of conferring on oneself personal value and importance.

One may distinguish between three main types of feelings of inferiority. First, humans suffer from the fact that they realize their biological inferiority, in the dangerous context of the forces of nature. Second, acknowledging how small they are in the

universe, humans have “enriched” themselves with feelings of cosmic inferiority, for which they try to compensate through religion, philosophy, and arts, longing for eternity and perfection, for an alliance with the supreme transcendental force. These two types of feelings of inferiority influence humanity as a whole and stimulate all humanity to create and diversify culture. Third, people are affected, probably in the most painful manner, by feelings of social inferiority. Unlike the other two types of feelings of inferiority, which bring the individual closer to other human beings, resulting in solidarity, the feeling of social inferiority stimulates the individual, turns him against others, and drives him to avenge the humiliation of his personal dignity.

Due to the fact that relationships of superiority-inferiority and competition are promoted in all spheres of life, the feeling of social inferiority will influence the development of the community feeling, as a sense of human solidarity, and, implicitly, the individual's mental health. Thus, one cannot develop feelings of belonging and pro-social sentiments if one feels s/he is despised, rejected, left aside, or relegated to a position of inferiority.

Often, individuals cannot defeat or compensate for their feelings of inferiority due to a complete lack of trust in their own abilities. De-motivated and deeply discouraged, they give in to resignation, experiencing an inferiority complex as a pathological form of the feeling of inferiority. Perceived subjectively as a feeling of incapacity and a depressing and paralyzing inability, the inferiority complex represents the “dead end” to any psychological development. Resigned, with the deep conviction of a lack of any personal value, the individual does not hide his deficiencies and imperfections. Instead, he starts to openly prove his insufficiency, the “deficiency,” as a non-stimulating and de-motivating pretext, isolating himself from life's realities, from any collective activity and inter-human relations.

Adler writes (1995/1933, p. 83) that the inferiority complex as a permanent manifestation and perpetuation of the consequences of the feeling of inferiority is explained by the severe lack of the feeling of social community. Whereas the feelings of inferiority lead from one aspect of the law of compensation to the other, by useful, constructive ways (positive compensation) or useless, disruptive ways (negative compensation), the inferiority complex represents a passive attitude that clearly shows the individual's isolation in a depressive state. Still, we believe that the inferiority complex is not fatal, an “incurable disease.” Instead, we think that it can be defeated, overcome if the feelings of inferiority that it incorporates are constructively, systematically, and skillfully modified.

Compensation has a universal character, viewed as a strong ascending impulse or as an impulse of elevation from a disadvantaging unfavorable position of inferiority to a profitable, favorable position of superiority. We all wish to overcome the hardships of life and strive to reach an aim that will make us feel strong, important, and complete. This ascending defeating psycho-dynamics of overcoming the feelings of inferiority starts in early childhood and continues throughout our lives.

7. The development of the sense of community – a premise for democratic cohabitation and for individual mental health

The main points in Adler's theory are not the feeling of inferiority and its compensation, as many believe. Instead, its focus was the sense of community that, in Adler's psychology, is not a mere feeling, but an evaluative attitude towards life, the fundamen-

tal process by which the individual constructively achieves his or her potentialities.

The sense of community develops due to the human being's need to belong to a social community that would give him the identity and quality of a social being. This complex psycho-social equipment involves cognitive processes, emotional attitudes, and feelings with respect to the individual's place in a community. Every human being has an innate potential for developing this feeling for and with the community (E.D. Ferguson, 1999/1984, p. 5).

The true sense of community involves the feelings of sharing, of reciprocity, and of admitting the fact that being a member of the group is important for the welfare of the community. One can assume that the sense of community represents an index of adaptation and mental health; thus, the more developed the sense of community, the lesser the individual's feelings of inferiority, alienation, and isolation (Z. Ambrus, 2004b, p. 25).

The sense of community or the social sense is an innate potentiality that, similarly to the character features that depend on it, comes to life, becoming a general evaluative attitude only in a social context, within the framework of inter-human relations. As an authentic value, the sense of community is manifest in the emphatic attitude, explained in a plastic formulation by "seeing with the other's eyes, hearing with the other's ears, and feeling with the other's heart."

Mention should be made of the fact that both the concept of community and that of a sense of community may be abused, for instance in demagogic rhetoric the other's sense of community is always appealed to. That is why a correct and profound understanding of these concepts helps us avoid this sort of misuse (H. L. Ansbacher, R. R, Ansbacher, 1993/1956, p. 140).

Developing the sense of community in school and encouraging community spirit with pro-social group activities contribute to preparing youth to deal with the three main matters in life, namely: work and professional career, couple relationships and love, and friendship and integration in community life (Adler, 1996/1929). Dealing with these life matters from the perspective of the sense of community gives to Adler's theory an axiological and praxiological content, with important significations for the young generation's moral socialization and mental hygiene. The development of social feelings, of social-emotional abilities, represents the foundation for both productive social behavior and for the individual's mental health, preparing him/her for "optimal experiences" that can take place only within a social context (M. Csikszentmihalyi, 1991).

Encouraging a child's social feeling of belonging supports the development of a self-image built around self-value, seen as a feeling of competence and being useful. Thus, the attitude towards others will be characterized directly by trust, decency, and cooperation. The child develops the feeling of his own identity only in the context of social life.

Developing the sense of social equality represents an opportunity to demonstrate the sense of community and, as a consequence, of democratic life. Equality does not mean uniformity; instead, individuals are recognized as unique, each with an unmistakable and infinite interior worth, and have the universal right to be treated with dignity and respect.

Youth will develop their capacity to cooperate only if they feel that, despite existing differences, they are not fundamentally different from others, have a similar social value as equal human beings, and a similar need of belonging. That is why their capacity to cooperate can be seen as a measure of the development of the sense of communi-

ty. When an individual has the conviction that one belongs to the community, aiming for cooperation and contributing to its welfare, one has a high level of self-esteem and courage. Thus, the sense of community, together with a corresponding level of self appreciation, gives him the courage to experience new things, to deal with weighty matters of life, to interact with others, to work in teams, and to focus on the essential aspects of everyday life.

Self esteem and the sense of personal worth can be understood as derivatives of the sense of community. Thus, when a person cooperates for the welfare of others, this strengthens one's self esteem. When s/he is discouraged because of life's hardships, the sense of community will lead him/her to adopt behaviors that will very probably help him/her develop trust in one's own abilities. This process is self-reinforcing: if, initially, the person is certain of his/her position within the group, this conviction leads to self-trust and the development of the sense of community. If, later on, the person is faced with discouraging experiences, the high level of sense of community will enable him/her to handle the hardships more successfully, which will help him/her regain trust in his/her own abilities and reshape the feeling of personal and social competence.

The sense of community, as social interest, presents a perspective that allows the individual to act bravely in a great variety of life situations and challenges. When the individual is not interested solely in defending and proving his own status, he becomes "free" to appreciate and to interpret much more objectively a great variety of life situations and to learn from a multitude of experiences. In Adler's opinion, cooperation happens both in relationship with other human beings, at an inter-personal level, as well as in life in general (E. D. Ferguson, 1999/1984).

We conclude that the sense of community does not guarantee success in life or that all obstacles will be easily overcome; yet, the most consistent courage required in life comes from the orientation towards community, from the social feeling, and ensures productive social behaviors throughout life.

Bibliography

Adler, A., (1933), *Religion und Individualpsychologie*. In: E. Jahn und A. Adler, *Religion und Individualpsychologie; eine prinzipielle Auseinandersetzung über Menschenführung*, Rolf Passer, Vienna, Leipzig, pp. 58-92

Adler, A., (1938/1933), *Social Interest: a Challenge to Mankind*, Faber & Faber Ltd., London (Translated from *Der Sinn des Lebens*, 1933)

Adler, A., (1946/1927), *Understanding Human Nature*, Greenberg: Publisher, New York

Adler, A., (1958/1931), *What Life Should Mean to You*, Alan Porter (Ed.), Capricorn Books, G.P. Putnam's Sons, New York

Adler, A., (1995/1933), *The Meaning of Life*, IRI Publishing House, București

Adler, A., (1996/1929), *Individualpsychologie in der Schule. Vorlesungen für Lehrer und Erzieher*, Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, Frankfurt am Main

Ambrus, Z., (2004a), *The Moral-Civic Education in Schools in the Context of Globalization and Transition*, Cluj University Press, Cluj

Ambrus, Z., (2004b), *Educational Programs: Group Activities and Methods used for the Formation of Students' Morality and Civism*, Cluj University Press, Cluj

Ambrus, Z., (2005), *The Psychopedagogy of Encouragement. Value-like and*

Actional Perspectives, Science Book Publishing House, Cluj

Ansbacher, H.L., Ansbacher, R.R., (1993/1956), *The Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler. A Systematic Presentation in Selections from his Writings*, Harper Torchbooks, Harper & Row Publishers, New York, Hagerstown, San Francisco, London

Beames, T.B., (1992/1984), *A Student's Glossary of Adlerian Terminology*, Second Edition, Photon Communications, Chicago, IL

Csikszentmihalyi, M., (1991), *Flow. The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, Harper Perennial, New York

Cucoş, C., (1996), *Pedagogy*, Polirom Publishing House, Iaşi

Delors, J., (coord.), (2000), *The Inner Treasure. The UNESCO Report of the International Commission for Education in the 21st century*, Polirom Publishing House, Iaşi

Dreikurs, R., (1989/1953), *Fundamentals of Adlerian psychology*, Adler School of Professional Psychology, Chicago, IL

Dreikurs, R., (2000/1971), *Social Equality: The Challenge of Today*, Adler School of Professional Psychology, Chicago, IL

Ferguson, E.D., (1999/1984), *Adlerian Theory. An Introduction*, Adler School of Professional Psychology, Chicago, IL

ION CORDONEANU

Experience and hermeneutics in the history of religions – a hypothesis on Mircea Eliade's work

Abstract:

The aim of this study is to analyse the fundamentals of Eliade's view of the History of Religions, with a focus on the origins of this view, in the context of the criticism against the field of study corresponding to religious studies as they have developed over the last two centuries. The first part of the study briefly evaluates religious studies as to where it falls on a spectrum ranging from scientific objectivity to ideology, while the second part aims at developing the hypothesis according to which the principles of the study of religions are found in the notion of "experience," under the determinative influence of Nae Ionescu's lectures.

Ion Cordoneanu
Lecturer, Ph.D.,
„Dunărea de Jos” University
of Galați,
Romania
**Author of
the book:**

creație și întrupare (2006).

E-mail: theosisro@yahoo.com



Key words:

Mircea Eliade, Nae Ionescu, religious fact, experience, hermeneutics, ideology, religious phenomena

Introduction: the public dimension of the History of Religions research in Romania

In Romania, the debate over contemporary religious phenomena acquired a significant reverberation on the public level as a result of the *European Congress of History of Religions* (ECHR) held in Bucharest, September twentieth through twenty third, 2006. Under the patronage of the Romanian presidency and organized by *The Romanian History of Religions Association*, *The European History of Religions Association*, and *The International History of Religions Association*, the purpose of the event was to reflect the effort of knowing our own religious dimensions, in a country in which, for almost half a century, totalitarian ideology had left its mark upon the religious manifestations of the Romanian people.

The most important project that came to light at this congress was the idea of founding a university department and a research institute in this field. Andrei Oișteanu, one of the initiators of this event, emphasized the fact that founding an institution on its own with a view to teach History of Religions is a necessity because, due to intercultural conflicts, the topic of religions is forever contemporary. The presidency has considered it necessary to reanalyse the role of the History of Religions in Romanian schools and universities.

The present event, of great international resonance, reminds us of a trend from the interwar period, when the last generation of intellectuals was about to be born, before

Romania was annexed to the communist block. More than 80 years ago, Nae Ionescu*, the spiritual mentor of the entire generation to which Mircea Eliade belonged, wrote: "Never since the establishment of the modern Romanian state have the public life and the spiritual atmosphere of this country been more honestly and openly interested in the religious problems than today."¹ Then as well as now – though in different contexts, with different actors, and for different reasons – the political factor was involved in promoting a project in which had to be rethought, on the level of public research and education strategy, the impact of religious subjects and their role in the intellectual debate. The interwar context speaks to us about how a young man like Mircea Eliade was to become a great scholar in the field of History of Religions.

The aim of this text is to emphasize the fundamentals of the History of Religions in Mircea Eliade's view, with an accent on the manner in which the Romanian scholar's perspective came into being, and in interaction with the criticism generated by certain scholars in the field of religious studies as it took shape in the second half of the 19th century and continued to develop in the 20th century.

I. "Religious studies" between scientific objectivity and ideology

One of the theses of the critics states that religious studies is a field of study that tries to build a decontextualized and ahistorical phenomenon that is separated from the problems of power.² The fundamental concept that is responsible for placing religious studies within the Western Christian assumptions about God and salvation (even when not in a strictly confessional sense) is that of a transcendent intelligent being that gives purpose and meaning to human history. Ever since Max Mueller, the founding fathers of *religionswissenschaft* have promoted, even without stating doctrinaire Christianity, a kind of ecumenical theology disguised as a scientific study of religions or as a phenomenology of religion.³ We refer to classic authors whose contributions to the History of Religions has been determinative: Rudolf Otto⁴, Nathan Soderblom⁵, Gerardus Van der Leeuw⁶, Joachim Wach, Joseph M. Kitagawa (influenced by Wach), et al. Wach himself states in his article "The Meaning and Task of the History of Religions" (1935) that the science of religions is not purely academic, its purpose being that of widening and deepening the meaning of the numinous, enhancing faith, and encouraging a new and comprehensive experience of what religion is and means.

Mircea Eliade is one of the most influential theoreticians in the modern history of religious studies. From the Romanian scholar's point of view the History of Religions belongs with the humanistic sciences and not with the theological or political fields of study. Those who criticized Eliade's methodological principles state that behind this methodology stand theological and ontological presuppositions about a transcendent reality. What is perceived as sacred in a hierophany proves the existence of primordial ontology characterized by Eliade in Parmenidean (the real is atemporal), Platonic (the archetypes), or Indian terms (the temporal experience is atemporal).⁷ Even Eliade's antireductionism is understood as an attempt to ideologize religious studies, under the pretext that antireductionists, together with reductionists, make use of the same reference specific to Judeo-Christian mono-theologism.⁸

However, they all notice that Eliade, when defining religion in terms of believing in the transcendent, makes use of the presupposition of a transcendent ontology that provides general references for all life forms that could be characterized as religious.⁹ One

of the Eliade's critics, Ninian Smart,¹⁰ belongs to the tradition of comparative religion as it was developed by authors like Mueller, Van der Leeuw, and Otto. Along this line of thought, N. Smart attempts to build the principle according to which religion cannot be reduced to theology or sociology, and in the context of these analyses he distancing himself from Eliade. The academic study of religions intended to eliminate any theological association and to assume scientific objectivity; hence Smart's critique of Eliade's perspective as being too dependent on the ontology of the transcendent.¹¹

At the heart of this criticism there lies the abolition of what commentators call the modern myth of a religion whose content, briefly put, is the following: there is an ultimate reality that we call either God or The Transcendent, who, ontologically speaking, is outside the world but who bestows significance upon human relations, history, and sufferance. This unconditioned reality makes itself known through various types of experience, and is refracted by various types of language, symbols, and culture. Today, university departments, academic curricula, and scientific publications contribute to the perpetuation of this myth.

II. The Fundamentals of Eliade's view of religion: a hypothesis

When Eliade was admitted into college, the aura of the metaphysics professor, Nae Ionescu, was becoming more and more visible among the young students. The encounter with this Socratic personality has been perceived in different ways. Thus, Mircea Vulcănescu describes the influence Ionescu had on him personally in the following terms: "Nae Ionescu was standing in front of us, ready, confessing an intransigent Christianity, as old as the hills, a monk-like Christianity, firm on its radical and realistic positions, born from the genuine spirit of fathers' traditions."¹² To Vulcănescu, Ionescu plays the role of a catalyst of the religious experience of the generation of the '30s, yet not of any religious experience other than that of orthodox Christianity: "in the sense of the regeneration of the orthodoxy within us." He is seen more like an avva in the Skete desert, in the sense of Eastern mysticism, rather than a Socrates of philosophy; he is more a teacher of freedom who takes his apprentices out of the religious crisis and puts them in the Church, rather than a "sickener" – in Constantin Noica's terms – whose mission is to transmit crises out of whose confrontations the spiritual maturity would rise.

Eliade's perception is much different, or at least much more nuanced. Professor Carl Schmidt, who Eliade meets in Berlin in 1942, reminds him of the Ionescu. What impresses him in Schmidt is "his metaphysical courage, his nonconformism, the vastness of his vision."¹³ On reading Ortega y Gasset, Eliade finds Ionescu in a meditation upon the human condition: "I don't think there is a more appropriate image of life than that of a shipwreck". Eliade's comment reveals nothing Christian, not even a mystic accent or shiver of holiness in Ionescu's personality: "I remember that the same image obsessed Nae Ionescu during the last years and in his last lectures. And not in the sense of a catastrophic event but of the human condition in general: man is, from the very beginning, a fallen being; he struggles to survive, to last and, especially, to save himself spiritually."¹⁴ Here, Eliade embraces entirely the significance of metaphysics promoted by Ionescu,¹⁵ his mentor, from whose lectures on metaphysics Eliade took the meaning of spiritual salvation. An atypical figure in the academic world, by excellence non-academic, the professor of metaphysics would start his inaugural lecture at the university by speaking of the epistemological function of love. Thus, the academic image of Ionescu

would be the more surprising as, during the lecture on metaphysics, he would speak of “redemption,” “holiness,” “orthodoxy,” and “heresy,” diverting from the tradition of idealism and positivism.

Nae Ionescu probably plays the most important role in Eliade's intellectual growth, more important than reading those authors whose theses in the field of religions the future scholar will embrace and write about.¹⁶ So powerful was the connection that ten days after the professor's death, Eliade sees him in his dream entering the room smiling and saying to him: “See, Mircea, the entire mystery is here, open a door and go through the other side” (a revelation that has nothing particularly theological or Christian in it).¹⁷ We cannot say whether Eliade conferred a religious significance to the “mystery” of his leaving the country only a few weeks after Nae Ionescu died in 1940. But it is significant that in his journal (August 28, 1959) the mentor's death is evoked in connection to obtaining freedom.

What the budding scholar will learn from his metaphysics professor is the importance of experience, rather than that of doctrine or of faith. Under the influence of Ionescu's metaphysical view, Eliade will become preoccupied with the relation between human consciousness and religiousness, in precisely the terms used by Ionescu (“religious experience” and “religious act,” rather than “faith”).¹⁸ Eliade will be seduced, under the influence of Ionescu's teachings, by the idea that “religion, Christianity in this case, could have been an issue of individual experience rather than one of faith or *dogma*.”¹⁹ From the perspective of this mystical philosophy of experience, Eliade will become preoccupied with the history of religions. His preoccupation with Christianity is expressed in specific terms: it is a religion of heroism and of the struggle of the individual, not of divine grace, the Christian *experience*.

Although the notion of experience is articulated within the context of Eliade's preoccupation with Christianity, this notion is not tributary in any way to monotheistic ideology. He is interested in religious experience without having any religious crisis (as he confessed towards the end of his life). Approaching the religious phenomenon from the perspective of religious experience will determine the articulation of Eliade's antireductionist view.²⁰ The notion of experience is not conditioned by the Christian view, though it appears in the context of a philosophy that asked questions in Christian terms, as did Ionescu's philosophy. It could be analysed within the framework of phenomenology or of the 20th century hermeneutics. One of the intentions of Eliade's hermeneutics is to be understood as a possible technique of spiritual initiation of the interpreter. Thus, “hermeneutics becomes a spiritual technique, that is a way of changing the subject himself.”²¹

This enables us to explain the impact that Eliade, in his turn, had in his carrier as a professor at the University of Chicago in the midst of an age of post-war religious rebirth. Charles H. Long confessed that, “when he was talking about a ritual or a symbol, he would hardly ever use an expression like ... *and they thought that* ... He would rather say something like ... *and then the divinity appeared*. We were being guided in a field of a different discourse which was trying to bring in front of our eyes an imaginary world of religion.”²² Perhaps this method was a result of the type of hermeneutics that Eliade understood to apply to any authentic religious fact.

From this standpoint Eliade will sign the “Werblowski manifesto,” in which were expressed the five minimal preconditions of research in the field of religion. The idea that the History of Religions is a scientific field of study completely distinct from theology

and international politics was among these preconditions.²³ In the context of western de-provincialization, the field of religions is equally affected by the encounter among civilizations and cultural diversity. Eliade's preoccupation with methodology in a field facing the *new humanism* is manifest in defining History of Religions as a complete field of study and the *homo religious* as a *complete man*. It is only now that the employment of hermeneutics is admitted to be necessary, since even for the History of Religions synthesis goes through hermeneutics – a total hermeneutics because, as Eliade puts it in *The Quest*, it is called to decode and explain any type of encounter between man and the sacred, from prehistory up to the present, and it represents the way of analysis of religious facts as expression of various *religious experiences*. At the heart of this hermeneutics lies the task of searching for the meaning that makes intelligible the “experience” or the existential situation that generated a religious form. A hermeneutics centred on a double “experience,” of the one who lives religiously and of the interpreter who encompasses this feeling. Hermeneutics, like Ionescu's metaphysics, is thus “a fact of life, of feeling” – under no circumstances an ideological construct.

Therefore, I believe, on the basis of the Smartian definition of religion, and at the same time, under the influence of a *total hermeneutics*, based on the model promoted by Eliade, that the field of study of religion would clarify the criticism addressing the difficulties of founding or epistemic justification, refocusing on what constitutes the unique (non-ordinary) object of study: *religious experience*. I believe this because, no matter whose culture or history it might belong to, the *religious experience* recommends itself by its authentic, non-dissimulated, living nature, and the study of religion at the heart of which lie the founding experiences cannot but explain the human being in a more complete and profound manner.

Notes:

* Nae Ionescu was a major Christian-Orthodox thinker during the interwar period, who developed a church-oriented discourse. He is considered to be a major ideologist of the movement called *Mișcarea Legionară*.

1. Nae Ionescu, „Învățămintul teologic” (July 5, 1926), in *Roza vânturilor*, Bucharest, 1990, p. 19-20. Ionescu was considered a major Christian-Orthodox thinker during the interwar period, and developed a church-oriented discourse. He is known as a major ideologist of the extremist movement called *Mișcarea Legionară*.

2. Timothy Fitzgerald, *The Ideology of Religious Studies*, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. IX. This criticism is not new. I limit myself to only a few considerations in order to clarify my position at the beginning of the presentation. As in the case of Pettazzoni, for Eliade historicity conditions any religious creation; implicitly, any religion should be understood from a historical point of view. “By simply being in the presence of a hierophany, we are in the presence of historic documents” (*Tratat de istorie a religiilor*. Bucharest: Humanitas, 1992, p. 22). In Eliade's case, through the formula “*historia ancilla phenomenologiae*,” the conflict between historic determination and religious form is transcended. In the expression “the History of Religions” the emphasis is on religion. It is more important to do understand a thing than to make its history. In Eliade's case, “history offers materials for documentation, verification and essentializing. This is the direction of Mircea Eliade's view on the issue of the cooperation between history and

phenomenology" (Adrian Marino, *Hermeneutica lui Mircea Eliade*. Cluj: Editura Dacia, 1980, p. 258). Eliade himself protested against the accusation of ahistorism or antihistorism. In Marino's opinion, Eliade's attitude towards history is not reduced only to admitting the "conditioning" that history does, but there is also a second super-historical conditioning, without these two excluding or conditioning each other in any way.

3. Fitzgerald, *op. cit.*, pp. 34-35. Thus, the *a priori* natural abilities theory, according to which man is capable of recognizing the infinite in finite forms, does indeed represent a particular formulation of the general idea of natural religion, clearly different from the traditional Christian belief regarding God's incomprehensibility. In this way the absolute need for a historical revelation is stated. However, "we can see how permeated is his formulation with Judaeo-Christian monotheist assumptions, more so in some respects than some of the deists, and more so than Herder or Hegel" (p. 34).

4. This is true in the same way in which the "theology of religions" has a sustainable value as a contribution to the methodology of religious studies (cited by Philip C. Almond, *Rudolf Otto and Buddhism*, in Masfield and Wiebe, 1994, p. 69; see Fitzgerald, *op. cit.*, General Bibliography, p. 261).

5. Soderblom and Van der Leeuw were Christian theologians. Soderblom's interest is concentrated in the expression "man's will to believe" (cited by Sharpe, Eric J, *Comparative Religion: a History*, 1986, London, Duckworth, p. 226), which, in Fitzgerald's opinion, expresses in the highest degree and clearer than anything else the European philosophical and theological interest (Fitzgerald, *op. cit.*, p. 36).

6. Van der Leeuw always considered himself a theologian, before everything else, and his phenomenology is founded on Christian assumptions (Sharpe, *op. cit.*, p. 232-233).

7. Cited in Ninian Smart, *Beyond Eliade: The Future of Theory in Religion*, in "Numen", 25 (2), p. 171-183.

8. Thomas A. Idinopulos and Edward A. Yonan (editors), *Religion and Reductionism: Essay on Eliade, Segal, and the Challenge of the Social Sciences for the Study of Religion*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994; Segal R., *In Defence of Reductionism*, in "Journal of the American Academy of Religion", 51 (1).

9. Fitzgerald, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

10. Fitzgerald characterized him as follows: "The founder of one of the best religion departments in the United Kingdom at the University of Lancaster," "emeritus professor of religious studies at another first-rate department in the University of California at Santa Barbara," "the most persuasive British writer to formulate some kind of theoretical model for studying religion" (Timothy Fitzgerald, *op. cit.*, p. 55).

11. Ninian Smart, *Beyond Eliade: The Future of Theory in Religion*, in "Numen", 25 (2), p. 171-183

12. Mircea Vulcănescu, *Nae Ionescu așa cum l-am cunoscut*, Humanitas, Bucharest, 1992, p. 47-48.

13. Mircea Eliade, *Jurnal, I*. Bucharest: Humanitas, 1993, p. 19.

14. *Ibidem*, p. 25.

15. "The metaphysical problem arises for the individual when his spiritual personality is perfectly well-formed, that is at the moment when nothing happening outside him can influence him anymore. [...] Metaphysics is nothing but the awareness of the relations between you and reality and the attempt to consciously valorize this external reality." "In a broader definition, philosophy is "an act of life, an act of living" that means reducing the sensible reality "to the necessities of your personality, the way it is well-

formed, well or wrong; because this is what philosophy means – to modify the sensible reality and to try to bring it into agreement with yourself, to project your own spiritual structure on the entire cosmos” (*Curs de metafizică*, Humanitas, 1991, p. 10, 11, 14). When the course of metaphysics touches upon topics such as “love – mystical instrument of knowledge” or “living and knowledge,” metaphysics is closer to the meaning of a quasi-spiritual experience rather than to the effort of reason to think the world in its being.

16. See James Frazer with his *Golden bow and Old Testament folklore*, Vittorio Macchioreo with his studies on orphism, Raffaele Pettazzoni with his book dedicated to mystical religions.

17. Mircea Eliade, *Jurnal, I*. Bucharest: Humanitas, 1993, p. 403.

18. In addition: “This should be the preoccupation of a philosophical system of religion, to define the religious act through research...” Nae Ionescu, *Prelegeri de filosofia religiei*. Cluj-Napoca, Romania: Editura Biblioteca Apostrof, 1993, p. 15.

19. Florin Țurcanu, *Mircea Eliade, prizonierul istoriei*. Bucharest: Humanitas, 2005, p. 83.

20. *Ibidem*, p. 125.

21. Afloroaei Ștefan, *Cum e posibilă filosofia în Estul Europei?* Iași, Romania: Editura Polirom, 1997, p. 252. The fact that the study of the religious phenomenon in Eliade's case has a double conditioning, both hermeneutical and phenomenological, could also be seen in the fact that it formulates with particular clarity the phenomenological exigency imposed on the subject as an essential condition of interpretation; namely, the fact that the attention paid to the intentional dimension of the religious fact converts the phenomenological description into a real comprehension of it, which, in its turn, presupposes a communication between the subject-interpreter and the religious intention (see Eliade, *Încercarea labirintului*. Cluj-Napoca, Romania: Editura Dacia, 1990, p. 112). We can say that in Eliade's case the hermeneutics of the religious fact is phenomenological hermeneutics structured around the hermeneutical experience understood as comprehension.

22. Țurcanu, *op. cit.*, p. 535.

23. *Ibidem*, p. 551. Later, Eliade emphasized that it is necessary for historians of religions to orient themselves towards humanism, a fact that has been neglected so far.

24. Smart was trying to give as comprehensive a definition of religion as possible, taking into account the following seven aspects: experience (as religious experience, out of the ordinary), the social aspect, narrative, doctrine, ethics, ritual, and the material (concrete manifestations).

CODRUȚA CUCEU
HORAȚIU CRIȘAN

Birth and Hindering of Religious Studies at the University of Cluj. A Historical Overview.

Abstract:

This study will focus on the birth of studies related to the domain of religion at the University of Cluj, starting with the interwar period, then following with the communist period. The paper aims to offer an exhaustive depiction of what has been done in the academic milieu from 1919 to 1989, concerning the domain of religion, excluding Theological studies. We tried to make the connection, from a historical perspective, between the changes supervened in the Romanian official, political ideology and its representation in the University curricula, on the basis of the Annual Reports issued by the Rectors' Office of the University of Cluj in the analyzed period of time.

Short history of the University

The first university from Cluj was founded by the document signed by Stephen Bathory in Vilna (Vilnius) on May 12, 1581, at that time being a Jesuit one, with three colleges, of Theology, Philosophy and Law.

The higher education in Cluj was reorganized in the year 1776 with the foundation of a new College, having four faculties: Law, Philosophy, Natural Sciences and Surgery.

Then, after the First World War, the university was re-founded by Romanian intellectuals who regarded it as the "best expression of the cultural features and of the constructive needs of the nation."¹ The existence of the University was justified through the support it could offer to the national state. The University of Cluj was reopened as a Romanian University in 1919, after the integration of Ardeal in Romania in 1918. In the Report written by Drăganu which preceded the reopening and justified the foundation of the University as a Romanian state University, the actual Hungarian University was to be moved to Tîrgu-Mureș in the case the Hungarians would have continued its support.² The status of Ardeal at that time restricted an immediate nationalization of the Hungarian University, and, therefore, the solution combined the two main alternatives:

Codruța Cuceu

Researcher,
„I. Barițiu”
Research
Institute of
Romanian
Academy,
Cluj,
Romania.

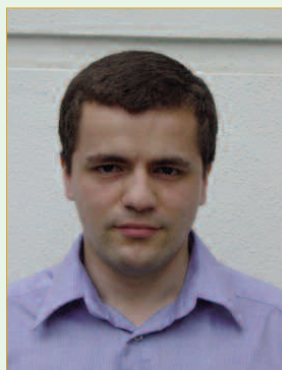
E-mail: codrutaliana@yahoo.com



Horațiu Crișan

Researcher,
Institute for
European
Research,
Babeș-
Bolyai
University,
Cluj,
Romania.

E-mail: hcrisan@gmail.com



Key words:

Religion, religious studies, curricula,
University of Cluj, interwar period,
communism., Transylvania

the nationalization and the creation of a new University.³ The takeover of the University was made by Professor Onisifor Ghibu on the 12th of May 1919. A Faculty of Theology did not exist at the University of Cluj. Due to the multi-confessional milieu of Transylvania, a single, Orthodox Faculty of Theology, as it had been planned to be created at a certain moment, would have been regarded as a source of tension between different confessions. The name by which the University was known till 1927 was „The University of Superior Dacia” and starting from that year the name was changed in „King Ferdinand University”, anticipating its tenth anniversary celebration. The name of the University was changed again with its relocation to Sibiu and Timișoara in September 1940. In the summer of 1945 the University King Ferdinand the First moved back to Cluj. In 1948 the name of the University changed again, due to the communist educational reform, in Victor Babeș. Departments of Marxist-Leninist studies were created and an unique curricula imposed to all universities in the country. In 1959 *Bolyai* University, founded by a decree of King Michael I dating from 1945 through which a state university having Hungarian as teaching language is created, is unified with *Victor Babeș* University, resulting the actual name of *Babeș-Bolyai* University.

Methodology

In order to offer an exhaustive image of what has been done in the academic milieu from 1919 to 1989, concerning the domain of religion, i.e., the first courses that focused on religious issues, studies and articles published by University professors, we consulted all the *Annual Reports*, *Programs of the courses and seminars*, *Bulletins* and *Guidebooks for students* issued by the Rectors’ Office starting with 1919, to the last one, published in 1962-1963. We tried to make the connection, from a historical perspective, between the changes supervened in the Romanian official, political ideology and its representation in the University’s curricula. We developed our methodology along our researches. We started by simply searching keywords that would be representative for the domain of religion, but only in the field of human and social sciences. Along our focused search we managed to gather information about the history of the University. We found out that the name of the University was changed a few times along its history. Certainly, this was a consequence of the historical development in *Ardeal* (Transylvania) and it has also strongly influenced the curricula, at least concerning the study of religion. We did not simply look at the list of courses offered at that time by each professor from every faculty with its short description, but we also checked out the biographies of those professors and their list of publications.

Short history of the public documents

Most relevant for the curricula of the University of Cluj from 1919 up to 1989 are the *Annual Reports*⁴ issued by the Rector’s Office. Some of them were preserved at the *Central University Library* from Cluj and others are to be found at the Museum of the University from Cluj. Unfortunately, it was impossible to recuperate the entire educational activity from 1919 to nowadays, even if we narrowed our research only to the domain of different approaches of religion. An exhaustive approach, planned as such from the very beginning, has proved to be unattainable by reason of an irregular issuance of the *Annual Reports* of the University from Cluj. One could blame historical events or major

changes occurring either in the political life of the country or in the organization of the institution *per se* for this irregular printing, or preservation of such reports. But in the case of the *Annual Reports* of the University from Cluj, no such explanation is plausible. From the interwar period there are only two reports missing, i.e., one which should have been published in the year of 1920-1921, and the other from 1939-1940. It is probable that the first one missing was not preserved, and that the second one had not been printed due to the commencement of the Second World War.

The elaboration and publication of the Annual Reports by the University has ceased in 1942. For the following years, up to 1947, the only documents issued by the University of Cluj concerning the curricula was *The program of the courses and seminars*⁵ of the *Faculty of Philosophy and Letters*.⁶ Afterwards, along the communist period, only two publications that played the formal role of the Annals are to be found: two volumes of the *Bulletin of the University*⁷, the first one concerned Sciences and the second one Humanities, both of them being issued under the supervision of the rectors representing each University, that is “Victor Babeș” University and “Bolyai” University. This *Bulletin* appeared only once, in 1956-1957, being afterwards transformed in the *Studia Universitatum Victor Babes et Bolyai* scientific journal that appeared beginning with 1958, being composed of the “series” Philosophy, History and Geology/Geography/Biology. Another document representative for the University during communism is *The Guidebook for students*,⁸ in which are presented the Faculties and their subsequent courses.

The birth of the studies related to religion at the University of Cluj

In order to separate and to interpret correctly the dates encountered in the *Annual Reports* we used the milestones of the historical timeline and, consequently, their correspondent ideologies, as education seems never to be completely detached from politics. This political involvement of the staff of the university in politics becomes obvious at a quick glance at the biographical details mentioned in the *Annals*. To exemplify, one of the most prominent figures representing the University from Cluj was Alexandru Lăpedatu, professor of Romanian History, who was the minister for Culture and Arts⁹, then a State minister¹⁰. He was also elected as deputy and senator in more legislatures. Another professor, Onisifor Ghibu was a deputy in the National Reunion of Transylvania and also member of The National Committee of Refugee Romanians from Ardeal and Bucovina in 1918. He was also member in the Romanian National Committee of the World Alliance for the Fraternization of People through Church. It seemed that most significant and exemplary for what happened in the field of what we nowadays call *religious studies* would be to divide the history of the University of Cluj with a certain relevance for this research study into three main periods: the interwar period (1919-1942), the period of the relocation of the University to Sibiu and Timișoara (1942-1945), and the communist period (1948-1989).

The structure of the reports during the first period (1919-1942) from each faculty follows the same rule, that is, firstly, a short biography of each full professor comprising his¹¹ academic and extra-academic, even political and religious affiliations, secondly, the curricula containing a short presentation of the course and its correspondent seminar that included the topics discussed and the papers presented by the students, and,

finally, an account of the studies, articles or reviews written that year by each professor from each Faculty. Those Faculty reports also contained statistics with the exact number of students registered in an academic year at that particular faculty. The statistics from each faculty were annually gathered in a general statistic of all students registered at the University of Cluj during that year.

One of the criteria that counted for the general statistic of students was, among gender, national or ethnic provenience and citizenship, their religious affiliation. If we take into consideration the order of these variables in the statistics, the apportionment of students according to their religion being the second criteria, next to gender, we can affirm, without going too much astray or misinterpreting facts, that, at least in the inter-war period, religious affiliation in Transylvania was considered essential for the identity of an individual. It was regarded as an essential feature of the person to such an extent that, for example, in the academic year 1922-1923¹³, for the Law School, the statistic also included the number of initially registered students in comparison with the number of successfully promoted students in exams, according to their religious affiliation. Therefore, if religion was a second variable in the statistic, following citizenship, which was taken into account in relation with the number of promoted students, it must have been considered a relevant criteria for the overall academic performance.

The first general statistic of the students of the University according to the criteria of religion and place of birth is recorded in the year 1919-1920.¹⁴ The occurrence of a general statistic at university level is not regular, thus not required every year, for example in the years 1922-1923, 1925-1926 or 1926-1927. Afterwards, the statistics tend to become more elaborated, taking into account also other criteria, such as gender, ethnic origin, citizenship and the exact number of students at each faculty.

In what follows, we will try to demonstrate to which extent has this fact influenced, or it has been representative for the making of the curricula of the University and for the intellectual and moral evolution or development of the student body, along the same period of time.

Studying the biographies of the professors, their memberships in different religious or political associations, their publications, we tried to establish the connection between those mentioned above and their academic interests, their courses or topics approached. To exemplify, Onisifor Ghibu, took his PhD in Philosophy at the University of Jena. He was primary school inspector from the Orthodox Archbishopric of Transylvania from 1919 to 1925. He taught courses of Pedagogy, in which he approached topics related to the field of religion, without a systematic program. For example, in 1935-1936 he held a seminar of *History of Pedagogy*, in which were read and discussed the following papers presented by the students: *The educational activity of the Piarist Order; Orthodox Monarchism as educational factor; Catholicism related to education; Orthodoxy and Catholicism; Neamț Cloister as a pedagogical center; The educational activity of the Premonstratens Order; The religious politics of Great Romania*.¹⁵ At the same seminar held the next year, a paper written by a student, named Iosif Naghiu entitled *Romanian specificities in religious education* was held among others such as *On the national education and Greek-Catholicism* held by Traian Tulbure and *On family, school and church as factors of national education*, held by Anatolie Chirav.¹⁶ Here the emphasis on the national character of education, even in what regards its religious nuance becomes obvious. Among his publications we should mention: *The Hungarian Catholicism in Transylvania and the Religious Politics of the Romanian State* (Cluj, 1924). *An Imperious National Necessity: The Religious Unity of Romanians* (Beiuș, 1931); *An Anachronism*

and a Defiance: *The Roman Catholic Transylvanian State*, (Cluj, 1931); *The University of Superior Dacia and the Problem of the Roman Catholic Transylvanian State*; *The nullity of the Concordate between Romania and the Holy Seat, which is the first volume from the collection Studies and Documents Regarding the Religious Politics of Great Romania*. (Cluj, 1935); *Contributions to the Juridical Problem of the Personality of Catholic Monk Orders from Romania. The Necessity of Repairing a Mistake made by the Minister for the Cults*. (Sibiu, 1936 – Excerpt from the *Theological Magazine*); *The Order of Conventual Franciscans (Minorites) from Transylvania*, (Bucharest 1937-1938); *A Cardinal National Problem: the Romanian Church, in the magazine Cele trei Crișuri*, (Oradea, 1938). In 1940 he publishes the sixth volume of the collection *Studies and Documents Regarding the Religious Politics of Great Romania* entitled *The Minority and Religious Politics of Romania* (București, 1940 Universul Printing House, 832 pages). In this volume, he analyses the principles of religious and minority politics in Romania between the years 1918-1940, opposing the generous official politics of the state to the disloyal politics of Transylvanian Hungarians and of the Catholic Church.¹⁷ In the same year, he publishes *Romanian Christianity and Hungarian Christianity in Transylvania*, written for “Siebenbürgen” a journal initiated by the Institute of National History of the University of Bucharest, published in German and Italian.

In his case, the scientific interest in the field of religion and its curricular reflection was strongly determined by his membership in different religious and educational commissions, and secondly by his interest in current regional political problems.

Alexandru Lăpedatu, was a deputy of Ceica in the Parliament (1922), Deputy in the National Ecclesiastical Congress of the Transylvanian Metropoly (1924). Deputy in the Eparchial Synod of the Dioceses from Cluj. Minister for the Cults and Arts beginning with the 1st of November 1924.¹⁸

Gustav Kisch, professor of German and German Literature at the Faculty of Letters, Counsellor in the *Ecclesiastic Supreme Council of the Evangelic Church from Sibiu*, School Inspector concerning confessional matters urged his students to present papers on German mythology in the light of literature.

Similarly, the academic interests and carrier of Ioan Lupaș has been influenced by his administrative responsibilities in domains related to religion. He was Professor of Romanian Modern History, School Inspector concerning confessional matters (1909-1919), Secretary of the Direction of Cults and Public Instruction from Sibiu (1918-1918), Member of the Commission for the making of the project of the law regarding the unification of the constitutional-ecclesiastic organization, Deputy in the Ecclesiastic National Congress from Transylvania and in the Synod of the Eparchy from Cluj. Among his publications stand the following *Icons in the World History up to the year 1453*, Bucharest, 1930; *Icons in the World History from 1453 to 1930*, Bucharest, 1930; *The Religious Education in the New Project for an Analytic Curricula*, in *Universul*, 25th of October 1931; *Social Protection and the Church*, in *Social Work*, III, no.2/1931, p.15-30; *Challenges between the pulpit and the preachment in Apuseni Mountains*, *Universul*, 15.IV.1933; *The Social Protection and the Church*, in *Our Country*, 1933.

At the Law School, a throughout preservation of the titles of the courses is noticeable, even if, as we will demonstrate in the following, the topics approached in the courses have changed according to the theoretical interests of each professor. One of our aims was to observe the changes which supervened in the curricula once with the change of one of the professors. The most relevant course related to the field of religion which presents, seemingly, the longest constant tradition, at least in the inter-war period at the

University from Cluj is the course of *Ecclesiastic Law*. The chair of Ecclesiastic Law is vacant in the year of 1919-1920, and it is occupied in the in the year 1923-1924 by Petre Poruțiu.¹⁹ The topics discussed during the course focused on: *The Church. Ecclesiastic Law and Canon Law. The history of Ecclesiastic Law. The ecclesiastic constitution in its historical development. Old Times. Bishops, Deacons, Presbyterians. Clergy and laics. The Synods. The Metropolitans. The development of Oriental Church. The Church in the Roman Empire and in the Franc Empire. The Roman primacy. The Tridentine Council. The papacy. The bishopric. The state and the church. The legal position of the Churches in Romania.*²⁰

Afterwards, in the year 1934-1935, the course of *Ecclesiastic Law* was, for the first time held by Lazăr Iacob. It comprised, then, discussions on The Concordats after the war. *The Concordat signed by Romania with the Holy Seat.*²¹ The following year, the same course was also held in the framework of the Graduate School. The topic approached was *The Supreme Patronage and the Rights of the Romanian State*.

But this was not the only course concerning religious issues from Law School. Another course, that of *Penal Law, Criminology*, held since 1924 by Professor Traian Pop, who treated religion among other social factors such as education, instruction and civilization in determining criminality.

Also, the course of *Social Politics*, held by Nicolae Giulea, at the same Faculty, treated the relation between Social Politics and other social sciences such as Sociology, Political Economy, Economic Policies, Bio-politics, Ethics, Esthetics, even Theology.²² In the year 1936-1937 for the course *Constitutional Law*, Romul Boilă approached the issue of the State and the Rights, excepting as presentations for the seminar two papers linked to religion: *Rabindranath Tagore and the Oriental Pantheism* held by Constantin Papuc and *The Papal Encyclic issued on the 6th of March 1937* by Ioan Botlinger. The only publications significant for the research, achieved at Law School are: *Concetto Christiano della Proprieta* by Jose Maria Palacio, O. P., *Compte Rendu in Revue Internationale de la Theorie du Droit*, Annee XI Cah. 3. and *Einfluss des Christentum auf das Corpus Juris Civilis*, by Const. Hohenlohe, in *Revue Internationale de la Theorie du Droit*, Annee XI Cah. 3.

Starting with 1939-1940 the course on *Ecclesiastic Law* is no longer held, the emphasis changed to *International Law, Diplomacy and Relations with the neighboring countries*. At Law School no further texts having religion as main theme appear.

In the years 1925-1926 and 1926-1927, at the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy the *Laboratory in Experimental Psychology* has among its publications the title *The Content and Evolution of the Religious Life for the Individual*, paper focusing on statistic based on the material gathered using questionnaires, written by L. Bologa, the Assistant of the Institute. Another publication in same field appears in 1936-1937 as Graduation Paper written by Alexandru Tohăneanu, *The Measurement of the Attitude Towards Church*.

In the field of Pedagogy, Vladimir Ghiozdănescu, even though he does not publish papers on religious themes, includes in his seminars topics related to religious education.

Some theoretical papers treating religious matters are presented during the seminar of Pedagogy such as: *The moral and the religious education in our (Romanian) secondary schools*, held by a student named Lucian Bologa in 1924. He afterwards became an Assistant Professor and maintained his interest in subjects related to religion, as showed above. Another seminar on *The religious education of adolescent girls* is to be found in 1933.²³ Another notable paper published in 1936 by Nicolae Mărgineanu,

Anatole Chircev and Maria Draser was entitled *Tests for measuring the social attitudes towards the church, nationalism and internationalism*.

In the domain of Pedagogy, at the seminar of *Methodics and the History of Pedagogy* were discussed, among others, the following texts on religious topics: *The right of supreme patronage of the Hungarian King over the Catholic Church*, held by the student Petru Nistor; *The carriers of the scholar work of the Jesuits from Transylvania: The Piarists*, presented by Veturia Nemes; *The Roman-Catholic Transylvanian State as Usurper of the Rights of the University from Cluj*, presented by Vasile Barna; *The Study of the Issue of the Roman-Catholic Hungarian, Transylvanian State from a historical and juridical perspective for guidance of the public opinion*, by Irma Juricscay; *The Hungarian Catholicism fighting against the Romanian Feeling*, by Minerva Lipovan; *The Order of Franciscan Conventual (Minorites) Monks in the Ancient Hungary*, by Petru Cimponeriu.²⁴

The Department of History was by far the most productive in the study of religion at that time. To demonstrate this, it is enough to remind that Silviu Dragomir, professor at that department, published in 1922 *The History of Our Religious Manumission*, for which he was awarded the prize of the Romanian Academy, and in 1930, he published a book entitled *The Ancient Churches from Zarand and their founders in the XIVth and XVth Century*. He also wrote *The History of the Manumission of Orthodox Church form Ardeal in the XVIIIth Century*, vol. II, Sibiu, 1930. In the same year, he began to elaborate an inventory of Romanian art aiming at creating an ecclesiastic museum for the Orthodox Bishopric from Oradea. Another book signed by the same historian entitled *The Founders of the Church from Bârsău (The County of Hunedoara)*, in *The Year Book for the Historical Monuments from Ardeal* has been issued in 1933.

In 1930, another famous historian and professor, Constantin Daicoviciu published *Contributions for the Religious Syncretism at Sarmizegetusa*, in *The Year Book* of the Institute for Classical Studies, Cluj. He also held a course entitled *Roman Religious Antiquities* in 1936-1937. Then, Constantin Marinescu, professor of World History participated to the *Fourth International Congress of Byzantine Studies*, in Sofia, in September, 1934 with the intervention *Le Pape Nicholas V 1447-1455 et son attitude envers l'Empire Byzantin*. He published in *Bulletin Historique de l'Academie Roumaine* the study *Le Pape Calixte III Alphonse V d'Aragon, Roi de Naples et l'offensive contre les Turques*. Also, during his course of *World History*, the students translated from the Pope Grigore I the Great, *Liber pontificalis* and from St. Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*. The course of Ancient History of Romanians, held by Associated Profesor C. Diclescu in the year 1926-1927, the topic *what does Christianity Mean for Romanians?* was treated.

At the Department of History, towards the end of the 1920s, the studies concerning the importance of religion along world history grew in importance.

Another representative department for the study of religion is the Department of Letters where Nicolae Drăgan published in 1940 *The History of Ancient Romanian Literature. A Manuscript of Religious Transylvanian Apocryphal from the XVth Century*, in the journal *Dacoromania* IX, pp. 219-224. At the *Laboratory of Experimental Phonetics*, in the year 1934-1935, Assistant Professor Emil Petrovici and Lecturer Ioachim Crăciun gathered material for a Bibliography of the History of the Romanian Church.

In the same manner, Romulus Vuia, in his course from 1936-1937 entitled *Ethnography and Folklore*, allowed students to present papers on different topics related to the field of religion. For example Caludi Anastasia presented a *Report on the Activity of C. Petran, especially on his works regarding the wooden churches from*

Ardeal, Banat and Maramureș; Tömlö Iuliu wrote *Christmas and New Years Eve Customs in the Village of Reteș*; Gheorghe Pavelescu spoke about *The Icons on Glass from the Alba County* and Roman Aurelia about *Christmas and New Years Eve Customs in the Village of Bolintineni*. He also introduced in 1945-1946, in the curricula of the Faculty of Letters, a course named *Introduction to Ethnology* in which he spoke about the beginnings of social, economic, and religious life.

Sociology was underrepresented in the perspective of our research. Only Constantin Sudețeanu held in 1934-1935 a course on Ethics during which a few lectures on the common basis of biological morals and religious morals were approached.²⁵

Last but not least, at one of the oldest departments of the University, Philosophy, Lucian Blaga held under the main topic *Philosophy of Culture* the course entitled *Religion and Spirit* in which he examined the influence that the factors which create a certain "style" have on the religious phenomena, with examples from the history of religions. He also published *Religion and Spirit*, a philosophical study, in which these ideas are developed.²⁶ During the 1939-1940 in the *Seminar of Rural Sociology* he comments on the *Transcendent Revealing Itself as Immanent*.

Another Professor Marin ștefănescu, held the course *The question of knowledge in Christian Philosophy*. He was President of the Association *The Cult of the Nation* and held in 1936-1937 a series of conferences for the enlightenment of the Romanian people in what regards the nationalist doctrine based on the Christian Philosophy. In 1943-1944 he continued with the theme Philosophical issues in the light of Christian Philosophy and held public conferences and discussions regarding philosophical problems. He changed the name of his course in 1944-1945 to *The role of Philosophy in the life of the nations*.

During the academic year 1946-1947 we found no mention of themes related to religion in the curricula.

As we hope to have demonstrated by the above mentioned, we cannot affirm that the criteria of religious affiliation present in the statistics influenced the making of the curricula, but rather the latter was affected by the biographies and interests of the professorial body. Anyway, the curricula planning was not centralized, i.e., decided at a national level, but rather it was determined by the each University. At that time, this could be considered an expression of the Universities' autonomy. Furthermore, the curricula, and, consequently the education and instruction of entire generations of students were being left at the free will and decision of the professors. Yet the interwar period there were a lot of initiatives concerning the study of religion but this cannot be subsumed to an academic discipline such as the religious studies.

The communist period and the study of religion

Even if the issuance of the *Bulletin of the University* from Cluj was regarded as "an important stage in the development of scientific research in the two institutions of higher education... and its aim is to improve the level of the courses and to ameliorate the educative work with the students"²⁷, the tradition of publishing Annals was broken. This happened because on the one hand the Annals seemed to be rejected as bourgeois and on the other hand, all publications were so centralized and totally submitted to the Party that such an initiative on the part of the University would have been considered at least partially incontrollable. The former Annals contained statistics and detailed data

that corresponded to the reality, to what was effectively happening in the University. These statistics and data would have been a lot harder to mystify according to the required ideology. Yet, it is a fact that, at least in the *Bulletin* from 1956, references to religion still appeared: “The practical program of the rural state aims at elevating the state in what regards the spiritual, moral and *religious* level of the state.”²⁸

In the same *Bulletin* the idea that the popular democratic (communist) regime fully installed in 1948, offers people of any national minority equal chances to participate to the political and administrative issues, to the government. The national minorities are considered, from an ideological perspective, in the creation of a common “thesaurus”²⁹ of Romanian people, but no reference is made to religious minorities. This means not only that religious affiliation is totally excluded from the sphere of the politics and left without any political representation, but it is also disregarded in the process of culture making.

Strangely as it seemed at that time, after the famous decree no. 177 from 1948 which “permitted the state considerable control over the religious life”, the *Bulletin* from 1956 contained more studies that could be regarded under the category of studies related to religion. One of them is entitled *A Valuable Contribution to the Development of Literary Romanian Language: The Sermons of Varlaam*. This study, written by Liviu Onu, Chair of Romanian language, V. Babeș University represents a short analysis of the language of sermons from the point of view of the history of literary language, comprising many illustrative citations, having the purpose of emphasizing the role of Varlaam in the development of literary Romanian language.³⁰ There appears, also, *A Transylvanian Copy of the Versificated Psaltry of Mitropolitan Dosoftei*³¹. But the *Bulletin* was the last publication issued by the Rector’s Office in which references and studies related to religion were allowed throughout the communist period.

Conclusion

The lack of a Faculty of Theology encouraged, in a way, other studies concerning religion. Along the researched period of time, we cannot speak about the presence of religious studies as a separate domain of study, as “a perspectival and comparative discipline”³² at the University from Cluj; no systematic study of religion could be noticed, neither from a historical point of view (Mircea Eliade, one of the most important representatives of a historical approach of religion, being at that time in his years of instruction in Bucharest), nor from a phenomenological perspective. Yet, a multidisciplinary study of religion, even if disparate – because the study of religion was not only conducted at various Faculties and institutional Departments, using, therefore, different methodologies, correspondent to particular fields of study, but it is also defined by a lack of continuity along time within the framework of each domain - exists at the University of Cluj, since its creation in 1919.

Even if in the interwar University the study of religion, even separate, was at least present, if not prominent, the communist period broke any tradition whatsoever, and the status of the social sciences degraded during communism in such a manner, that it became impossible to conduct any research regarding religion, and afterwards, immediately after 1989 it was quite hard to recuperate the basis for religious studies, but the curricular need for such a domain was imperative.

Notes:

1 Vasile Pușcaș, *University and Society. A History of Higher Education in Cluj in the 20th Century*, Cluj University Press, 1999.

2 Ibidem, p. 71.

3 Ibidem, p. 73.

4 *Anuarul Universității din Cluj*. 1919-1942.

The program of the courses and seminars for the year 1942-1943, Faculty of Philosophy and Letters, Cartea Romanească Cluj Publishing House, Sibiu, 1943.

5 *The program of the courses and seminars for the years 1942-1947*, the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters. Cartea Romanească din Cluj Publishing House, Sibiu

Buletinul univeristăților V. Babeș și Bolyai, Cluj, seria științe sociale, vol I nr. 1-2, 1956.

6 *Îndrumar pentru studenți*, Universitatea Babeș-Bolyai Cluj, 1962-1963.

7 Alexandru Lăpedatu was minister for Culture and Arts in the following periods of time: 1st of November 1923-31st of March 1926, 4th June 1927-10th of November 1928, and 9th of July 1934-30th of August 1936. Cf. *Anuarul Universității din Cluj* for the year 1924- 1925. Elaborated by the rector of the year, C. Negrea, and by ștefan Jarda, general secretary of the University, Institutul de Arte Grafice „Ardealul” Publishing House, Cluj, 1926, p. 97.

8 Alexandru Lăpedatu was State minister in the following periods of time: 14th of November 1933-9th of June 1934 and 30th of August 1936-15th of November 1936. Cf. ibidem.

9 At that time the majority of the teaching staff was made up by male professors. The first woman professor, who showed a certain interest in topics related with religion was Elena Eftimiu, lecturer of Czech language at the Faculty of Letters, who held a conference at Radio Bucharest entitled *Christmas celebration for Slavic peoples* on the 25th of December 1938. Cf. Annual Report of the University for the year 1939-1940, printed by the Institute of Graphic Arts “Ardealul”, p. 220.

10 The presentation of the seminars, in the *Annual Reports*, developed along time in such a way that the first occurrence of a detailed description of a seminar dates from 1924. It was the seminar for the course of *Theoretical Pedagogy*, held by professor Onisifor Ghibu. Herein, the title of the papers written by students during the seminar of *Religious Educational Literature* was mentioned: *The Historical Development of the Romanian Religious Educational Literature in comparison with German, Hungarian and Jewish Literature*. It is also recorded that the seminar focused especially on the current educational literature for the religious instruction in secondary orthodox, uniate, catholic, evaghehelic, reformed, unitarian and mozaic schools. A first, still incomplete bibliography of this literature has been composed as result of the same seminar, in the *Annual Report of the University* for the year 1924-1925, printed by the Institute of Graphic Arts “Ardealul”, p.120.

11 *Annual Report of the University* for the year 1922-1923. Elaborated by Professor, Ph.D. Iacobovici, Rector of the year și Dr. ștefan Jarda, general secretary of the University, p. 32.

12 “The number of students enlisted at our University was unexpectedly high. In the first semester there were enlisted overall 1871 students out of which 909 at the Faculty of Law, 707 at the Faculty of Medicine, 116 at the Faculty of Letters, 82 at the

Faculty of Natural Sciences and 57 attended the Faculty of Pharmacy. 1637 were ordinary students and 237 extra-ordinary audience. According to their declarations, 734 Greek-Oriental, 554 Uniates, 281 Hebrews, 220 Evangelical, 72 Catholics and 10 Reformed. According to nationality 1288 Romanians, 281 Jews, 225 Germans, 77 Hungarians. From abroad there were 51, that is: 38 from Hungary, 5 from Poland, 2 from Russia out of which a transnistrian Romanian, one from France, one from Switzerland, one from Austria, one from Czechoslovakia, one from Ukraine and one from Yugoslavia. In the second semester there were enlisted overall 2152 students out of which 1817 were ordinary students and 335 extra-ordinary audience. According to the faculties: 1098 at the Faculty of Law, 797 at the Faculty of Medicine, 114 at the Faculty of Letters, 79 at the Faculty of Natural Sciences and 64 attended the Faculty of Pharmacy. According to their declarations, 838 Greek-Oriental, 595 Uniates, 428 Hebrews, 186 Evangelical, 83 Catholics, 19 Reformed and 3 Unitarians. According to nationality 1433 Romanians, 428 Jews, 291 Germans and Hungarians. From Romania according to place of birth (counties): 1276 from Transylvania, 296 from Banat, 219 from Crișana, 156 from Maramureș, 96 from the ancient Regat, 15 from Bucovina, 10 from Basarabia and 6 from Dobrogea. From abroad there were 78, that is: 61 from Hungary, 6 from Galicia, 2 from each of the following: Macedonia, Russia, France and one from each of the following: Yugoslavia, Ukraine and Austria.” Cf. *Annual Report of the University* for the year 1919-1920, p. 15.

13 Cf. *Annual Report of the University* for the year 1935-1936, elaborated by rector Florian ștefănescu Goangă, printed by the Institute of Graphic Arts “Ardealul”, p. 188.

14 Cf. *Annual Report of the University* for the year 1936-1937, printed by the Institute of Graphic Arts “Ardealul”, p. 113.

15 *Annual Report of the University „King Ferdinand I”* Cluj-Sibiu in the second year of refuge, 1941-1942, elaborated by Iuliu Hațieganu, by the Institute of Graphic Arts “Ardealul” p. 522.

16 *Annual Report of the University* for the year 1924-1925, elaborated by Rector C. Negrea and ștefan Jarda, General Secretary, Institute of Graphic Arts “Ardealul”, 1926, pp. 97-98.

17 *Annual Report of the University*, 1923-1924, elaborated by Rector N. Bănescu and ștefan Jarda General Secretary, printed by the Institute of Graphic Arts “Ardealul”, 1925, p. 48.

18 *Annual Report of the University* for the year 1924-1925, elaborated by Rector C. Negrea and ștefan Jarda General Secretary of the University, Ardealul Printing House, 1926, p.24.

19 *Annual Report of the University* 1934-1935, elaborated by Florian ștefănescu Goangă, Ardealul Printing House, p. 78

20 Ibidem.

21 *Annual Report of the University* for the year 1932-1933, elaborated by Florian ștefănescu Goangă, Ardealul Printing House, 1933, p. 203

22 *Annual Report of the University* for the year 1934 -1935, Elaborated by Florian ștefănescu Goangă, Ardealul Printing House, 1935, p. 255.

23 *Annual Report of the University* for the year 1934-1935, op. cit., p. 250.

24 Lucian Blaga, *Religie și spirit*, Editura Dacia Traiană, Sibiu, 1942.

25 *Bulletin of the University*, op. cit., Foreword written by Acad. Prof. Raluca Ripan, Rector of the Victor Babeș University and Laszlo Banyai, Rector of the Bolyai University, p. 9.

26 Ibidem, from a text written by Gall Ernő, *Chair of Dialectic and Historic Materialism*, Bolyai University, p. 36. Emphasis added by the authors.

27 Banyai Laszlo, *Chair of History*, in *Bulletin of the University*, op. cit.

28 Liviu Onu, *O contribuție valoroasă la dezvoltarea limbii romane literare: Cazania lui Varlaam*, p. 289.

29 *O copie ardeleană a psaltirii in versuri a mitropolitului Dosoftei*, in *Bulletin of the University*, op. cit., p. 291.

30 Richard D. Hecht, *Religious Studies*, in Wade Clark Roof (ed.), *Contemporary American Religion*, Macmillan, New York, 2000, p. 606.

CORIN BRAGA

"Imagination", "imaginaire", "imaginal"

Three concepts for defining creative fantasy

Abstract:

This paper comparatively presents three notions related to the concept of creative fantasy. These three terms ("imagination", "imaginaire", "imaginal") have been developed by the French school of research on the imagination ("recherches sur l'imaginaire"), which is little known in the Anglo-Saxon academic field. As such, the terms don't even have convenient translations and linguistic equivalents. Briefly, imagination is fantasy conceived as a combinatory faculty of the psyche. French rationalistic "philosophes" saw it as a misleading and rather weakly creative ability. "L'imaginaire" is the resourceful and inventive aspect of fantasy, as conceived by the Romantics and then theorized by psychoanalysis and contemporary French philosophers. "L'imaginal", or "mundus imaginalis" is a concept defined by Henry Corbin in order to designate fantasies as self-sustained, ontological beings.

In this paper I wish to comparatively present three notions related to the concept of creative fantasy: "imagination", "imaginaire" and "imaginal" or "mundus imaginalis". The first term is a venerable one, it has its roots in the Latin words "imago" and "imaginatio", and is well established in the English language. The last two terms, "imaginaire" and "imaginal" have been developed by the French school of research on imagination ("recherches sur l'imaginaire"), which is little known in the Anglo-Saxon academic field. As such, they don't even have convenient translations and linguistic equivalents in English. Possible translations for

"L'imaginaire" could be imagining (suggesting that imagination is a dynamic process, as in Richard Kearney's *Poetics of Imagining*, 1998) and the imaginary (trying to transform an adjective into a noun, as in Wolfgang Iser's *The Fictive and the Imaginary*, 1993), but

Corin Braga

Assoc. Prof.
PhD

Director of
Phantasma,
The Center
for

Imagination
Studies,

Chair of the

Department of Comparative
Literature, Faculty of Letters, Babes-
Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca,
Romania.



Author of the books:

Night-Walkers (novel, 1992), The
Imaginary Horizon of Nichita
Stănescu (literary criticism, 1993),
Hydra (novel, 1996), The Genesis of
the Imaginary World of Lucian
Blaga (literary criticism, 1998),
Oniria. Dream Diary (1985-1995),
(1999), 10 Studies in Archetypology
(1999), Le Paradis interdit au
Moyen Âge. 1. La quete manquée
de l'Eden oriental, (2004), La quete
manquée de l'Avalon occidentale. Le
Paradis interdit au Moyen Age - 2
(2006), From archetype to anarchy-
type (2006).

Email: corinbraga@yahoo.com

Key words:

Fantasy, imagination, "imaginaire",
"mundus imaginalis", Plato, Kant,
Gaston Bachelard, Gilbert Durand,
Henry Corbin

neither is sufficiently precise or specific. As for the last term, "*l'imaginal*", it has been coined by Henry Corbin in its Latin form "*mundus imaginalis*" (Corbin, 1958), and so it should be used in English too. Nowadays images and phantasms, fantasy and imagination, fiction and fictionality tend to become cognitive and investigative instruments meant to supplement reason and logics, not only in the field of arts and culture, but also in the hard sciences. This is why an analysis of the three terms would significantly enrich the concept of creative work.

1. Imagination is the traditional term that designates the function of the spirit the Greeks called *phantasia* and *eikasia*. *phantasia* or *eikasia* is the ability to produce mental images, *phantasmata*, *eikones*, *eidola*. The problem with these representations is that, however useful they might be for human cognition, they are *not* the real thing itself, they are only a copy of it. Investigating the foundations of non-existing things, Plato, in his dialogue *The Sophist*, made a seminal distinction between two species of the art of images: the technique of creating correct and adequate images of things, that is *eikones*, and the technique of creating invented images of things that may even not exist, that is *phantasmata* (*The Sophist*, 236a-c). In the first instance, this distinction would seem to solve the problem, by assigning *eikones* to being and *phantasmata* to non-being. *Eikones* would be reliable images, able to tell the truth, and *phantasmata* false images, producing errors.

However, the questioning of the Stranger from Elea, Plato's character in the *Sophist*, about the nature of *sophistic* allegations raises new troubles. In order to reproduce the real dimensions of things, images must sometimes lie (as in the case of the craftsman willingly distorting the dimensions of the higher parts of huge statues, so that people from the ground could perceive them adequately and harmoniously). So the problem is not that images can be at some times correct and at other times incorrect, but that images can generally represent non-existing things. In Plato's terms, this would lead to the paradoxical conclusion that non-being exists. Images would then be something real representing something unreal, and *phantasia* the capacity of creating non-existing illusions (*The Sophist*, 240b).

Things are even worse if we place images in the context of Plato's ontology and metaphysics. In book X of the *Republic*, the philosopher develops the famous metaphor of the two degrees of mimesis. Any thing, a bed for example, can be conceived in three ways: as the *paradigm* of the bed, that is an idea, an ontological essence representing the "ultimate nature of things"; as a material bed, made of wood, that is an immanent copy of the transcendent model; and as a bed painted by a painter, that is an illusory copy of the material copy of the spiritual model (*The Republic*, 597a-598b). Stating that human images are copies of copies, or mimetic in the second degree, led Plato to the famous expulsion of the artists from his utopian *polis*.

Aristotle took over Plato's reflections. In his treatise *De anima*, he established a hierarchy of the functions of the soul, such as sensation, memory, imagination, opinion, intellection, science, etc. Aristotle defines imagination as the ability of producing internal images and places it between sensation (*aesthesis*) and thinking (*dianoia*). Images derive from sensations, they cannot exist in inanimate or insensitive beings, and they are specific to sentient beings. More precisely, fantasy is a movement of the soul generated by the sensations in act (*De anima*, 428a-428b). However, fantasy itself is not a sensation. An image can appear in the absence of a sensation, as it happens in dreams.

Now, the problem is that fantasy, although it depends genetically on sensation, splits itself away from sensation. Or, in Aristotle's system, sensations are the warrants of truth. Senses are always reliable, because they are in immediate relationship with external things, while images have stepped away from this contact. As Aristotle puts it, "sensations are always true, while images are most often fallacious (*pseudeis*)" (*De anima*, 428a). On the other hand, the intellect (*nous*) and science (*episteme*), situated at the other end of the scale of psychic abilities, are also secured as reliable operations, able to produce truth by their internal functioning and instrumental logic (*organon*). This means that imagination, partially in alliance with opinion (*doxa*), constitutes an intermediate level between the two secured and reliable levels of the psychic apparatus, i.e. senses and reason. Imagination is situated in a no-man's-land, where illusion and error are most probable to appear. Images deform sensations, creating delusions and false impressions, while reason has the obligation to assess and to correct them.

In the main, Greek philosophers were averse to the idea that imagination had the capacity of construing truth and guiding the human psyche. The Judeo-Christian tradition was also defiant of the imagination, because it considered it the source of original sin and of evil in general. Although created in the image and resemblance of God, Adam transgressed the divine law because he was endowed with a faculty that distinguished him from the animals but also prevented him from remaining in the abode of God: *yetser* (imagination). In other words, Adam was attracted to the forbidden fruit because he had imagination. Each time they felt tempted to exercise their fantasy, Adam's descendants strayed off the path of the just and fell into idolatry and heresy (Kearney, 1988).

This view was adopted by medieval theologians and doctors, who added to Greek philosophical skepticism a religious aversion towards fantasy. All activities correlated to imagination, such as oniromancy and all kinds of divination, were considered to be diabolical. Dreams, for example, were divided by fathers like Tertullian into three categories: dreams sent by God, dreams sent by demons and dreams sent by the individual's own psyche. As the first kind of dreams are obviously rare, the general advice is to avoid dreams as delusional or misleading, as an instrument of corruption. After the Council of Trent, the Counter-Reformation intensified the attacks against overflowing fantasy of the Renaissance, producing what Ioan Petru Couliano termed the "great censorship of the imagination" (Couliano, 1984).

Religious censorship of fantasy was relayed by the new philosophies of early modernity, rationalism and empiricism. Starting with Descartes, imagination was considered "*la folle du logis*", the madwomen of the house. In his short treatise, published only after his death, *Regulae utiles et clares ad ingenii directionem in veritatis inquisitione*, Descartes made a clear-cut distinction between imagination and intellect. He argued that *ingenium*, the cognitive faculty of man, consisted of four functions: perception, memory, imagination, and intellect. Within the frame of a dualist vision, which separated matter (*res extensa*) from spirit (*res cogitans*), Descartes considered that the intellect was able to express the abstract and non-figurative ideas of the spiritual substance, while imagination offered images of the visible corporeal substances. Even more, imagination itself was a "genuine real object, extended and figurative". The main cognitive function, the only one that had access to the truth, was intellection, while imagination was doomed to roam between false and real images, without the capacity of discriminating between them. What imagination could do at best was to provide the ideas of the spiritual substance with individual and figurative examples from the corporeal substance (Descartes, 1977).

But while Descartes continued to sponsor the concept of some harmony and cooperation between intellect and imagination, Spinoza and other rationalists denied even the capacity of fantasy to support reason. In a treatise that also remained unpublished until the death of the author, *Tractatus de intellectus emendatione et de via qua optime in veram rerum cognitione digitur*, Spinoza excluded imagination from the "method" of finding the truth. The only criteria for veracity are provided by the cogito. Reason is the only psychic function able to assess the correct relationship between the essence (or the nature) of external objects and the existence (or empirical presence) of these objects. Depending on the mode of correlating the essence and the existence, there are three types of objects of cognition: impossible objects (whose nature contradicts their existence), necessary objects (whose nature contradicts their inexistence), and possible objects (whose nature admits both their existence and their inexistence). Necessary objects are the clear ideas of the intellect, which reflect the real external things. Impossible objects are fictions created by imagination, which don't have a real essence and existence. Possible objects are false conjectures and interpretations, which attribute to a given existence a nature incompatible with it. So the intellect is the only generator of necessary objects, while imagination is the source of fictions and errors. Ancient mythologies, folk superstitions, magic techniques, and Christianity itself are all relegated by Spinoza to the category of impossible objects created by fantasy (Spinoza, 1992).

Seen as a "disease of the soul", imagination was successively depreciated by the rationalists, the empiricists, and the materialists of the 17th and 18th centuries, by the "philosophes" of the Enlightenment, by the positivist thinkers of the 19th century, and by the scientists of the 20th century. One of the last in this line is the French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, who re-elaborated the category of imagination within the framework of phenomenology and existentialism. Taking up an old Aristotelian distinction, Sartre defines perception as producing images *in preasentia* of the external objects, and fantasy as presenting images *in absentia* of these objects. This means that fantastic images are, accurately speaking, made out of nothing. They don't have a real ontological support, and as such they are representative for the nature of the human consciousness. We have to remember that Sartre identified, in *L'être et le néant*, two modes of being: *etre-en-soi*, the being which is its own source of being, and encompasses all that exists, and *etre-pour-soi*, the being that tries to contemplate itself and, in doing so, has to get out of the *etre-en-soi*, that is out of all existence, into nothingness. Human consciousness is an *etre-pour-soi*, and as such it is a de-creator of what it contemplates. Human consciousness is the source of the *néant*. Imagination participates in this process of *néantisation*, as a modality of producing insubstantial images of real things (Sartre, 1940, 1943).

2. The French term "*imaginaire*", the imaginary, the imaging or the imagining function of the psyche, is a concept coined in the 20th century, in order to re-ennoble and to re-enhance the suffering and discredited term "imagination". "*L'imaginaire*" (treated grammatically as a noun) has two overlapped meanings (Wunenburger, 2003). In the first instance, it designates the products of the imagination, the passive body of images and representations created by an individual or collective fantasy. As H. Védrine puts it, "*L'imaginaire*" is "the whole world of beliefs, ideas, myths, ideologies that pervade each individual and each civilization" (Védrine, 1990). In the second instance, "*L'imaginaire*" is seen, on a larger scale, as the dynamic human faculty of creating this complex system of images. For Claude-Gilbert Dubois, it is "the visible outcome of a psychic energy, which has its formal structures both at the level of individuals and of collectivities"

(Dubois, 1985). For Joël Thomas, it is "a system, a dynamic function of organizing images, that gives them soundness and correlates them" (Thomas, 1998). For Jean-Jacques Wunenburger, it designates the "inner creative force of imagination" (Wunenburger, 2003).

In the history of ideas, the rehabilitation implied by the term "*imaginaire*" compared to the term "*imagination*" began with Immanuel Kant and the idealistic philosophy of Fichte, Schelling, etc. In *The Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant tried to go beyond the "*querelle*" between the rationalist and the empiricist philosophers. He showed that neither Descartes' nor Hume's theses on the absolute priority in human cognition of reason, respectively of the senses, is acceptable. Real comprehension takes place through the collaboration between sensibility, which supplies the "contents" of the mind, and understanding, which offers the "forms" for organizing this material.

The meeting point between the senses and reason is represented by the *transcendental imagination*, a psychic function in which Kant sees the precondition (an a priori) for all knowledge. In the absence of the transcendental imagination, we would have either sensation without understanding, or understanding without sensation. While the first is blind, the second is empty. In order to highlight the new meaning he is giving to the concept, Kant distinguished reproductive imagination from productive or active imagination. Reproductive imagination refers to the mimetic model of representation, that is, to the old term of imagination as a combinatorial function. Productive imagination relates to a transcendental model of formation or creation (Kant, 2004). The French term "*L'imaginaire*" will apply to Kantian productive or transcendental imagination.

The post-Kantian thinkers took over the concept of imagination as an aprioristic form of the mind. Ernst Cassirer, for example, in his *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, considers that human culture is molded by a set of *a priori* categories that he calls "symbolic forms". The perception of the external things is organized and guided by an internal structure that has self-evidence and expressiveness. This striking and conspicuous character of symbols ("*prégnance symbolique*" in French) adds to perceptive experiences a certain non-intuitive meaning and construes them into larger and profoundly human representations of the world (Cassirer, 1972). The concept of symbolic imagination was further developed by other thinkers of the 20th century, such as the Romanian philosopher and poet Lucian Blaga, who made the distinction between revelatory, transcendental metaphors, and plastic, reproductive metaphors (Blaga, 1985), or the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur, who spoke of "live metaphors" ("*métaphore vive*") (Ricoeur, 1975).

Another major trend of thought that massively contributed to the rehabilitation of imagination was psychoanalysis. In his *Interpretation of Dreams*, Sigmund Freud rooted the oneiric fantasy in what he defined as the human subconscious or unconscious. Depth psychology postulates that imagination is a highly creative and expressive function of the brain independent and often more significant than perceptions and conscious notions and ideas. Phantasms rising from the unconscious have the same inner power and self-evidence as instincts and drives (Freud, 1900).

Carl Gustav Jung, the great dissident from the psychoanalytic movement, achieved the harmonization of neo-Kantianism and psychoanalysis. While Freud stated that the unconscious level of the psyche from which phantasms arise has an individual unique character, Jung amplified the concept of unconscious from the personal to a collective dimension. He determined that the collective unconscious is structured by a set of molds or patterns that he called archetypes. He further stated that the archetypes have the same role within the psychic life of the individuals as instincts have within their psycho-somat-

ic life. Myths and symbols constitutive of human culture are particular expressions of the collective archetypes (Jung, 1969).

On these theoretical bases the modern science of the imaginary was founded at the middle of the 20th century, through the works of Gaston Bachelard, Mircea Eliade, Charles Mauron, Gilbert Durand, and other prominent scholars. Carl Kerényi, a Hungarian historian of religions and a collaborator of Jung's, wrote a series of studies dedicated to the gods of ancient Greece, who are seen as archetypal images of father and mother (Zeus and Hera), mother and daughter (Demeter and Persephone), humanity (Prometheus) or life (Dionysus) (Kerényi, 1963). The Romanian Mircea Eliade, another historian of religions invited by Jung to participate in his circle Eranos, wrote an important *Treatise of History of Religions* in which he organized the religious symbols of humanity on a vertical scale, from the sky and the stars to the earth and the underground (Eliade, 1964). The French Gaston Bachelard began as a philosopher of the sciences and finished by writing a series of "psychoanalyses" of the four elements of antiquity, earth, air, fire, and water, seen as the matrix of human fantasy (Bachelard, 1938, 1942, 1943, 1948).

Perhaps the most important thinker in this lineage is Gilbert Durand. In 1969, he published a most influential treatise, *The Anthropological Structures of Human Imaginary* (*Les structures anthropologiques de l'imaginaire*), in which he laid the basis for a paradigmatic system of cultural symbols. Starting from the main anthropological schemes and reflexes (vertical posture, digestion, and sexual function), he defined three "régimes" of the imaginary: the diurnal, the nocturnal, and the mystical (G. Durand, 1969). Latter on, in the '90s, he added to this structuralist morphology a diachronic and historical approach, in which he studied the evolution of cultural constellations of images and symbols through the concept of "semantic basins" (*bassins sémantiques*). He called his hermeneutics myth-odology (G. Durand, 1996). Recently, one of his disciples, Yves Durand, published a book of practical psychology in which he tries to demonstrate the existence of Durand's "régimes" of the imaginary through a set of tests called the AT.9 (Y. Durand, 2005).

Also in the '60s, Gilbert Durand founded the *Centre de recherche sur l'imaginaire*, in Grenoble, France, which gave the impulse for the creation of a series of similar research groups, first in France, then in other countries, primarily countries with Latin languages. Currently there are more than 50 such Centers for the Study of the Imaginary worldwide, in France, Spain, Portugal, Romania, Italy, Belgium, Switzerland, Poland, Czech Republic, Greece, Israel, Brazil, Argentina, Korea, etc. Among the most important contemporary scholars in this movement can be counted Claude-Gilbert Dubois, Jean-Jacques Wunenburger, Philippe Walter, Joël Thomas, Michel Maffesoli, Gerard Peylet, Allain Pessin, Lucian Boia, and others.

3. The third term describing fantasy, "*l'imaginal*", or "*mundus imaginalis*" (written in Latin), has its roots in an alternative tradition of the concept of imagination. Most surprisingly, Plato's philosophy, which depreciated images as copies of copies, also gave birth to another tradition, forged by his late disciple Plotinus in the 3rd century A.C.E. As is well known, Plotinus reorganized Plato's metaphysics in an emanation system, in which from the first principle, the One, derive, through successive emanations, the cosmic Intellect, the cosmic soul, and the material world. In this triadic system, the cosmic soul (*Anima mundi*) corresponds to the human psyche, and so to the human sentiments, passions, impulses and fantasy. Because of its consubstantiality to the *Anima mundi*, human imagination is no longer deprived, in Neo-Platonism, of ontological reality.

During the Middle Ages, while classical philosophy was "forgotten" in Europe, the Muslims inherited, among other classical concepts, the Neo-Platonist emanation system. In Sufi mysticism, there are three levels of reality: the intelligible world of the One, an intermediary world, in which intelligible beings appear as individual figures, and the sensible world of the body and matter. The intellectual reality is accessible to pure intellect, the intermediary reality to visionary imagination, and the material reality to the senses. Contrary to physiological imagination, which produces unreal fictions, the visionary imagination has access to a transcendent reality. Angels, heavens, cities of God, etc., described in mystical visions, are ontological manifestations of the One. In order to describe these meta-psychological representations, the French philosopher Henry Corbin, who studied extensively the mystic experiences of Persian Zoroastrians and of Shiite Muslims, called them *imaginables*, ontologically real, in opposition to *imaginaires*, fictitious. He also called the intermediary level of reality *mundus imaginalis* (Corbin, 1958).

Some of the Neo-Platonist and Sufi concepts also passed to Europe during the 12th-13th centuries. For example, in Miguel Asin Palacios demonstration, Dante's cosmology appears to have many parallelisms with Ibn Arabi's and other Muslim philosophers' systems. Still, the real rediscovery of Neo-Platonism took place during the Renaissance. The Platonic school in Florence, led by Marsilio Ficino, rediscovered Plato, Plotinus, and the Hermetic treatises and created an alternative philosophy to the Christian one. In this esoteric system, which structured the kabalistic, astrological, alchemical, and magical doctrines of the Renaissance, the second emanation, or the intermediary world (*Pneuma* or *Anima Mundi*), is the vehicle for all magical influences and operations. Exploiting the homogeneity between the individual soul and the Soul of the world, the magus was able to use his imagination in order to produce real events and phenomena in the world. Through his fantasy, called *vis imaginativa* (imaginative virtue) and *phantastikon pneuma* (fantastic soul), he could project and materialize his inner images (Coulano, 1984). In the Renaissance Neo-Platonism and hermetism, imagination had an ontological efficacy.

The Romantics revisited all the occult and mystical philosophies of the Renaissance. They attributed to fantasy the same demiurgic power. The human poet, the genius, was considered to have a demiurgic capacity of creation, and to be a competitor of God. He is a creator of micro-universes that are as real and as dense as the material one. The major differences between Neo-Platonist mystic and Romantic fantasy is that for the Romantics the movement of transcendence is not ascendant but descendant, not diurnal but nocturnal, not oriented toward the exterior but toward the interiority, not angelic but demonic. As the German philosopher Hamann puts it, "Only the knowledge of the self, a real descent to the inferno, can lead us to divinization" (Béguin, 1939). The change of the direction of these imaginary vectors was due to assigning the imagination to the "magical I" (or the "nocturnal I") glorified by the Romantics, which was to be called, a century latter, the unconscious.

Neoplatonic, Muslim, Renaissance, or Romantic fantasy has an *imaginal* quality: it can give material form and presence to incorporeal ideas and essences. *Mundus imaginalis* is a world of metaphysical images, having the same consistency and reality as the world of Platonic ideas. However, this definition is subject to some objections, especially now, after the "postmodern turn". In the context of contemporary attacks of relativism and skepticism on the metaphysical narratives and explanations, it is difficult to concede the value of Truth and Being to any concept and system proposed by speculative philosophy. The concepts of a transcendental *mundus imaginalis* and of an ontolog-

ical fantasy are difficult to prove and to sustain. In this circumstance, what could be the signification of the *imaginal* faculty?

Updating Neoplatonism to postmodern times, I would say that *mundus imaginalis* can be equated with what we call the icono-sphere or the imago-sphere. Contemporary society is evolving into a "global village" in which people from all over the world are provided, via media channels, with information on potentially every single event that takes place on Earth. Nevertheless, unlike in the traditional village, where the transmission of this information was direct, non-mediated, and interpersonal, in the global village the information is indirect, mediated, and transformed. The global advertising system, the worldwide movie distribution network, the newspapers and magazines, cable and satellite television, the Internet, all these media no longer supply "perceptive" images of remote people and events, but only "imaginary" images, processed in offices and studios. These inter-subjective or even objective images, which are produced collectively, form a kind of visual ecosystem. We live in an imago-sphere, as we also live in the atmosphere, in the biosphere, or in the noo-sphere. So we could safely assimilate the icono-sphere, the world of the images produced by the contemporary visual civilization, to a sort of "*mundus imaginalis*". This is why I would propose to down-grade and re-attribute Henry Corbin's metaphysical and mystical concept to the field of the global culture of images.

In order to conclude this brief survey of the main avatars of the concept of fantasy, I would like to focus on its relationship with religion. After the great disenchantment of modern thought, religious phenomena were customarily identified with products of fantasy. However, the question arises, with which of the three species of fantasy previously defined here ought religious phenomena to be identified? In this context, the distinction between these three species may prove beneficent not only for the definition and the historiography of the concept, but also for a better understanding of collective opinions about religious experience.

When related to imagination (in the restrictive sense defined at point 1), religion was consequently relegated to illusion and non-being. The systematic attack on imagination began in the seventeenth century. Nevertheless, the rationalist philosophers, Descartes, Spinoza, and also Thomas Browne, Francis Bacon, and Thomas Hobbes, did not plainly identify imagination with religion. They would rather associate the "divine light" (i.e. divine revelation) to reason, and distinguish between divine miracles (direct interventions of God in history) and false miracles and illusions perpetrated by charlatans and false prophets. Theology was secured by placing it together with science, in the field of reason.

This maneuver no longer seemed defensible once empirical philosophy emerged. With the introduction of the criterion of practical verification, religion could no longer be paired with science and truth. David Hume revisited Tillotson's argument that the evidence we have of Christian religion, as presented by the apostles, is less evident and immediate than the opposite evidence, offered by the experience of the senses. By dissociating religion from reason, John Locke and David Hume opened the way of associating it with false opinions, superstitions, marvels, and other errors of human understanding. This pairing of religion with the imagination was fatal for its credibility.

When related to "*l'imaginaire*", religion appears as a function of the human brain. It is no more a mere non-being, a "*néant*", although neither does it receive an ontological status. Imaginary phantasms are real as mental or psychic phenomena, but not as exter-

nal beings. Through the concept of "*imaginaire*", religion is to be explained as a constellation of mental patterns (or archetypes) generating a series of religious experiences and images. Jung would say that, as a psychiatrist, he is not qualified to say anything about the reality of God. What he can professionally say is that his patients do show and document the existence of an "*imago Dei*", an image of God present in the human psyche. And although Jungian psychology is somewhat out of fashion nowadays, the brand new discipline of neurotheology seems to demonstrate, with the aid of *sophisticated* brain-scanners, that certain areas of the brain are specific only to religious experiences.

Finally, when related to "*l'imaginal*", religion would claim its full ontological reality. "*Mundus imaginalis*", the transcendent world shown in mystical revelations, is no longer seen as an illusion, as a non-being, or as a mental phenomenon, but as a world out of our reach. Still, empirical evidence apparently cannot be brought in support of the theory of the actual existence of the supernatural. This is why the acceptance or the rejection of the "*mundus imaginalis*" remains mainly an act of faith. "*L'imaginal*" does not bring a theoretical testimony or proof for the subsistence of the sacred. Nonetheless, it linguistically evaluates it as ontologically real.

Literature

- Alberto Filipe Araújo & Fernando Paulo Baptista (coord.), *Variações sobre o imaginário. Domínios, teorizações, práticas hermenêuticas*, Lisbon, Instituto Piaget, 2003
- Gaston Bachelard, *La psychanalyse du feu*, Paris, Gallimard, 1938
- , *L'eau et les rêves*, Paris, José Corti, 1942
- , *L'air et les songes*, Paris, José Corti, 1943
- , *La terre et les reveries de la volonté*, Paris, José Corti, 1948
- Albert Béguin, *L'âme romantique et le rêve*, Paris, Corti, 1939
- Lucian Blaga, *Opere (Works)*, Bucharest, Minerva, vol. 7, 1980, vol. 8, 1983, vol. 9, 1985, vol. 10, 1987, vol. 11, 1988
- Lucian Boia, *Pour une histoire de l'imaginaire*, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1998
- Roger Caillois, *Approches de l'imaginaire*, Paris, Gallimard, 1974
- Ernst Cassirer, *La philosophie des formes symboliques. 3. La phénoménologie de la connaissance*, Traduction et index de Claude Fronty, Paris, Les Editions de Minuit, 1972
- Henry Corbin, *L'imagination créatrice dans le soufisme d'Ibn Arabi*, Paris, Flammarion, 1958
- Ioan Petru Couliano, *Eros et magie à la Renaissance. 1484*, Paris, Flammarion, 1984
- René Descartes, *Règles utiles et claires pour la direction de l'esprit en la recherche de la vérité*, Traduction selon le lexique cartésien, et annotation conceptuelle par Jean-Luc Marion, Avec des notes mathématiques de Pierre COSTABEL, La Haye, Martinus Nijhoff, 1977
- Claude-Gilbert Dubois, *L'imaginaire de la Renaissance*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1985
- Gilbert Durand, *Les structures anthropologiques de l'imaginaire*, Paris-Bruxelles-Montréal, Bordas, 1969
- , *Introduction à la mythodologie. Mythes et sociétés*, Paris, Albin Michel, 1996
- Yves Durand, *Une technique d'étude de l'imaginaire*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2005
- Mircea Eliade, *Traité d'histoire des religions*, Paris, Payot, 1964

Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, London, Hogarth Press, 1900

Wolfgang Iser, *The Fictive and the Imaginary*, Baltimore and London, The John Hopkins University Press, 1993

Carl Gustav Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1969

Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Translated by J.M.D. Meiklejohn, Introduction to the new edition by Andrew Fiala, New York, Barnes and Noble, 2004

Richard Kearney, *The Wake of Imagination*, London, Routledge, 1988

–, *Poetics of Imagining. Modern to post-modern*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1998

Carl Kerényi, *Prometheus. Archetypal Image of Human Existence*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1963

Paul Ricoeur, *La métaphore vive*, Paris, Seuil, 1975

Miguel Rojas Mix, *El imaginario. Civilización y cultura del siglo XXI*, Buenos Aires, Prometeos Libros, 2006

Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'imaginaire. Psychologie phénoménologique de l'imagination*, Paris, Gallimard, 1940

–, *L'être et le néant. Essai d'ontologie phénoménologique*, Paris, Gallimard, 1943

Baruch Spinoza, *Traité de la Réforme de l'Entendement*, Etablissement du texte, traduction, introduction et commentaires par Bernard ROUSSET, Paris, Librairie philosophique J. Vrin, 1992

Joël Thomas (ed.), *Introduction aux méthodologies de l'imaginaire*, Paris, Ellipses, 1998

H. Védrine, *Les grandes conceptions de l'imaginaire*, Paris, Gallimard, 1990

Jean-Jacques Wunenburger, *Philosophie des images*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1997

–, *La vie des images*, Grenoble, Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, 2002

–, *L'imaginaire*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 2003

ANDREEA-TEREZA NIȚȘOR

Speaking the Despicable: Blasphemy in Literature

Abstract:

This article examines the controversial issue of blasphemy in literature from the viewpoint of reception inside and outside the academia. The thesis of the article is that blasphemy in literature, though inherently related to religion and language, has a plurality of connotations and interpretations (dissidence, intertextuality, critique of colonialism, discursive strategy, alterity/Otherness, ethnicity, subversive text). Consequently, blasphemy in literature is an incentive for fruitful discussions regarding tolerance, freedom of expression, and the re-situation of the (post)modern self in today's world, dominated by an uncanny admixture of secular and religious values.

Andreea-
Tereza
Nițșor

English
Department,
"Al. I.
Cuza"
University
of Iasi,
România.



E-mail: terezaio@yahoo.co.uk

Key words:

blasphemy, literature, freedom of expression, secularism, postmodernism, subversive narratives

Blasphemy is an artistic effect, because blasphemy depends upon a philosophical conviction. Blasphemy depends upon belief and is fading with it. If any one doubts it, let him sit down seriously and try to think blasphemous thoughts about Thor.

(Gilbert Keith Chesterton¹)

...it may well be that the only scandal that remains in the postmodern world is that of religious seriousness.

(Malise Ruthven²)

An apple of discord and an always renewable source of irrepressible conflict between religious authorities, scholars and writers, blasphemy continues to be a transgressive notion, relativising the boundaries between literature, religion, and ideology. Whether intended as a direct or indirect attack on religious institutions or deployed in literature as a motif, discursive strategy, or subversive mechanism, what has been termed *blasphemy* emerges as the underpinning of an impressive number of fictional and philosophical works such as John Donne's *Biathanatos* (posthumously printed in 1647 by Donne's son), Thomas Paine's *The Age of Reason* (1794-1796), Ambrose Bierce's *The Devil's Dictionary* (1911³), Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita* (completed in 1940), Bertrand Russel's *Why I am not a Christian* (1957⁴), Naguib Mahfouz' *Children of Gebelawi* (1959), Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* (1988), José Saramago's *The Gospel According to Jesus Christ* (1991), and Norman Mailer's *The Gospel According to the Son* (1997), to randomly name just a few. In the past twenty-five years blasphemy has come under serious academic scrutiny outside the inherently religious context⁵, being analysed and correlated with other major postcolonial and (post)modern concerns such as Otherness/Alterity, ethnicity (and implicit critique of colonialism⁶), dissidence, iden-

tity, freedom of speech, and tolerance.

The purpose of this article is to show that blasphemy, although a religious concept, has not been confined to a religious context but, on the contrary, it has been rather successfully used as a charge against writers and thinkers as recently as the twenty-first century. Whilst it is beyond reasonable doubt that literature belongs to the realm of aesthetics and not to that of religion, sometimes the two realms intersect. The situation becomes particularly problematic when aesthetics and religion clash and such cherished secular values as the judicial system is the impact area. Blasphemy laws still exist in the penal codes of many countries⁷, including European states that boast secular democratic values, and where there is a legal basis for the charge of blasphemy, writers, artists, philosophers and scholars can be prosecuted for what is essentially a religious crime. Consequently, what is at stake is nothing less than such highly praised notions as freedom of speech and autonomy of art. Under these circumstances, blasphemy has come under academic scrutiny since the second half of the twentieth century not only as a verbal offense against what is deemed sacred, but also as a question of freedom of expression.

Since this freedom is a prerequisite for writers, I shall focus on blasphemy in literature, particularly as there has been a significant increase in the number of literary works for whose publication their authors have been accused of blasphemy. The relatively recent controversies and violent incidents (including murder and the destruction of property⁸) triggered by “blasphemy cases” involving writers prove that blasphemy is not a mere modernist and postmodernist cliché, but a serious issue with surprising implications and upshots.⁹

Scholarly studies such as Leonard W. Levy’s *Treason Against God: A History of the Offense of Blasphemy* (1981) and *Verbal Offence Against the Sacred, from Moses to Salman Rushdie* (1993), David Lawton’s *Blasphemy* (1993), Marjorie Heins’ *Sex, Sin and Blasphemy: A Guide to America’s Censorship Wars* (1993), Joss March’s *Word Crimes: Blasphemy, Culture, and Literature in Nineteenth-Century England* (1998), David S. Nash’s *Blasphemy in Modern Britain: 1789 to the Present* (1999), Neville Cox’s *Blasphemy and the Law in Ireland* (2000), Abdullah and Hassan Saeed’s *Freedom of Religion, Apostasy, and Islam* (2004), and S. Brent Plate’s *Blasphemy: Art That Offends* (2006), among many others, approach the hotly-debated issue of blasphemy from a variety of standpoints – historical, secular, ethical, literary, etc. Whether incisive or mildly cautious, these works testify to the emergence of blasphemy as one of the trademarks of the postmodern *Zeitgeist*, one more reason (if such a reason was requisite) to include blasphemy in Religious Studies curricula and to investigate it as a complex phenomenon that transgresses religious fundamentalism. While blasphemy cannot be separated from the religious context in which it emerges, its implications reach far beyond the confines of religion.

This is all the more so since the concept of blasphemy is inextricably linked both with religion and with language, with all the predicaments this double “affiliation” entails. As the *New Oxford Dictionary of English* (1998) shows, unlike heresy, which is doctrinal, blasphemy is mainly textual, of linguistic rather than ideological nature.¹⁰

In Michel Foucault’s view, the entire religious, sexual, and magical series of blasphemous words falls under an *interdiction of articulation*.¹¹ John Wright, a Unitarian minister charged with blasphemy in 1817, replied:

Blasphemy is a word of such terrible sound that it frightens men of weak mind and

weak nerves. It has been applied so variously, that all who make use of it attach their own signification... Blasphemy is essentially rhetorical... Blasphemy stands for whatever a society most abhors and has the power to prosecute. It is a form of religious vituperation against those who have transgressed the timeless truths that a society most cherishes.¹²

Distrust in language itself is part of the etymological development of the word *blasphemy*. The terms *blasphemy* and *blaspheme* are Late Greek (*blasphemein*, from *blasphemos* “evil-speaking”) and remain largely inactive until they are used in the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew verbs *nakob* and *qillel*, “to pronounce aloud” and, respectively, “to curse”, in classic formulation of the Mosaic law of blasphemy in *Leviticus 24*. In Greek it functions as the opposite of the more common religious word *euphemizein* “use auspicious words” (from which *euphemize* and *euphemism* are derived), although in English the opposite of *euphemism* is *dysphemism*.¹³ The Jewish and Christian traditions are uniquely logocentric in believing that the most abominable form of profanation is the linguistic one, and the Christian notion of blasphemy is the first to be so extensive and supreme. As late as the twentieth century the *Catholic Encyclopedia* defines blasphemy as “a mortal sin, the gravest that may be committed against religion”.¹⁴

Historically, the religious and social punishments and sentences have undergone dramatic changes. Nevertheless, the abuses and violence committed by the clergy in the Middle Ages still strike the contemporary mind as instances of extreme intolerance. G. G. Coulton proposes an interesting justification for the persecution of the blasphemers and “heretics” in the Middle Ages. The British scholar argues that the “Apocalyptic spirit” that dominated the age is responsible for the gruesome abuses of the medieval epoch:

It is difficult to realize the extent to which medieval minds were influenced by Apocalyptic ideas, and the haunting fear of Antichrist and Last Judgement at any moment. St Thomas More himself was inclined to believe that those must be imminent in his own day.¹⁵

Even great theologians and Christian philosophers like St Augustine went as far as to assert that “whatever knowledge man has acquired outside the Holy Writ, if it be harmful is there condemned; if it be wholesome it is there contained”.¹⁶

Indeed, as Coulton notes, St Augustine’s idea is strikingly similar to the words ascribed by tradition to Caliph Omar Ibn al Kattab¹⁷, by which he condemned to the flames, in 642 A.D., the Library of Alexandria: “If all those volumes contain that which is written in the Koran, they are superfluous; if anything contrary, then they are mischievous: burn them all.”¹⁸

Unfortunately, bibliopyromania beset Christian authorities as well. In 1236 Pope Gregory IX condemned the *Talmud* as blasphemy against the Christian dogma. In 1242 in Paris thousands of *Talmuds* were confiscated and burned publicly in Place de Grève.¹⁹ Moreover, many Christians executed for holding “unacceptable” views on Christianity²⁰ as, under the “totalitarian tenets” of the Church, “theological differences were in themselves sufficient to bring a man to the stake.”²¹

The Church was the main institution responsible for censorship until the rise of totalitarian regimes, and the number of books and periodicals banned on account of religious differences is staggering. A history of blasphemy in literature is, of course, beyond

the scope of this article, but I could give just a few examples: Michael Servetus was burnt for publishing *De Trinitas Erroribus* (1531), a book considered blasphemous and heretical; Thomas Paine's *The Age of Reason* (published in 1794) was labelled blasphemous and the author was forced to leave America and return to Europe²²; for publishing *The Necessity of Atheism* Shelley was dismissed from Oxford in 1811, and his *Queen Mab* was prosecuted for blasphemy in 1842 (Shelley was long dead but the publisher was convicted); Charles Southwell (1814-1860) was prosecuted for a blasphemous denunciation of the Bible – in the periodical *Oracle of Reason* –, which he described as “that revoltingly odious Jew production”²³, and was sentenced to a year in gaol; Joyce's *Ulysses* was banned or charged with obscenity, or, where obscenity failed, with irreligion, successfully in Britain, and unsuccessfully in the United States; on February 14, 1989 Ayatollah Khomeini declared Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* blasphemous, and passed a death sentence against the author and all those involved in the publishing of the book; José Saramago's *O Evangelho segundo Jesus Cristo* (1991) was deemed blasphemous and its author was forced to leave Portugal and move to Spain (moreover, for the same reason, in 1998 the Pope objected to Saramago's being awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature); in 1977, Denis Lemon, the editor of *Gay News* was found guilty of for publishing James Kirkup's poem *The Love that Dares to Speak its Name*, and was fined £500 and sentenced to a suspended sentence of nine months imprisonment. Curiously, rewritings of the Old Testament are not considered *loci classici* of blasphemy. Julian Barnes' novel *A History of the World in 10¹⁰ Chapters* (1989), which presents the story of Noah and the Flood from the viewpoint of a woodworm, was never interpreted as blasphemous, although Noah is portrayed as a tyrannical and whimsy patriarch with very few, if at all, holy things about him. Barnes' novel is a perfect example of parodic desacralization, but one that escaped acid debates and religious dilemmas.

Whereas such books as the ones enumerated above are studied at major universities throughout the world, the sensitive issue they touch upon or explore at length, blasphemy, is not particularly popular with Religious Studies (especially in Romania), even though some of the excellent tomes on this topic were published by scholars who teach Religious Studies (David A. Lawton, S. Brent Plate, Abdullah Saeed et al.). The Church representatives have heterogeneous - even discordant - views on “blasphemous books”. While the Diocese of Braga, for instance, declared Saramago's novel “blasphemous”, a Dominican cleric contended that *The Gospel According to Jesus Christ* would “awake” the Portuguese people from their “theological lethargy”, and the Diocese of Porto praised the book for the same reasons.²⁴ In a similar vein, Norman Mailer, author of *The Gospel According to the Son* (published six years after Saramago's novel), explains what prompted him to write the book:

Since nothing is more important to half of all Americans than the Gospels, I thought it was worth posing the theme dramatically.²⁵

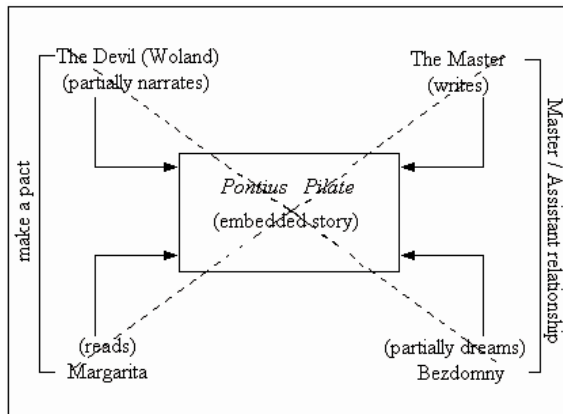
On the other hand, many Muslim theologians and all Muslim fundamentalists have a far more radical view on blasphemy. The “Rushdie Affair” was not an isolated incident; citation of Mahfouz' *Children of Gebelawi* in the Swedish Academy's declaration of award of the Nobel Prize to Naguib Mahfouz in 1988 enraged Muslim fundamentalists and, shortly after the Rushdie Affair had erupted, the then leading fundamentalist Omar Abd al-Rahman (currently imprisoned in the United States for his role in the September 11th attacks) declared that had they killed Mahfouz in 1959 for having writ-

ten *Children of Gebelawi*, Rushdie would have never dared write his novel [*The Satanic Verses*].²⁶ On October 13, 2002, BBC correspondent from Dhaka, Moazzem Hossain, related that the Bangladeshi feminist writer Taslima Nasrin had been given one-year prison sentence on a charge of writing derogatory comments about Islam in several of her books (*Lajja* (Shame), *My Childhood Days* and *Wild Wind*)²⁷. Nasrin had been tried in her absence by a magistrate court in Gopalganj (a hundred kilometres from the capital Dhaka). Her books have been banned after Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's government charged her (1994) with blasphemy for some of her controversial comments about Islam. The same year (on July 14, 1994) the *New York Times* published Salman Rushdie's open letter to Taslima Nasrin, ensuring her of his and other writers' (such as Milan Kundera, Mario Vargas Llosa, and Czesław Miłosz) support. Rushdie wrote:

How sad it must be to believe in a God of blood! What an Islam they have made, these apostles of death, and how important it is to have the courage to dissent from it! ... You have spoken out about the oppression of women under Islam, and what you said needed saying.²⁸

Despite some obvious ideological implications, blasphemy in literature is mainly (but not exclusively, as postcolonialist literary works show²⁹ that blasphemy is part of the process of cultural anamnesis³⁰, a prerequisite for historical and cultural 'recovery' from the traumatic experience of colonialism) a discursive strategy, a narrative artifice employed to defamiliarize readers.³¹ One instance of such deployment of blasphemy as artifice is exemplified by Mikhail Bulgakov's masterpiece *The Master and Margarita* (completed in 1940, shortly before the writer's death, and published by his wife twenty-six years later; censored by the Soviet regime, the book circulated underground, as *samizdat*). With a flamboyant narrative architecture, Bulgakov's novel is a *mélange* of fantastic ingredients, esoteric elements, intertextual allusions, metatextual references, blasphemy, folk beliefs, Christian Orthodox dogma, literary clichés, and erudite innuendos. The Russian novelist gives a heterodox account of the birth of Christianity (as Saramago and Mailer would give more than half a century later, and as Rushdie would produce a heterodox account of the beginnings of Islam), by no means liable to accusations of blasphemy. Bulgakov envisions nothing less than a *gospel according to the devil*. The main technique is that of *mise-en-abyme*: within *The Master and Margarita* (the frame story) there is the embedded story of Pilate, which is a story written by the Master (named Faust in some earlier versions), partially narrated by the Devil (Woland³²), partially dreamed by Bezdomny (the Master's assistant), and read by Margarita (the Master's lover). The narrative design could be graphically represented as follows:

The Master and Margarita
(frame story)



The interrupted lines mark the other relationships between the characters, in addition to those already highlighted in the graphic representation of the novel. The Devil, who could be interpreted as the true protagonist of the story, introduces himself, from the very first chapter, as “Professor of black magic”³³ and casually tells Bezdomny and Berlioz – who were having an argument about the existence of Jesus – that he had just had breakfast with Immanuel Kant. The German philosopher is known for having found the sixth argument for the existence of God – after he had dismissed the other five as false. The Devil finds fault with Kant’s argument, and brings his own:

The fact is ... I was there myself. On the balcony with Pontius Pilate, in the garden when he talked to Caiaphas, and near the gallows, but secretly, incognito so to speak... (Bulgakov, 47-48)

In the Devil’s account, Jesus-Yeshua, surnamed Ha-Notsri, is a frightened man. During Pilate’s interrogation, he says he had been wrongly accused, as his words had been “untruthfully” transcribed by Matthew the Levite. This entails that the “truth” had been distorted, history had been fictionalized by Matthew, and that his gospel is a gross perversion of “reality.” In other words, the versatile narrator of *The Master and Margarita* “blasphemously” implies that the New Testament is a misrepresentation, a forgery, mere fiction.

The Devil’s account of Christ’s trial could be considered an original *Gospel According to the Devil*. Yet, by means of a subtle narrative shift, the story of Yeshua and Pilate as narrated by the Devil becomes part of the fiction created by the intuitive and insightful Master. The Master writes a novel about Pontius Pilate imagining the characters, the setting, the events and the dialogue in the exact way the Devil recounted them. Blasphemy here (as in Rushdie’s case) is part of a strategy of deliberate mystification of the readers by means of an intricate narrative stratagem: the Devil, who tells a blasphemous story about Jesus, is apparently a reliable authority, since he is supposed to have witnessed the events as they occurred; however, the Devil is “the Prince of Lies,” the antonym of “truth,” the classic trickster never-to-be-trusted, which is to say the Devil is *the archetype of the unreliable narrator*. Moreover, Woland’s account is part of the fiction concocted by the Master – who is “accommodated” in a mental institution – which, in turn, is embedded in another fiction, *The Master and Margarita*. The Master wants his novel to end with the phrase “Procurator of Judea, fifth in that office, the knight Pontius Pilate,” which is the final sentence of the excipit of *The Master and Margarita*.

The two intertwined narratives, both constructed around blasphemous topics (the

myth of Faust in *The Master and Margarita*, and a heterodox rewriting of the Gospels in Pilate), are linked by the presence of Satan. As in Saramago's *Gospel* and Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*, the Devil in Bulgakov's novel is an ambiguous figure, best characterised by the epigraph (from Goethe's *Faust*) that stands as a motto for Bulgakov's novel:

„Say at last—who art thou?”
 „That Power I serve
 Which wills forever evil
 Yet does forever good.”³⁴

The same lines are quoted in Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*, though in a slightly different form – “Who art thou, then? / Part of that Power, not understood, / Which always wills the Bad, and always works the Good”.³⁵

Bulgakov's Satan is a powerful, entertaining and vengeful creature, punishing communists, atheists, bureaucrats, and the Muscovites who are complacent with an ordinary life and afflicted with moral lethargy. He brings justice in a world corrupted by the Stalinist regime, and tries to persuade people of the existence of God and of the necessity of faith. Bulgakov (again, like Saramago and Rushdie would do half a century later) advocates the dialectical relationship between Good and Evil, between God and Satan. Thus, the Devil becomes *necessary* because Evil is a mechanistic requisite for Good in Bulgakov's view (a Manichean idea). Bulgakov's Devil never utters injurious words against God; on the contrary, he assumes the role of Christ's advocate right from the beginning of the novel. However, it is Matthew the Levite who rebels against God, cursing and blaspheming.

The Master and Margarita is intertextually built on Goethe's *Faust*, but Bulgakov finds an original expression for the Faustian myth. The chief technique is parody intermingled with ironic inversions and reversions. It is not the Master who makes a pact with Satan in exchange for knowledge and gratification; in Bulgakov's burlesque of the medieval myth, Margarita is the one who, out of love for the Master, assents to transacting with the Devil. Metamorphosed into a witch, Margarita avenges the Master's humiliation, persecution, and rejection. Like the *Faust* witches, she flies on a broomstick around Moscow, naked and invisible at will.

Perhaps the most offending element for Christians is the parody of transubstantiation – baron Meigel's blood is transformed into wine and drunk during Satan's feast. Parody functions at other levels as well: whereas in Goethe's *Faust* there is divine intercession, in *The Master and Margarita* it is the devil's intercession. Although the narrative contrivance is the same, *deus ex machina* or, in Bulgakov's case, *diabolum ex machina*, there is a reversal: the supernatural forces do not intervene with the exclusive purposes of *saving* characters and *solving* the problems. Woland and his accomplices interfere with the lives of the Muscovites in order to save the Master's manuscript – though not his life – and mostly to punish the wicked.

Furthermore, there are other subtle implications in Bulgakov's fictional discourse. As stated in the opening epigraph, Satan is part of “that Power,” a mysterious signifier without a clear signified. Yet, the novel has a distinct political dimension and it is pervaded with criticism of all forms of power, perceived as essentially corrupting. Foucauldian *avant la lettre*, Bulgakov's Jesus maintains that

All power is a form of violence exercised over people ... (Bulgakov, 33)

Again as in Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* and Saramago's *Gospel*, in *The Master and Margarita* the chief effect achieved is *carnivalization*.³⁶ Bulgakov's novel is, in fact, a Menippean satire, mingling humour, parody and satire with philosophical topics, comical discussions, subversive narratives, esoteric knowledge, folklore, demonology, and intertextual references – to Goethe, the Bible, Pushkin, Tacitus, Kant, Lermontov, Gogol, Cervantes, Dostoevsky, *Apocrypha* (*The Gospel According to Nicodemus*), etc. The text displays an impressive narrative sorcery and the two stories merge, literally insinuating that between reality and fiction there is only an elusive, almost evanescent border. Blasphemy in *The Master and Margarita* is a means of carnivalization and, at the same time, a form of dialogue with the fundamental texts of the Christian world (although subverting the grand/master/metanarrative³⁷ of Christianity). The parody here is not directed at the faithful; on the contrary, it is form of criticizing atheist claims and fallacies. Bulgakov's polemic is not with Christian faith but with *history*, perceived as subjective, contrived. Matthew the Levite is the fallible "untruthful" historian, and *Pontius Pilate* denounces the traditional claims that the Scripture is historically accurate.

As proven in this analysis of Bulgakov's novel, blasphemy in literature is more than plentiful food for thought. Although easily liable to misinterpretation outside the confinements of academic studies (and sometimes even inside), blasphemy in literature is, implicitly, a dissimulated appeal to tolerance, and a powerful assertion of the essential freedom of speech a writer should enjoy. It is perhaps symptomatic that no Romanian scholar has undertaken a systematic study of blasphemy.³⁸

Notes

1. Gilbert Keith Chesterton, *Heretics* (1905), Chapter 1, "Introductory Remarks on the Importance of Orthodoxy", text available at <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/470> (13.02.2007).

2. Malise Ruthven, *A Satanic Affair: Salman Rushdie and the Rage of Islam*, Chatto, London, 1990, p. 48. The book was republished in 1991 as *A Satanic Affair: Salman Rushdie and the Wrath of Islam*.

3. The *Devil's Dictionary* was first published in a partial form in 1906, with the title *The Cynic's Word Book*, "a name which the author had not the power to reject nor the happiness to approve" (Ambrose Bierce, "Preface" to *The Devil's Dictionary* of 1911, in Ambrose Bierce, *The Enlarged Devil's Dictionary* (1967), Research and editing by Ernest Jerome Hopkins, Penguin Books, 2001, p. 27.

4. A lecture entitled "Why I am not a Christian" was delivered by Bertrand Russell in Battersea Town Hall (South London) on March 6, 1927.

5. An interesting and much-needed scholarly article about blasphemy jurisprudence in the United States is Sarah Barringer Gordon's *Blasphemy and the Law of Religious Liberty in Nineteenth-Century America* (*American Quarterly*, Vol. 52, No. 4, December 2000, pp. 682-719). Professor Gordon notes that "While blasphemy jurisprudence remains a largely overlooked piece of American legal history, those historians who have studied the case law have dismissed it as a meaningless vestige of English law or attacked it as a blatant violation of civil liberties. (...) Through the investigation of the controversies that gave rise to blasphemy prosecutions, we recover a richer sense of the history of constitutional law and theory, as well as a view of religious dissent that is oth-

erwise screened from historians' gaze" (683-684). Although blasphemy is a religious concept, as the cases of writers accused of blasphemy by various institutions other than the Church prove, and as Professor Gordon shows, "the reasoning and doctrines that underlie blasphemy opinions have survived" in the twenty-first century (684).

6. See A. Lawson and C. Tiffin (eds.), *Describing Empire: Postcolonialism and Textuality*, Routledge, London, 1994. Lawson and Tiffin contend that „Just as fire can be fought by fire, textual control can be fought by textuality... The post-colonial is especially and pressingly concerned with the power that resides in discourse and textuality; its resistance, then, quite appropriately takes place in – and from – the domain of textuality, in (among other things) motivated acts of reading" (p. 10). Also, David Lawton maintains that "... the discourse of blasphemy and that of colonialism are ... related: practically, it is a conviction that native cultures are blasphemous per se that silently licensed their destruction" (David Lawton, *Blasphemy*, Harvester Wheatsheaf, London, 1993, p. 42).

7. Some countries in which there still exist blasphemy laws include: Austria (Articles 188, 189 of the penal code), Finland (Section 10 of chapter 17 of the penal code – unsuccessful attempts were made to rescind the law in 1914, 1917, 1965, 1970 and 1998 –), Germany (Article 166 of the penal code) – on February 23, 2006 Manfred van H. was convicted of "defamation of religious convictions in a manner suitable to disturb the public peace", under Article 166 of the German Penal Code, a controversial article called the "blasphemy clause" –, The Netherlands (Article 147 of the penal code), Spain (Article 525 of the penal code), Switzerland (Article 261 of the penal code), Denmark (Paragraph 140 of the penal code – was up to revision in 2004, but failed to gain majority). Cf. (19.04.2007).

8. See, for instance, „The Rushdie Affair”.

9. I shall not refer to Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* as a relevant example of blasphemy in literature for at least two reasons: firstly, Dan Brown's thriller is a perfect example of cheap commercial literature of no literary virtue, the literary equivalent of fast food; secondly, the claims made in *The Da Vinci Code* are not original and the historical background inaccurate and distorted, despite the author's statements.

10. The definition of blasphemy given in the *New Oxford Dictionary of English*, Edited by Judy Pearsall (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1998), is: "the action or offense of speaking sacrilegiously about God or sacred things; profane talk". Also, for an excellent contrastive discussion of blasphemy and heresy, see Lawton 1993, pp. 3-5 et passim.

11. Cf. Michel Foucault, "Nebunia, absența operei", in *Theatrum philosophicum. Studii, eseuri, interviuri* (1963-1984), trad. de Bogdan Ghiu (Casa Cărții de știință, Cluj Napoca, 2001), p. 52.

12. Apud David Lawton 1993, pp. 2-3.

13. Cf. Liddell and Scott's Greek Lexicon, quoted in David Lawton 1993, p. 14. Also, for the pair euphemism – dysphemism, see *The New Oxford Dictionary of English*.

14. Apud David Lawton 1993, p. 6.

15. G. G. Coulton, *Medieval Panorama*, vol. II., *Horizons of Thought*, (First Edition: Cambridge University Press, 1938), Collins, The Fontana Library, London & Glasgow, 1961, p. 70.

16. Quoted in G. G. Coulton 1961, p. 70.

17. Cf. Andrei Oișteanu, „O istorie a bibliocidului”, in *Mythos și Logos. Studii și eseuri de antropologie culturală*, Nemira, București, 1998, p. 313.

18. Cf. G. G. Coulton 1961, p. 70.

19. Cf. Andrei Oișteanu 1998, p. 316.

20 See Ioan Petru Culianu, *Gnozele dualiste ale Occidentului. Istorie și mituri*, Ediția a doua, Trad. de Tereza Culianu-Petrescu, Polirom, Iași, 2002.

21. G. G. Coulton 1961, p. 98.

22. In *A Chronology of the Life and Work of Thomas Paine* Edward J. Dodson notes that Paine's *The Age of Reason*, completed in 1793, was an "attack on established religion" and was "condemned (on both sides of the Atlantic) as an atheistic manifesto, although what it really condemns is the influence of organized religion. Similar views are quietly held by Jefferson, Franklin, Adams and others. Paine challenged the Bible as a book of second hand tales interpreted and rewritten to serve those who sought to put themselves between the individual and their god" (13.04.2007). Nevertheless, Theodore Roosevelt denounces Paine as a "filthy little atheist" (Quoted in George Perkins and Barbara Perkins, *The American Tradition in Literature* (Instructor's Manual), Shorter Edition in One Volume, The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., 1999, p. 69), while Philip S. Foner believes that Paine "was doing for the English world what had already been done in France by men like Voltaire and Diderot. Moreover, he was doing what Jefferson had advised his nephew Peter Carr to do as early as August 10, 1787. 'Fix reason firmly in her seat,' wrote Jefferson in his letter of advice, 'and call to her tribunal every fact, every opinion. Question with boldness even the existence of a God; because if there be one, He must more approve of the homage of reason, than that of blindfold fear. You will naturally examine first, the religion of your own country. Read the Bible, then, as you would read Livy or Tacitus. . . . Your own reason is the only oracle given you by heaven, and you are answerable, not for the rightness, but the uprightness of the decision'" (Philip S. Foner (ed.), *Thomas Jefferson: Selections from His Writings*, p. 76, quoted at (13.04.2007).

23. Cf. Edward Royle, *Secularists and Rationalists, 1800-1940*, in Sheridan Gilley and W. J. Sheils (eds.), *A History of Religion in Britain: Practice and Belief from Pre-Roman Times to the Present*, Oxford (UK) and Cambridge (USA): Blackwell, 1994, p. 410.

24. Cf. Mioara Caragea's "Evanghelia eretică a lui José Saramago", the preface to *Evanghelia după Isus Cristos*, trad. de Mioara Caragea, Univers, București, 1999, p. 10.

25. Cf. Barbara Probst Solomon, *Struggling with God: A Conversation with Norman Mailer*, "Culturefront," vol. 6, #3, <http://www.culturefront.org/culturefront/magazine/98/winter/article.8.html> (20.03.2000).

26. Cf. Sabry Hafez's comprehensive article published in "New Left Review" (2000) at <http://www.newleftreview.net/NLR23908.shtml> (20.01.2003).

27. Cf. the BBC News October 13, 2002 report at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/2324245.stm (22.01.2003).

28. Cf. Salman Rushdie's open letter to Taslima Nasrin at <http://www.umiacs.umd.edu/users/sawweb/sawnet/news/nasrin.html#rushdie> (22.01.2003).

29. See, for instance, Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) for the African experience of colonialism, Rudolfo Anaya's novel *Bless Me, Ultima* (1972) for the Chicano identity conundrum, Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* (1977) for the aftermath of imperialism on the Native-Americans, Alice Walker's *The color Purple* (1982) and Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) for the African-American ordeal caused by slavery, and Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981) and *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995) for the Indian colonial encounter with British imperialism.

30. Cf. Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*, Edinburgh

University Press, Edinburgh, 1998, p. 48 et passim.

31. The concept of “defamiliarization” (ostranenie, “making strange”) was introduced by the Russian Formalist Victor Shklovsky in the essay *Art as Device* (1917). He claims that the habitual nature of everyday experience makes perception trite and automatic, but art enables us to ‘see’ things afresh: “art exists that one may recover the sensation of life ... The technique of art is to make objects ‘unfamiliar’, to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object; the object is not important.” (Quoted in Peter Childs and Roger Fowler, *The Routledge Dictionary of Literary Terms* (1973, 1987), Routledge, London and New York, 2006, pp. 93-94). For defamiliarization, see also Chris Baldick, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York, 1990.

32. In Goethe’s *Faust* there is a reference to a demonic Junker Voland (“Platz! Junker Voland kommt. Platz!”). Thus, the name Woland is an intertextual reference to Faust.

33. Cf. Mikhail Bulgakov, *Maestrul și Margareta*, trad. de Natalia Radovici, postf. de Ion Vartic, Univers, București, 1995, p. 19. All subsequent references are to this edition.

34. The English version of Goethe’s epigraph is available at <http://www.davar.net/EXTRACTS/FICTION/NEVRTALK.HTM> (13.02.2006).

35 Salman Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses* (1988), Vintage, Great Britain, 1998, p. 417.

36. Chris Baldick explains Bakhtin’s concept of carnivalization as “the liberating and subversive influence of popular humour on the literary tradition, according to the theory propounded by the Russian linguist Mikhail Bakhtin in his works *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* (1929) and *Rabelais and his World* (1965). Bakhtin argued that the overturning of hierarchies in popular carnival – its mingling of the sacred with the profane, the sublime with the ridiculous – lies behind the most ‘open’ (dialogic or polyphonic) literary genres, notably Menippean satire and the novel, especially since the Renaissance. Carnalized literary forms allow alternative voices to dethrone the authority of official culture...” in Chris Baldick 1990, p. 30.

37. The term was coined by Jean-Francois Lyotard in *La Condition postmoderne. Rapport sur le savoir* (1979; translated into English in 1984), in which he says: ‘simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodern as incredulity toward metanarratives’ (emphasis in the original). In this seminal study, Lyotard interrogates the “foundationalist” project of Western civilization and argues that its main strategy, the appeal to grand narratives (constructs that serve to legitimize, authorize cultural practices and institutions) has reached a point of crisis, and are now groundless and indefensible. Cf. Jean-Francois Lyotard, *Condiția postmoderna. Raport asupra cunoașterii*, traducere de Ciprian Mihali, Editura Babel, București, 1993, p. 15 and Jean-Francois Lyotard, ‘Answering the Question: What Is Postmodernism?’ in Thomas Docherty (ed.), *Postmodernism: A Reader*, Harvester Wheatsheaf, London, 1993, pp. 38-39.

38. An interesting study, though not on blasphemy but on curse, is Dan Horia Mazilu’s *O istorie a blestemului*, Polirom, Iași, 2001.

TUDOR PITULAC
SEBASTIAN NĂSTUȚĂ

Choosing to be Stigmatized: Rational calculus in religious conversion

Abstract:

Starting with an empirical study of several Jehovah's Witnesses¹ congregations we aim to highlight the social mechanisms of religious conversion and the phases an individual passes through before becoming a Witness. By applying Lewis Rambo's systemic stage model of conversion we are able to identify a series of elements that characterize the conversion to this religion in Romania, such as: social filtering, delegitimation of the previous religion, and incipient identification with the Witnesses' group. The article asserts that the Witnesses' decision to convert implies the deliberate assumption of the others' disapproval and even social stigmatization. Nevertheless they opt for this religious status because the immediate benefits brought by the religious community and the future benefits of the earthly Heaven offer them sufficient motives for becoming Witnesses.

Religious conversion – approaches to the phenomenon from the per- spective of the social sciences

Religious conversion or the change of one's religious affiliation is significant not only to theology and religious studies but also to psychology, sociology, and anthropology. More than the adhesion to a different religious group, conversion also implies the assumption of a new set of norms and values and even the adoption of a new lifestyle that may lead to the stigmatization of the individual by social groups.² The social sciences have approached the religious behavior of men since the classical stage of their development. Conversion was, at the beginning, a distinct chapter in the empirical and theoretical studies of psychology and psychiatry. Early approaches – highly influenced by theological explanations – regarded conversion as an individual rather than social phenomenon. Even though he insists upon the uniqueness of conversion experiences, William James' approach should be seen as a metaphorical comprehension of a psychological phenomenon – through a sociological fact that stresses the social elements in conversion (Leone, 2003).³

In the 1960s, within the context of the unprecedented development of New Religious Movements, American sociologists focused their attention on conversion and

Tudor Pitulac

Lecturer, Ph.D.

Faculty of Psychology,
Sociology and Social Work,
'Petre Andrei' University of Iași,
Romania.

Author of the book:

*The Domestic Violence in a
Transitional Society. A study on
Iasi City (2002).*

Co-author of the books:

*Managementul proiectelor de
dezvoltare din perspectivă insti-
tuțională, (2004), Concepte și
modele în știința politică (2001).*
Email: tudorpitulac@yahoo.com

Sebastian Năstuță

Research assistant

Faculty of Psychology,
Sociology and Social Work,
'Petre Andrei' University of Iași,
Romania.

E-mail:

sebastian.nastuta@gmail.com

Key words:

Religious conversion, Jehovah's
Witnesses, Rational calculus,
Subjective rationality, commit-
ment, social stigmatization

tried to explain the adherence of young people to Oriental-based religious groups. In 1965, when John Lofland and Rodney Stark published *Becoming a World-Saver: A Theory of Conversion to a Deviant Perspective*, they were exploring virgin territory. This model was developed based on the analysis of the first group of members of the Unification Church in the United States (Richardson, 1985).⁴

Lofland and Stark (1965) emphasized six factors that are crucial in order to transform a prospect into a verbal convert and then into a full convert.⁵ According to their research, the path to conversion usually involves passing through an experience likely to make him feel a certain tension (relative frustration), having a religious perspective on solving problems, being/seeing himself as a religious seeker,⁶ and finally meeting the members of the Divine Principles group⁷ at a turning point in life. The recruit develops social bonds with one or several members of the group. The latter are trying to minimize the recruit's involvement with people outside of the religious group. In brief, a potential member is exposed to intense interaction with the group (Lofland, Stark, 1965). While trying to apply this model, other researchers discovered its limits. Some stages could not be applied to certain religious groups while new elements appeared that were not to be found in the model. Establishing affective bonds with the members of the group and frequent interaction with them seem to be the only preconditions essential to conversion in general, as shown by Greil and Rudy (1984); the other elements are variable.

The theoretical trend opened by the two authors led to the drawing up of at least three stage models of religious conversion: the model proposed by James Beckford in his work *The Trumpet of Prophecy. A Sociological Study of Jehovah's Witness* (1975), which analyses the Jehovah's Witnesses' conversion in England; the model of conversion to the occult proposed by Frederick R. Lynch (1978); and the systemic stage model proposed by Lewis Rambo (1993). Even if they are visibly different in content such models may be included into what some authors name the active paradigm of religious conversion (Richardson, 1985).⁸ These models stress the active role played by the individual in his own conversion. Individuals are volitional beings who opt for a specific religion without being compelled to do so.

Conversion as a religious and social option

The title of our article, *Choosing to be stigmatized*, suggests the voluntary nature of the resolutions made from the moment someone decides to carry out a Bible study with the Jehovah's Witnesses until he begins to preach from door to door the message of this religious group and in spite every contestation and the opposition of his family, friends, and everybody he approaches in order to 'preach the Truth'.⁹

At the level of Romanian public opinion, the conversion of an Orthodox Christian to another religion is viewed from the perspective of several prejudices. This is particularly true in the case of a highly visible religious group which is frequently engaged in doctrinarian disputes with other groups. A series of interviews with students from the Faculty of Theology allowed us to highlight some of the prejudices that accompany, as a rule, the interpretations regarding someone's religious conversion.¹⁰

I think that the only thing that attracts people to these sects is money (...) they don't know the doctrine the others preach (...) they want something new that

would make them happier (...) they don't look for something consistent... to guide them in their lives, like principles... [a student at the Faculty of Theology, Patrimony section, first year, male].

More than other religious groups, the Jehovah's Witnesses are subjected to negative social reactions because they actively contest the official religion, priests, and Orthodox doctrine. Door-to-door preaching, characteristic of the Witnesses, exposes them to a greater extent to negative social reactions and even to social stigmatization.¹¹ Someone's opting for this religion is not a strictly personal affair but has consequences for his social relations, consequences that are often negative. Nonetheless, paradoxical as it may seem, some of the people approached by the Witnesses will opt for this religion and for the way of life it involves.

Explicative models of Jehovah's Witnesses' conversion

Starting with the systemic stage model of religious conversion proposed by Lewis Rambo (Rambo 1993; Rambo, Farhadian 1999), we shall try to provide an answer to the following question: *why does a person deliberately choose to become a Jehovah's Witness even if he understands ex ante all the shortcomings and social implications of this religious status?*

Conversion to this group is a long process that can take from six months to two years and that demands systematic efforts from the convert in order to study doctrine, to attend meetings, to preach new teachings, and to justify himself in front of his family and friends, etc. During each stage of his evolution towards this new status, a person knows precisely all the risks and advantages of being a Witness and has sufficient time to change his mind.

Most people who begin a Bible study drop out or do not publicly declare their relationship with the Witnesses.¹² Nevertheless, the deeds of those who become Jehovah's Witnesses are often rather surprising from the perspective of what is being preached or the manner in which they justify their beliefs or overcome negative social reactions. Our intention to explain the mechanism of their conversion stems from this phenomenon.

The work of reference with regards to the Witnesses belongs to James Beckford. Written in 1975, *The Trumpet of Prophecy: A Sociological Study of Jehovah's Witnesses* proposes the first explicative model of their conversion. The British sociologist presents a series of conditions whose simultaneous presence makes an individual a likely candidate for becoming a Jehovah's Witness.

Thus, the potential convert will be raised in a Christian family and, prior to his encounter with the Witnesses, he will have participated rather frequently in religious ceremonies. He has a marginal occupation, has not establish any social ties, and the regular visits of the Witnesses gratify him. Young families with children respond favorably to the Witnesses' message out of their need to answer the religious and ethical questions of their children. Most adults converted when they were in their 30s, and as Beckford shows, this renders conversion to Jehovah's Witnesses atypical (1975, 184). Also, people with relatives who are Witnesses are more inclined to respond favorably to their message.

The state of suggestibility, the second stage of the model, refers to a perceived discrepancy between values and reality. This may cause anxiety in individuals and may gen-

erate openness towards an ideology able to explain and/or alleviate the state of psychological discomfort. Also, vestigial dogmatism – the individual believes in a single, absolute truth, accessible to humankind – renders people more likely to accept the explanations provided by the accessible and unambiguous doctrines of the Witnesses (Beckford, 1975).

After critical events, people pass from the latent state of suggestibility to a favorable answer to the evangelization of the Watch Tower Society. House-to-house preaching or incidental witnessing stimulates the emergence of such critical events.¹³ Even if before conversion most of Beckford's subjects were not interested in social and political issues, they claimed that the preachers had helped them understand the events of the world in a significant manner (*ibidem*).

Affiliation and induction refer to the process by which newcomers are initiated into the doctrines, values, and practices of the Watch Tower Society and to the manner in which they are integrated into the new group. These follow a standard pattern. Throughout all the stages of conversion, the learning process takes place within the group. Although the newcomer spends a lot of time reading the literature of the sect, he is always oriented towards further discussions within the group.

In time, the potential convert begins to know the Witnesses quite well and this close relationship with them strengthens trust and respect for what they uphold. Contact with the Witnesses is maintained and intensified by taking part in their meetings, events, and Bible studies and results in the redefinition of the individual's previous situation according to the new ideology (Hamilton, 2001).

The positive evolution of the convert-congregation relationship depends upon maintenance of adhesion to the group's beliefs and upon taking part in preaching activities. Long-term commitment develops as the convert is 'promoted' to positions of responsibility at the level of a local congregation – a mutual relationship of stimulation exists between the commitment to the Witnesses' ideas, on the one hand, and the integration into the network of social relationships of the sect, on the other (Beckford, 1975).

In a recent work, *Jehovah's Witnesses: Portrait of a Contemporary Religious Movement*, Andrew Holden depicts in a synthetic manner this mechanism of conversion supported by the individual's integration into the group. Those who convert to the Watch Tower Society are gradually resocialised into a new way of life. This involves the reshaping of their identity so that it becomes consistent with what is considered appropriate by other devotees. Group support is particularly important if this transition is to be successful. The bonds provided by any world-renouncing religious community affirm the new self and belief system as new recruits gradually withdraw from their previous social relationships. The individual's belief system is socially acquired and supported by a wide range of activities through interaction with other members (Holden, 2002, 58).

The systemic stage model of religious conversion – Jehovah's Witnesses case study

A general theoretical model of conversion with great explicative qualities and a higher degree of generality is that of Lewis Rambo (1993). Taking into account certain adjustments of his model according to the socio-cultural context of post-communist Romania, we think that it can explain rather well the conversion of Orthodox Christians who became Jehovah's Witnesses.

In brief, the stage model of conversion comprises seven stages: *the context, the crisis, the quest (religious search), the encounter with the religious group, the individual –*

religious group interaction, the commitment (making the religious relationship public), and the consequence of conversion.

Context is not a stage per se; it refers to the medium in which religious change takes place. Yet it influences the overall process of conversion. In order for the conversion to take place, the individual should have had previous experiences able to make him receptive, to some extent, to the message, style, promises or orientations of the sect, or he should be attracted by the example of its members, or he should be fascinated by the idea of association or by the atmosphere of the sect (Wilson, 2000: 138). Emotional, structural, intellectual, and religious availabilities of a person depend upon the context of conversion (Rambo, Farhadian, 1999).

In accordance with someone's degree of involvement in the social and religious activities of his previous religious community, it can be assessed that he possesses a smaller or greater amount of religious capital that he will try to maximize.¹⁴ Thus, the change of religion, particularly in the case of those who dispose of a considerable religious capital, materializes in the abandonment of a series of investments made in time in order to accumulate that capital. This is why an individual who was brought up within a religious group and possesses a consolidated position within his community is not likely to change his religion, because he will want to maintain the religious and social (relational) capital acquired within that religion/community.

It is interesting to notice that most of the Witnesses interviewed were people with consistent religious capital before they were converted. It was their interest in religion that allowed them to initiate first contacts with the new religion. Because they were interested in discussing religious matters, they were intellectually available for conversion. In some cases, the lack of integration into the community also generated a certain emotional availability for visits and discussions with the Witnesses.

Crisis is the second stage of the systemic stage model of conversion. It is "a rupture in the taken-for-granted world" (Rambo, Farhadian, 1999, 23). Crises can be triggered by certain social disorders, political oppression, and also by dramatic personal events that lead to the quest of religious solutions for solving problems. To the same extent, a seemingly ordinary fact can generate an individual crisis likely to lead the individual towards religious conversion (ibidem).

According to the interpretation proposed by Rambo, crisis is the factor that triggers the religious quest and predisposes individuals to convert after having encountered a religious group. In the case of the Witnesses who were interviewed, crises took place following discussions with preachers and materialized in a gradual deligitimization (calling into question) of Eastern Orthodox dogma.

First, I learned what God is going to do in the future. Then I began to take lessons in customs and traditions, to see if they're approved or not by God (...) It was very hard for me... because I used to be very dogmatic, I used to go to Church very often and I used to organize burial feasts (...) This was easier to understand... It was harder to learn about the Cross... The Bible says that we shall not make idols and that we shall not pray to images, but I used to think that I was not worshipping them; I was keeping them in my house to remember God... But later I understood that God was not there, neither was Jesus Christ (...) I was very disappointed when I heard... about what I hadn't known before (...) about the false teachings I'd acquired and the beliefs I'd upheld before. And, with each study I read, the verses I read with her, I analyzed the context. Sometimes, I used to stay up till midnight to analyze the context... I was afraid that the verses she gave me could have been something else... [woman, born in

1951, baptized in 1996, divorced, 4 children (2 Witnesses)].

In the case of people with much religious capital, superior knowledge and commitment to the doctrines of the Orthodox Church result in the accompaniment of the abandonment of Orthodox dogma by a series of active quests. Although the logical arguments of the Witnesses are accepted, they are sometimes associated by a feeling of distrust generated by the tension caused by the erosion of familiar doctrinal positions. This is why the potential convert requests supplementary arguments.

Moreover, the disqualification of previous experiences and life standards is central to any conversion experience. From the perspective of the convert and of the group that receives him, the change of religion is seen as a passage from an inferior religious tradition to a superior one, as a passage from darkness to light (Taylor, 1999).

Delegitimization is a constant feature throughout the whole process of the Witnesses' conversion. Interest in religion was already present and the crisis of delegitimization (psychological discomfort, disappointment towards a failing cultural investment) leads to greater involvement, to an active search of the new religion, and to stronger commitment to the new group and religious system.

The systemic stage model supports the idea that the stage of religious quest is triggered by a crisis. In the case of the Jehovah's Witnesses, the temporal evolution of conversion does not support this argument. *The context* predisposes the individuals to accept a dialogue with the Witnesses (an encounter with the religious group) and to begin a *Bible study*.¹⁵ The latter can be considered the equivalent of the *religious quest* stage in Rambo's model. As a result of the religious quest, a *crisis* is triggered, which leads to the intensification of the *interaction between the potential convert* and the group of Witnesses and, in some cases, to an official *commitment*.

Even if in some subjects the quest/orientation towards religion was anterior to the moment they met the Witnesses, after the encounter with this religious group and the acceptance of the study, the quest¹⁶ takes the form of the progressive acquiring of the new doctrine, is based on standardized materials, and is carried out systematically.¹⁷ The choice to begin the Bible study¹⁸ is not always motivated by a crisis but can be triggered by curiosity, by family pressure, by the interest in a specific aspect, or by the wish to be polite.

The discomfort someone feels as a result of the delegitimization of his cultural investments (religious knowledge, etc.) is one of the reasons why a person drops out of the Bible study. Beyond doctrinal aspects and extramundane rewards that are important in a religion (Stark, 1996b), the group of the Witnesses represents – for the potential convert – a structure of plausibility able to confirm the newly acquired cultural elements. Those who do not perceive the immediate benefits of the Witnesses' group (making friends, receiving answers to questions related to one's religion, etc.) or who consider the costs of attending the group to be too high usually leave the Bible study. As we have already mentioned, only one out of 6 people who begin the Bible study becomes a Witness.

The next stage is the *encounter with the religious group*. In our case, we should make a distinction between the first contact with the Witnesses and the contact with the religious community. The positive evolution of the individual Bible study is usually accompanied by the invitation to attend the weekly meetings of the congregation. If interaction with one Witness, in the case of those who carry on the Bible study, stresses the doctrinarian aspects of the organization, interaction with the religious group stresses the community-based dimension that plays a central part in the conversion process.

The attention paid to the newcomer, the care and interest shown to him, the

warmth and support offered by the community are only some of the elements that have a great impact upon those who visit the congregation. The community-based dimension becomes much more important, as it is rather poor within the Orthodox Church, particularly in urban areas. While talking about the atmosphere of the congregation, subjects compare it to that of the church and obtain supplementary arguments for the delegitimization of the church-based community. Along with rational arguments, supported by the Bible, affective community-based benefits compensate for the subjects' affective needs and strengthens their commitment to the new community. This commitment sustains the overcoming of the tension generated by the cultural discontinuity resulted from the abandonment of Orthodox Christianity. When they meet the community, some subjects reject the doubts they had about the Witnesses. Thus the structures of plausibility of the previous religion begin to erode and structures of plausibility for the new doctrine are built.¹⁹

First, I remember the first meeting I attended; I was impressed by the atmosphere surrounding the Jehovah's Witnesses. When I went to Church I didn't see that. Here, you had (...) a feeling of friendship, they paid attention to you, and everybody talked to you, things that... I didn't notice when I was Orthodox... they're very organized people, (...) here you find everything a man can want from life: friends, a healthy entourage, collaborators, supporters, everything you want... for me this is a beautiful life (...) This is what I'd wanted before I became a Witness, to find people like that [man, born in 1977, baptized in 1993, single].

This is the moment we called *incipient identification*. At the level of actions, the convert begins to attend the meetings of the group on a regular basis and to acquire knowledge of the Bible. In many cases he is enthusiastic about learning new things and wishes to share with his family and friends what he has learned. Some people even begin to practice preaching activities together with an experienced Witness. Incipient identification activates the *social filter* through which the individual clearly sees the costs implied by living as a Witness.²⁰ He will be faced with the usually negative reaction of his family, friends, and of those he encounters during preaching activities. Moreover, festivities on religious holidays, birthdays, etc., are prohibited, which can cause frustration, especially when it comes to the Witnesses' children. The process of conversion is carried on only if the potential convert considers the social costs of his religious choice, the tension, and even the social stigmatization worth his while.

...my parents told me : "Don't come back to us if you carry on this way" (...) "Let Jehovah give you stuff, I'll not give you anything anymore" and I said "Jehovah will give me and will give you too (...) Jehovah gives to everybody because He is our true God." For a couple of weeks I didn't go to their place, but after a while they asked somebody to tell me to go and visit them and not to discuss the Bible anymore... [man, born in 1963, baptized in 1998, married, 2 children].

In the case of those who choose to carry on the conversion process, previous social networks are gradually replaced with the new networks of the organization. For those who did not have a rich social life the congregation becomes a place where they can manifest themselves and develop new relationships – a supplementary argument for adhesion to the organization.

Interaction – the fifth stage of the systemic stage model – leads to the formation

of a new identity, that of a Jehovah's Witness, and ends in the public declaration of this status through public baptism. Four elements of the interaction introduce the person or the group to the new religious affiliation: *ritual, social relationships, rhetoric, and roles*. As a result of the interaction of these four, the individual passes through a process of ideological encapsulation that separates him from those who are not Witnesses.²¹

First, the act of developing *social relationships* serves as a network of transformation. Affiliations that are crucial to the learning process may follow the line of the family, friends, or teachers. In general, the closer the relationship between the preacher and the potential convert, the greater the probability of religious change (Rambo, Farhadian, 1999)²².

Rituals allow people who were converted to experience religion beyond the intellectual level. Through community-based activities such as singing, scripture recital, and prayer, ritual activities consolidate interpersonal relationships and induce a stronger feeling of belonging to the Witnesses' community. Prayer, singing at conventions or in the Kingdom Hall, preaching activities, and community work are only some of the religious activities that strengthen the commitment to the new religious group. Also, these represent confirming experiences (Stark, 1999) and structures of plausibility for the new religious system.²³ Directly experiencing religious events such as a convention or other activities carried out within the group is another element that confirms the truthfulness of the doctrine.

The third element of the interaction with the new group is the *adaptation of the Witnesses' rhetoric*, which includes different linguistic interpretations of the actions, feelings, and purposes of the potential convert. Conversion does not mean merely a change of behavior and relationships but also the conceptualization and interpretation of these changes (Rambo, 1993).

A person's interaction with a new group implies a series of transformations at the linguistic level. This process is more stressed in a religious conversion because words play a central part in religious groups. Throughout the interaction stage, the potential convert learns to speak the language of the group in order to be in accordance with the ethos and the purposes of the movement. Within this framework, metaphor is not only a linguistic tool, but also a vehicle in the transformation of one's conscience.

The language used by the religious group represents the means by which the conscience is formed and transformed.²⁴ To some extent, conversion takes place through a process of learning the new language and using it in relevant situations (Rambo, 1993). The usage of distinct communication formulas confers a feeling of belonging to the new community and the capability to communicate more easily with the members of the group. The new language, inaccessible to outsiders, also induces a feeling of demarcation from other groups. Expressions such as "friend of God," "New World," "to go to the Hall," "to go on field," "to do the works," "the New World Translation," or "the Knowledge" say nothing to those who are not Witnesses or are not related to them.

Besides the change of metaphors, Snow and Machalek (1984) highlight the changes that take place at the level of the converts' system of attribution.²⁵ They adopt a new attribution scheme.²⁶ After having adopted the Jehovah's Witnesses' new rhetoric and attribution scheme a biographical reconstruction occurs; in other words, previous and current experiences are interpreted according to the new ideology.

The fourth component of interaction refers to the adoption of *role expectations* and new behaviors requested by the religious group. Implicitly or explicitly, people who

convert are informed about the changes they must make in order to be received into the group.²⁷ Through interaction with the religious group the individual actually embraces a new lifestyle opposed to his previous one; he acquires a new language, adopts a new definition of his own individuality and personality and of the social community to which he belongs (Wilson, 2000).

As a result of the tension between the Witnesses and society, a *detachment from the new role* is evident in many situations. This is caused by the contradiction between the new role and previous roles, by the lack of familiarity with the activities requested by the group, or by the negative reactions of other people. Fear of talking with people, embarrassment of preaching, and hiding one's status of a Witness are only some clues in this respect.

For two months nobody rejected me (...) I was so enthusiastic and so glad! And I used to think when I heard: "oh, I was rejected." I used to say: "you don't know how to speak"... but see what happened on Rozelor Alley (...) a lady comes out and I say: "Hello, ma'am, today I would like to discuss the Scripture with you." "Go away! I don't want to see you here! Get out or I'll throw something at you!" I was petrified. I say: "Ma'am..." Nothing. All the neighbors were coming out of their apartments. "Go away!" Oh, my Lord! I felt, oh... (...) I tried to explain, why were they shouting like that? I didn't say anything bad. I was distressed, how was it possible? (...) I said: I would never go preaching again; that's enough! I went home; I didn't study anymore, I went to the countryside (...) I didn't attend the meetings anymore. Over this period I thought about what I'd studied, about what I'd told people, about how they'd reacted (...) At that time, that's what I told Paul [the Witness with whom he used to study]: Oh, yes! That's nothing! If this didn't happen, it would mean that this isn't the truth (...) He gave me some Scriptural arguments that clearly show: everybody who wants to be dedicated will be humiliated. You must be humiliated (...) [man, born in 1967, baptized in 1992, married, 2 children, his wife is also a Witness].²⁸

Still, at the beginning, I was embarrassed, I couldn't (...) tell that I was a Witness (...) I told them many things from the Bible but I didn't tell them what I was. Well, it was hard for me to say that because I wasn't very sure about what I knew, I didn't know how to explain and then, if I said I was a Witness, then what... Oh! Really? This was the hard part (...) and I often cried and said: "Lord Jehovah, I want to say that I am but I can't... I can't handle these people..." It's been a long time (...) I grew stronger, and all of a sudden I began to tell (...) I didn't beat about the bush anymore (...) whether they talked with me or not. I was just happy to tell [woman, born in 1952, baptized in 1996, married, 2 children, her husband is also a Witness].

In many situations the potential converts expect to encounter negative social reactions. Thus, any reaction of this type becomes a confirming experience and can support the truthfulness of the biblical prophecies in which the Witnesses believe. A fact that would usually inhibit the decision to convert has the opposite effect.

Doctrine becomes the engine of the Witnesses' actions; the help of the Bible allows them to overcome the obstacles they encounter and generates the religious activism that supports the growth of the organization. The fact that detachment from the role of Witness is overcome by giving other meanings to social relations is just another example that shows that doctrine is functioning.

After having carried out the religious quest (Bible study), overcome the social filter, integrated into the Witnesses' group, and limited social relationships outside of the sect, the only thing that still needs to be fulfilled is making the conversion public through baptism. Considered to be a public declaration of the fact that someone wishes to serve God, baptism is purely a public, formal dedication with the purpose of showing to the others the religious option of an individual. The Witnesses do preaching work long before they are baptized; this is why we are inclined to believe that, from a conversion perspective, another moment is more significant than this: the moment when an individual subjectively identifies himself with the organization and dedicates himself to Jehovah in prayer, thus disavowing his previous religion. This is the true moment of the Witnesses' conversion.

Throughout this transformation process, we believe that the potential convert's perception of the expected rewards of conversion is crucial. He carefully weighs both the social rewards (acceptance, respect, love, overcoming fear and pressure) and cognitive benefits (ultimate meanings and solutions to practical problems) delivered by the community of Witnesses and the social or religious losses implied by the choice of leaving the previous religion. Making this decision is not an internal process but an experience of social interaction in which one's group of Witnesses, family, and social groups are involved. The rational choice theory offers a theoretical framework for the comprehension these decisional processes.

Applied on the individual level, the rational choice theory supposes the actors weigh the anticipated costs and benefits of a decision, acting so as to maximize their net benefits. Owing to the uncertainty that surrounds religious goods, their value is established with the help of statements delivered by reliable sources, such as one's religious community (Iannaccone, 1997, Stark, Iannaccone, 1993) or the Bible.²⁹

"Have you ever thought about what you are going to do in Paradise?" "I'll probably build bridges, houses, roads; I'll help my Brothers to transform the Earth into a Paradise." "Why bridges, houses, roads and not something else?" "Well, don't think we would cross the rivers by boat. Maybe we'll also cross them over bridges. I learned and (...) I was talking to a Sister who is a physician and I told her: Sister, you'll be unemployed in Paradise because there we won't see doctors anymore, Jesus Christ will be enough. But I hope I'll be very busy as a construction worker" [man, born in 1975, baptized in 1992, married, his wife is also a Witness].

Sir, I... I didn't say I thought it would come. I say I'm convinced that we're living in the Last Days right now... it's so simple because... when Lord Jesus was asked: Tell me, when will Thy Kingdom come and what signs will there be? Lord Jesus answered: Concerning that day and hour nobody knows, neither the angels of the heavens nor the Son, but only the Father, but I can give you some signs! It is said that the Last Days will be tough times, difficult to endure. Men will be dishonest, untamed, and vile; they'll love pleasure more than God. I want to say that when you look at people living today, in general, you realize that things are just like the Scripture tells, and there's also written that there'll be earthquakes, epidemics, wars, famine (...) I myself went through two devastating earthquakes and since I know myself wars have continued and never end. See... before I was born, or to put it this way, since 1914, there's been the First World War, the Second World War and there hasn't been one minute of peace (...) Economy is disastrous. Need for divine intervention is felt. People can't suffer poverty, famine, diseases anymore (...) conditions are met; I talk about the conditions described by Jesus, those that must be met by the times that define the End. (...) we pray that End come (...) Thy Kingdom

come (...) we have prayed that the Kingdom of God come for 2000 years (...) At that time, Lord Jesus said: The Kingdom draws near. If then it was so close, then how is it now? I firmly believe I have the chance to pass to the New System of Things without seeing Death (...). I can tell you only partially what there'll be after Armageddon, because man is not capable to understand the blessings there'll be immediately... afterwards... God - it is written - God will destroy those who spoil the Earth. (...) They will disappear and there'll actually be a... What Adam and Eve actually did when... They had to (...) make Eden bigger. Well, this will happen in the Kingdom of God (...) step by step, all the Earth will be turned into a paradise that will harbor all those who were resurrected [man, born in 1949, baptized in 1991, his 2 children and wife are also Witnesses].

For the Witnesses, religious concepts are almost never uncertain. We can talk about the Witnesses' biblical realism, meaning that they literally accept everything the Bible says. The previous interview fragment also emphasizes a standard formula of the arguments through which the truthfulness or biblical truth and its applicability in everyday life are demonstrated for and by the Witnesses.

Main premises: Citing biblical arguments

[...the Last Days will be tough times, difficult to endure. Men will be dishonest, untamed, and vile; they'll love pleasure more than God....]

'Proofs': Citing facts observed in real life that confirm biblical prophecies

[...when you look at people living today, in general, you realize that things are just like the Scripture tells...]

Supplementary premise: Biblical prophecies have been fulfilled

[conditions are met; I talk about the conditions described by Jesus, those that must be met by the times that define the End....]

Conclusion: Armageddon is coming soon.

[I firmly believe I have the chance to pass to the New System of Things without seeing Death]

From the perspective of formal logic, this argumentative structure is correct. However, we are dealing with a material error related to the meaning of the terms employed and the acceptance of premises. This is not so unusual, because logical truth is eluded by all religions that propose a type of logic of salvation. Witnesses act according to principles that are similar to those of other religions: to offer a better life in another world, to save the world, etc. What sets them apart are the different premises they adopt and, obviously, the different manner in which they act. Someone who goes to church every week, who fasts, and who gives alms to the poor in order to "receive in the afterlife," and a Witness who preaches the Bible from door to door, follow similar purposes but use different means.

Our conclusions support Stark and Finke's (2000) hypothesis that the Witnesses do not pay the great costs of adhesion out of fanaticism or ignorance. We are dealing with decisions that were deeply deliberated upon. From the first contact with the

Witnesses up to baptism there is a period of time when the potential convert analyses the advantages and disadvantages of affiliation. The future Witness is involved in the way of life he prepares for (he does preaching work, observes people's reactions) and decides if these costs are worth while. Possible reactions or negative reactions of friends or family are weighed and, according to the result of this calculation, the convert decides whether he should go on or not. There are several moments when a person can decide to end the relationship with the Witnesses (he does not want to give up religious holidays, does not want to argue with those close to him, does not want to upset his parents or family, etc.). The potential convert is asked to be actively involved in order to move ahead towards conversion. It is not enough for him to agree about doctrinal aspects. This is why we support the idea also emphasized by the article's title: the Witnesses deliberately choose to preach and to be subjected to social pressure or even to be stigmatized according to a sort of logic of salvation or deliverance different from that of other religious groups.

Subjective rationality – proposed by Raymond Boudon (Hagen, 2000) – is in our opinion the most appropriate way to define this type of rationality, specific to religious conversion, in which costs and benefits are subjectively assessed. Far from suggesting that those who convert make an explicit, direct assessment of these facts, the idea of a cost/benefit analysis made by the potential convert concerning his situation aims to show that the person who converts is an active agent, author and negotiator in his own experience of conversion.

Bibliography

- Atkinson, R., *Povestea vieții - Interviul*, Iași: Editura Polirom, 2006.
- Barker, E., Beckford, J. A., & Dobbelaere, K. eds., *Secularization, Rationalism and Sectarianism: Essays in Honour of Bryan R. Wilson*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993.
- Beckford, J. A., *The Trumpet of Prophecy. A Sociological Study of Jehovah's Witnesses*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1975.
- Berger, P., *The Sacred Canopy. Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*, New York: Anchor Books, 1967.
- Bruce, S., *Choice and Religion: A Critique of Rational Choice Theory*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Clarke, P., Sutherland, S. eds., *The Study of Religion, Traditional and New Religions*, London: Routledge, 1991.
- Greil, A.L., Rudy, D. R., "Social Cocoons: Encapsulation and Identity Transformation Organization". *Sociological Inquiry*, 54, (1984): 260- 278.
- Hagen, R., "Rational Choice", *Classical and Modern Social Theory*, Andersen, H., Kospersen, L. B. eds., Blackwell Publishers, 2000. 197-212.
- Hamilton, M., *The Sociology of Religion: Theoretical and Comparative Perspectives*. London: Routledge, 2001.
- Holden, A. *Jehovah's Witnesses: Portrait of a Contemporary Religious Movement*, London: Routledge, 2002.
- Iannaccone, L. R. "Rational Choice. Framework for the Scientific Study of Religion", *Rational Choice Theory and Religion. Summary and Assessment*. Ed. Young, L.A. New York and London: Routledge, 1997, 25- 45.
- Leone, M., *Religious Conversion and Identity: The Semiotic Analysis of Texts*,

New York: Routledge, 2003.

Lewis, J. R., ed., *New Religions and the "Cult" Controversy* *New Religions and the Cult Controversy*, Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2001.

Lofland, J., Stark, R., "Becoming a World-Saver: A Theory of Conversion to a Deviant Perspective". *American Sociological Review*, 30, (1965): 862-875.

Lynch, F. R., "Toward a Theory of Conversion and Commitment to the Occult". *Conversion Careers. In and Out of the New Religions*, Ed. Richardson, J., Beverly Hills, London: Sage Publications, 1978: 91-113.

Rambo, L., *Understanding Religious Conversion*, New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1993.

Rambo, L., Farhadian, C. E., "Converting: Stages of Religious Conversion", *Religious Conversion. Contemporary Practices and Controversies*, Ed. Lamb, C., Bryant, M. D., London: Cassell, 1999: 23-34.

Rambo, L., Farhadian, C. E., "Conversion", *Encyclopedia of Religion. Second Edition*, Ed. Jones, L., Detroit, Thompson Gale, 2005: 1969 - 1974.

Richardson, J.T., „The Active vs. Passive Convert: Paradigm Conflict in Conversion/ Recruitment Research”, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 24 (2), 1985: 119-236.

Snow, D. A., Machalek, R., "The Sociology of Conversion", *Annual Review of Sociology*, 10, 1984: 167-190.

Stark, R., Bainbridge, W. S., "Network of Faith: Interpersonal Bonds and Recruitment to Cults and Sects", *American Journal of Sociology*, 85, 1980: 1376-1395.

Stark, R., Iannaccone, L. R., "Rational Choice Propositions about Religious Movements", *Religion and the Social Order*, 3A, 1993: 241-261.

Stark, R., *The Rise of Christianity. A Sociologist Reconsiders History*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996.

Stark, R., "Why Religious Movements Succeed or Fail: A Revisited General Model", *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, vol. 11 (2), 1996 b: 133 - 146.

Stark, R., Iannaccone, L. R., "Why the Jehovah's Witness Grow so Rapidly: A Theoretical Application", *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 12 (2), 1997: 133-157.

Stark, R., Finke, R., *Acts of Faith. Explaining the Human side of Religion*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.

Stănciulescu, E., *Teorii sociologice ale educației. Producerea ei și construcția sociologiei*, Iași: Editura Polirom, 1996.

Taylor, D., "Conversion: Inward, Outward and Awkward", *Religious Conversion. Contemporary Practices and Controversies*, Ed. Lamb, C., Bryant, M. D., London: Cassell, 1999: 35-50.

Wilson, B. R., *The Social Dimensions of Sectarianism: Sects and New Religious Movements in Contemporary Society*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992.

Wilson, B., *Religia din perspectivă sociologică*, București: Editura Trei, 2000.

Notes:

1 In 1882, Charles Taze Russell founded the religious organization known today by the name of Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, the official name of the Jehovah's Witnesses organization. Renowned for its extraordinary international expansion, the organization counted 44,080 members in 1928, 6,035,564 in 2000 and 6,613,829 in

2005. A Stark and Iannacone estimate (1997) shows that in 2020 there will be 12,475,115 members world-wide. The following beliefs are representative for the Jehovah's Witnesses: they worship only God, while Jesus is the Son of God and God's first creation; the Witnesses reject the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, blood transfusions, and religious symbols (the cross, icons, etc.). They do not believe in life after death and do not have religious holidays such as Easter or Christmas. Jehovah's Witnesses also believe that Armageddon is coming soon and that an earthly Paradise will follow it.

2 According to the definition given by Lewis Rambo, conversion is a complex, multidimensional process that involves personal, cultural, social, and religious elements. Even if conversion may be triggered by a particular event and in some cases lead to very sudden experiences of change, for most people it takes place over time. People change for a multitude of reasons; change may be permanent or temporary (Rambo, 1993). The array of approaches to conversion makes impossible the consensus on its definition. In the article on Conversion from *Gale Encyclopedia of Religion*, Rambo and Farhadian present several theoretical orientations, each shedding light on different aspects and processes involved in conversion: personalist theories (psychoanalytic, archetypal, attribution, and attachment theories), social/cultural theories (multicultural, postcolonial, identity, intellectualistic, and narrative theories), religious theories (theological and translation theories), convergence models (process theory of conversion, feminist theory, Christianization, or Islamization theory) (Rambo, Farhadian, 2005).

3 The destabilization of the self – stage in the model of conversion proposed by James – is represented by the loss of social identity as a result of the fact that the group the individual belongs to lacks the capacity to socially integrate individuals (Leone 2003).

4 Traditionally, conversion was approached by theologians and focused on the exemplary conversions of biblical characters or of significant characters in religious life (the prophets in the Old Testament, Saul of Tarsus, Augustine of Hippo, etc.). The study of primitive populations in ethnology and anthropology implied not only an approach to the religions of these populations, but also the first recordings of conversions to Christianity. These matters were further developed by the first sociologists – it is sufficient to mention Émile Durkheim's *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* or the work of Marcel Mauss and Max Weber. Psychology deserves the historical merit of having approached religious conversion as a distinct religious experience. We note here the contributions of William James (*The Varieties of Religious Experiences*, 1905), Edwin Starbuck (*Psychology of Religion*, 1915), George Jackson (*The Fact of Conversion*, 1908), or Sigmund Freud (*A Religious Experience*, 1927).

5 Verbal converts are those who profess faith and are considered to be sincere by the leaders of the group but who do not play an active role in the religious movement; full converts are those who manifest their engagement by making donations and also by preaching (Lofland, Stark, 1965).

6 "Religious seeker" (Lofland, Stark, 1965) is an expression describing people with a cognitive approach to religious issues who base their beliefs on their own readings and researches.

7 Divine Principles is the fictitious name proposed by the authors in order to respect the anonymity of Unification Church members.

8 Theories that see the individual as passive in conversion are a constituent part of what Richardson named the 'old paradigms of religious conversion'. This category includes: theological models of conversion (e.g. the prophets of the Old Testament, Saul of Tarsus, and Augustine of Hippo), scientific models inspired by psychiatry, psycho-

analysis, and the relative frustration theory, models based on 'brainwashing', and the first stage models of conversion. The predominant role in conversion is played by an external factor: the omnipotent divinity in theological models, unconscious psychological influences in psychological models, or social factors whose presence would inevitably determine the conversion. Such deterministic models suppose a passive subject and are seen as predestinations (from a theological point of view), predispositions (from a psychological point of view), or situational determinations (in sociology) (Richardson, 1985).

9 The quotation marks underline an expression frequently used in the speeches of interviewed Witnesses. The authors of this article are not defending the religious meaning or the truth of quoted excerpts and/or of the Jehovah's Witnesses' doctrine. We are only interested in the mechanisms that result in a number of people opting for a religious status that implies a certain amount of social stigmatization.

10 "(...) Romanians are known to be poor people (...) poor people are bought with minimum material means" [student, Faculty of Theology, Theology-Social Work section, fourth year, female]. "...their success is due above all to the lack of religious education... poverty (...) moral liability (...) spiritual indolence, which is moral procrastination" [student, Faculty of Theology, Patrimony section, third year, male].

11 In Western countries, during the 1950s, the Witnesses were the most contested new religion. Together with the Mormons, the Witnesses were targeted by most anti-cult movements owing to their strong doctrinal deviances from official religions. Their aggressive proselytizing and their refusal to salute national flags or to participate in patriotic activities led to their prosecution and even to their imprisonment (Lewis, 2001). Researchers of religious phenomena were also interested in the Witnesses. For example, it was observed that their success is particularly visible in the countries where Protestantism has not succeeded (Wilson, 1992). The success of the Witnesses – about whom Rodney Stark and Laurence R. Iannacone said that they were the religious movement with the fastest growth – is materialized in an annual average growth of 5% worldwide between 1923 and 1997 (Stark, Iannacone, 1997).

12 For several reasons, individuals may quit the Bible study or may study the Bible without converting. This is proved by the disproportion between the great number of Bible studies carried out (an average of 14,018 per year between 1992-2000 in Romania) and the small number of baptized people (2,642 on average) – an estimate of one baptism in every six Bible studies.

13 *Incidental witnessing* is the expression used for the situations where proselytism is not the primary interest but provides unexpected opportunities to preach: meetings in transportation terminals and in restaurants or specific literature distributed in public places. These can be seen as critical events because they focus the convert's attention on models of thought and action that would not have been adopted otherwise (Beckford, 1975).

14 When we are socialized in our own culture, we invest in it, we spend time and make efforts to learn, understand, and remember its cultural resources. For example, people brought up to be Christians have accumulated substantial amounts of Christian culture: doctrines, prayers, hymns, rituals, and memories (Stark & Finke, 2000). The concept of 'religious capital' could be seen as a sub-species of cultural capital. Pierre Bourdieu, who made famous the concept of 'cultural capital,' designates by it the ensemble of resources an agent disposes of and that can be capitalized to his benefit in his efforts to gain superior positions in a given social field (Stănculescu, 1996). At the level

of common sense, this logic is to be found in the following behaviors related to the religious life of a community: a person invests (offers) resources (time or money) in current religious activities or in the erection of a church, etc., with the implicit purpose of obtaining immediate rewards (social prestige, recognition of his merits by the leadership, etc.) or future rewards (rewards in the 'afterlife'). According to an understanding of various doctrinal aspects of the Orthodox Church and to actual practices of religion, our sample can be divided into 3 categories: *people with much religious capital* (women who go to church on a weekly basis and who are actively involved in their own or in their family's religious life), *people with average religious capital* (people attached to the traditions of the Orthodox Church, even if they do not lead an active religious life), and *people with little religious capital* (particularly young people who lack both the doctrinal basis and actual involvement in the religious life).

15 The Bible study refers to regular meetings with a potential convert or someone interested in learning about the religious doctrine of the Witnesses. Its purpose is to discuss and analyze each element of the doctrine. Successive discussions about traditions, religious symbols, and religious holidays lead to the delegitimization of the structures of plausibility of Orthodoxy.

16 The notion of "quest" is based on the supposition that individuals try to maximize the meanings and purposes in their lives, to eradicate ignorance, and to solve inconsistency. In abnormal or crisis situations, this quest becomes imperative – people are actively seeking resources for solving problems. Quest is an on-going process, but it is intensified during periods of crisis (Rambo, 1993).

17 We refer here to bimensal magazines of the Witnesses (*Awake!* and *Watchtower*) and to a series of publications dealing with the main doctrinal aspects of the group: *All Scripture is Inspired of God and Beneficial*, *What does God require from us?* etc.

18 Conversion and the initiation of the Bible study usually have complex motivations that involve emotional, intellectual, and religious features. For instance, a person yearning for relationships may find a proselytizer's friendship a wonderful balm; this friendship could then be the beginning of the conversion process (Rambo, Farhadian 1999, 27). Also, someone who is intellectually attracted to religion or a very religious person may convert due to individual motivations that make them disposed toward conversion. This is why we talk about structural, intellectual, emotional availability in order to stress the fact that religious change may be triggered by a wide array of factors.

19 In *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* Peter Berger stated that social reality and systems of signification need structures of plausibility in order to survive and be seen as real (1967). In this way a religion becomes real in the eyes of its supporters. In the case of the Jehovah's Witnesses, the social support of the group delivered during meetings becomes the structure of plausibility for the new ideology. We understand this if we think about the positive effects (enthusiasm, desire to preach) the meetings have on the new converts. Through interaction with the group, a person learns how to integrate himself into the role of Witness and how to adopt a new lifestyle.

20 By *social filter* we refer to all the mechanisms by which individuals who accept the costs of conversion are selected. The incipient identification of a potential convert with the Witnesses takes place when his group of friends and his family are informed of the fact that the convert studies the Bible with the Witnesses. The social filter is formed by the reactions that may convince the convert to quit the study. The choice to

carry on the study is often accompanied by the suspension of relationships between the individual and his family and friends.

21 Arthur Greil and David R. Rudy (1984b) make a distinction between physical encapsulation (wherein individuals are isolated in monasteries), social encapsulation (wherein individuals wear clothes or other distinctive signs in order to show their identity), and ideological encapsulation (which is also present in the case of the Jehovah's Witnesses).

22 To support the same idea, Stark and Bainbridge (1980) show that the door-to-door preaching of the Mormons has a success rate of 0.1%. However, if a Mormon friend or if a relative offers his house as a place where missionary contact can be initiated, the success rate reaches 50% (Stark, 1997).

23 For the Witnesses, the fact that their organization bears the proper name of God is a proof that they represent the only true religion. The fact that preaching work and all other activities (organization of conventions, construction of the new Kingdom Hall) are volunteer-based is also a proof in this respect (a confirming experience). Other aspects the Jehovah's Witnesses insist on are using the Bible as a source of the knowledge they offer and the lack of traditions or rituals in their ways of praying. The empiricism of the Witnesses' doctrine, the feeling of belonging to a strong community, the feeling of belonging to the people of God and of respecting His wills, the belief in the imminent arrival of Armageddon and the inauguration of a Kingdom of God that will solve the problems of humankind are the constitutive elements of a logic of salvation – a mentality specific to the Jehovah's Witnesses. These elements, combined with the biblical legitimation of the Witnesses' leaders and of the group's activities, deliver security, firmness, and authority. Metaphorically speaking, we can assert that the Witnesses offer certitudes based upon the "word of God." It is this certitude that offers resources for the individuals to overcome the social filter, to endure the experience of stigmatization.

24 The Witnesses use language and images to set up social boundaries and to stress, with their help, the difference between members and outsiders. Images with positive connotations promote the millenarian doctrine while negative images warn about the presence of evil in the world (Holden, 2002).

25 Attributions represent the process by which individuals give meaning and motives to their own actions and to the actions of others.

26 Feelings, behaviors, and events previously interpreted according to a series of various causal schemes are now interpreted through the official attribution scheme of the religious organization. In general, the convert's interpretation transcends the perspective of ordinary experiences and imagines life as a dramatic struggle between good and evil (Rambo, 1993).

27 Giving up smoking, celebrating birthdays or religious holidays, and refusing to salute state symbols (the flag, the national anthem, etc.) are only some of the key elements of the new behavior and system of values to which the new adept must conform. The convert interiorizes the new role and sees himself according to the features of this role that help him orient in all interactive situations (Snow, Machalek, 1984).

28 In this quotation, three mechanisms are to be noticed: social filter (the negative reaction triggered by the Witness), detachment from the role ("I would never go preaching again"), and overcoming this detachment through a biblical interpretation of the negative social reaction ("if this didn't happen, it would mean that this isn't the truth"). This fragment also illustrates the four mechanisms that take place before the event of baptism: *incipient identification* (preaching), *social filter* (inducing a certain

detachment from the role), *overcoming detachment from the role* (by giving a different signification to the events), and finally *total identification with the role of Witness* (making the religious status public). First, the failure of the potential convert generated a separation from the community and could have led to the decision to break with the Witnesses. The intervention of a close Witness and the biblical explanation of a social reaction allowed the process of religious conversion to be continued.

29 In fact, the reliability of the Witnesses' message before the potential convert is built both throughout the individual Bible study and through social activities (weekly meetings, conventions). All these converge towards making the potential Witness assimilate the proposed doctrine as an absolute and indubitable truth.

CONSTANȚA
MIHĂESCU
MIRUNA
MAZURENCU MARINESCU
ILEANA GABRIELA
NICULESCU-ARON

Who is afraid of
the big bad “ring”?
Gender differ-
ences when consider-
ing couple formation
in a newfangled EU
capital

Abstract:

This paper aims at analyzing and presenting the findings of an inquiry carried out in the spring of 2006 in Bucharest. The inquiry itself originally set out to investigate the effect of different gender and religious beliefs and practice with respect to couple formation and related issues, with particular reference to varying corresponding attitudes towards relationships between the men and women. The inquiry was conducted on a sample of inhabitants of Bucharest, the capital city, and one of the most significant urban areas of Romania on the verge of EU accession. Statistically, significant differences were observed with respect to couple formation, depth of religious beliefs, and the corresponding degree of religious practice, in addition to the stated reasons for marriage in the first place, and hence, to the prospective partner's attributes and selection criteria, both subjective (emotional) and objective (practical and pragmatic).

Constanța Mihăescu
Statistics and Econometrics
Department, Academy of
Economic Studies of
Bucharest, Romania
Author of the books:
Quantitative methods in
demography and social sta-
tistics (2005), Population and employment.
Past , present and future (2001), Demography
and social statistics (1996)



Miruna Mazurencu Marinescu
Reader, Ph.D., M.B.A.,
Statistics and Econometrics
Department, Academy of
Economic Studies of
Bucharest, Romania
Author of the books:
Strategies for maximizing
the value of the companies
(2004), Valuation and feasibility (2004).



Co-author of the book:
Statistical-economic analysis and valuation
methods of the companies (2002).

Ileana Gabriela Niculescu-Aron
Senior lecturer, Ph.D, Statistics
and Econometrics
Department, Academy of
Economic Studies of
Bucharest, Romania.

Co-author of the books:
Statistical-economic analysis
and valuation methods of the
companies (2002), Sampling techniques in work
force analysis (2005), Sampling techniques.
Applications and tests (2005).



Key words:

Couple formation, gender differences, demo-
graphic behavior, new family models, religious
behavior, planned behavior theory, religious
determinants

We live in an era that is marked by profound changes in the system of social values regarding family life in general, as well as non-marital cohabitation, partners' roles and responsibilities, and the demographic behavior of the population in general. These social changes were first observed in Western Europe, during the second part of the last century, and have only recently started to be transferred to and to “contaminate” Central and South-Eastern Europe, where the speed of change is even faster due to the conditions of rapid economic and social transition encountered since the early '90s.

The main characteristics of this recent evolution are manifested in a “higher flexibility” in initiating, sustaining, and terminating relationships, as indicated by the increase of non-marital cohabitation of couples, and an ever increasing divorce rate (Hărăguș, 2005). Marriage postponement as an acceptable social option, and as a by-product of further extension of training periods, the deferral of bearing children at young ages, frequent change of partners' roles within the relationship, as well as placing career aspirations at the top of women's priorities, all of which contribute to the current picture of these ever-changing social values, which in turn generate new life-style practices and new personal arrangements that are sometimes imposed on young couples through peer pressure.

The international literature abounds with studies on family life in general, and new life styles in particular, especially new types of cohabitation, distribution of household tasks, and the demographic impact of behavioral change of partnerships and the process of reproduction, while fewer studies exist that deal with values, expectations and perceptions, and the impact on couple formation (marital or non-marital). Romanian demographic and sociologic literature encompasses studies and analyses regarding the evolutions of the family institution, before and after 1990, but the specific issue of selecting a life partner has been only tangentially “addressed,” due to a lack of specific data, namely longitudinal type inquiries. This indicates the important significance of the aforementioned inquiry.

These types of data sources are considered to be the only ones capable of highlighting not only the numerous and complex systems of determinants in choosing the marital or non-marital partner, but also the whole interdependent dynamics existing between the demographic processes and the economic, social, and cultural changes. The general tendency in this sphere is just to continue moving forward. However, in 2004, at the initiative of the United Nations' Economic Commission for Europe, the Gender and Generations Programs were launched, in which Romania took part. These programs are multidisciplinary regional research of the panel type, and aim at supplying transversal and longitudinal data for the population with ages between 17 and 79 years old, for all participating countries (Mureșan, 2005).

Within this context, the present demarche aims at determining whether the Romanian capital's population, known for its avant-garde demographic behavior compared to the rest of the country, subscribes to the current trend of European change in terms of couple formation and reproductive behavior. The specific aspects related to social behavior issues discussed here can be detected in a series of attitudes, norms, and perceptions, reporting on the specific influence derived, mainly based on the function of gender and religion, as can be gleaned from the demo-scope inquiry carried out in Bucharest. In Western Europe, these types of inquiries have been regularly organized since the end of the '50s and their collective conclusions have led to the “notion” that the choice of a partner, regardless of the type of cohabitation, has become just like that of the choice of a job, or even considering the option of having children or not, acquiring a house, or the choice of best friends, one of the most important life decisions with

complex implications not only for individuals, but also for the entire society (Girard, 1981; Bozon, 1988, 1990).

An entire system of values underpins the marital or non-marital partnership, comprising economic, social, cultural, gender, religious, and psychological factors, whose influences affect any prospective corresponding outcome, and these factors are sometimes interdependent and interfere with choices and how they may be arrived at. A series of scientific research has helped to identify these factors, formalize them, and has tried to quantify them.

The theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 2005) offers an explanation of the decision-making process for the choice of a partner and cohabitation modalities. The impact of the subjective attitudes and norms and also of the perception of behavioral control differs with respect to gender. Numerous other criteria, like place of residence, level of instruction and education, social class, personal and family wealth, or even parents' and close friends' influence and interference, as well as religious beliefs and the degree of adherence to practicing religious rituals, are taken into consideration (Laplante, Miller, and Malherbe, 2005).

Religious affiliation influences economic and demographic behavior through its impact on the perceptions regarding costs and benefits of the numerous decisions made by individuals and families (Lehrer, 2004). Additionally, for behaviors that pertain to married-couple households, as opposed to individuals, religion counts because it is a complementary trait in marriage, affecting many activities that husband and wife engage in together.

The aspect of religion itself encompasses many dimensions, such as commitment to the religion, the strength of religious beliefs, and participation in religious activities individually or as part of a congregation. That religion may even have an impact on economic and demographic outcomes, partly because it accentuates the effects of affiliation, partly because of its generally positive influence on health and wellbeing (or the mere perception of such influence), can have repercussions for such outcomes.

In Western countries, the transformations afflicting both the institutions of family and marriage, as well as the new values related to couple formation, appeared to result from a background of profound economic, social, and cultural change (Gherghel, 2005). First of all, non-discriminatory access to instruction and training, prolongation of the duration of formal studies, and educational diversification have provoked significant changes of life style itself, in addition to how the populace views the inherent value of children within the social constructs of society, and consequently a corresponding parent-child- relationship transformation.

Secondly, the intensive participation of women in the labor market and the resulting change of their social status have essentially modified the man-woman balance, resulting in a near equal distribution of domestic chores, and have increased the possibility of greater independence of a woman from her family. The direct consequences of such developments are reflected in modified family behavior, characterized by the postponement of marriage, and deferral of the birth of the first child, resulting in the decrease of marital fertility. Thus the preference for a non-marital cohabitation has become the default choice, which is only natural. It allows a couple to live without long-term commitment and with more options to achieve educational and professional objectives (Gherghel, 2005).

Thirdly, new contraception techniques have become ever more effective and accessible, providing more options (especially for women) for managing life in stages, in line

with their corresponding professional and educational objectives. In time, this particular aspect of freedom has systematically eroded the importance of tradition and has diminished the perceived value and sanctity of marriage.

These changes in attitudes regarding marriage have created a double dissociation: between marriage and sexuality, as well as between sexuality and reproduction. Through transitivity, marriage is no longer necessarily associated with reproduction since sexuality as a required intermediary in this bi-dissociation is already allowed by the newly accepted social norms. Sexuality in cohabitation gains territory, as it implies neither long term commitments nor children that would consume important resources and might affect certain individual life objectives. According to Castells (1999), all these evolutions have collectively led to the virtual bankruptcy of the patriarchal family.

The compound effect of the three main tendencies, starting in the '60s, is:

- (a) development of a global and information based economy,
- (b) new fertility control technologies, and,
- (c) emergence of feminist movements.

Further, the progress of science and the development of information and communication technologies have accelerated the formation of the global information based society, with new professional demands for the individuals on the labor market. The high standards of professional proficiency and availability suppose mobility, flexibility of the work schedule, dynamism, and multidimensionality that are themselves paradoxically vivid constraints for traditional family life strategies. In addition, the paid work of women has modified the balance of power between the two genders, as man is no longer the only financial support of the family, and from that moment onwards, man's dominance continuously fades away as women's financial autonomy increases.

Progress in medical science in general, and in new reproduction aids and techniques in particular, offers women the ability to control both timing and fertility, resulting in a wider range of options. Such freedom of choice translates into positive impact on women's self-esteem.

Homosexual movements have further compounded the effects of the newly emancipated women on society, which results in further undermining the very base of the patriarchal system, predominantly dependent on heterosexuality (Castells, 1999). The outcome of the bankruptcy of the patriarchal system is not disappearance of the family, but its profound transformation, through the dissolution of relations between the patriarchal triad: marriage-family-heterosexuality. Taking its place are the new diversified types of partnerships, where couples are formed in a non-traditional fashion based on three common elements. Two of these – the support network and the central role of women – determine the redistribution of roles and responsibilities through negotiations. The third refers to a new model of allowed arrangements that suppose multiple partners along the normal lifecycle.

For Ulrich Beck (1992), during the transition from the industrial society to the risk society, individuals become more individualistic, less constrained by structures, but needing to face the challenge of constructing their own individual biography. So the individual becomes the entrepreneur of his or her universe, education, fortune, and destiny through labor market, personal life planning, and organization.

This process of social transformation is akin to "de-traditionalization," not only in the public, but also in the private sphere. In the public sphere this means the bankruptcy of the nuclear family based on division of roles between genders and unequal distri-

bution of rights between men and women. The new set of options arising out of this background is the diversity of life arrangements that depend on individual choice. The transformation of the family takes part in a global process of social-transformation, through each of the individuals seeking to evolve in relation to social structures and to build up "the chosen biography" (Ulrich Beck, 1992).

Romania's social and demographic evolution is no exception to these tendencies. However, unlike other European countries, there is a certain deviation of time, rhythm, and intensity in the manifestation of the demographic behavior of partnerships, explained by demo-social-psycho evolutions, severely imprinted by the communist regime through strict control of reproduction behavior prior to December 1989.

The profound economic, social, and political transformations after 1989 generated a demographic cost through the transition period. Of the various components of this cost, we will only focus on the aspects of redefining the institution of marriage and reconstruction of public and private space.

The demographic evolutions from 1990 to the present, which are manifestly indicated by decrease of state control on the family through the sharp decrease in the birth rate, the great number of abortions (the peak years were 1990-1991), the increase (between 1990-1991) followed by the relative stability of the divorce rate, the slight increase of average life expectancy, strong emigration (record figures 1990-1991) that fluctuates along election cycles, and an infant mortality rate of 14 deaths per 1000 during the first year of life, which was the second highest rate in Europe in 2006 (surpassed only by Albania).

The first recorded demographic of a consensual unions as a civil status variant is cited in the Population and Households Census of March, 2002. According to the recorded data, Romanians are rather conservative when it comes to the question of marriage, where the great majority opted for traditional marriage partnerships. The proportion of population that opted for non-marital cohabitation represented only 3.8% of the whole population. The majority of these are from the younger generations, between 20 and 34 years old and living in the country side. Out of all people in non-marital partnerships, 73.6% were single, 17.9% divorced, 7.1% widowers, and 1.4% married.

Although the traditional marriage was found to be, still, the most frequent model of cohabitation in Romania, other forms of cohabitation appeared to be gaining territory. The demographic behavior transformation after 1990 was predictable, but the speed and intensity of change were found to be surprisingly high. These changes are due not only to the abrogation of forced childbearing legislation, but also to the economic and social constraints generated by the economic transition (the decrease in real income, unemployment, inflation, and the shortage of dwelling space). These elements all influenced decisions regarding marriage and reproduction.

In the long run, the state control measures have provoked important political and socio-psychological consequences through the imposition of the One-Party-State. The model of resources redistribution, based on an egalitarian ideology, created a balance of forces in which the individual was ever more dependent on the state systems. This balanced model invoked an infant behavior of society and the development of an assisted mentality (Gherghel, 2005).

By monopolizing the public space, the state forced the individual to withdraw into the familial environment. For this very reason, Romanians can be classified, in general, as those of similar East-European models, characterized on the one hand by a limited spread of cohabitation, combined with a high rate of fertility outside of marriage

(Hărăguș, 2005), and on the other hand by early marriage and maternity.

An entire system of values underpins the marital or non-marital partnership, comprising economic, social, cultural, religious, and psychological factors whose influences affect any outcome and are sometimes interdependent and interfere with choices and how they are made at. In this context, various kinds of motivations that make up the foundation upon which choosing a partner depends, which is not a random process, are of great interest. Numerous factors have a major influence, like the place of residence, level of instruction and education, social class, religion and religiosity, personal and family wealth, and even the interference of parents and close friends play a part and are taken into consideration. At the same time, the couple formation process itself is dependent on people's values regarding intimate relationships. Recent trends confirm ample changes of these values, provoking the transition from the modern family (couple), initiated by the romantic love, to the post-modern family (couple), with two careers, sustained by a "pure relationship" and "confluent love" (Rughiniș, 2002).

The causes of these transformations reside mainly in "atomization of various social circles," which allowed the increase of the importance of intimate relationship and lead to "society individualization." People are increasingly defined as individuals and not as mere members of a certain social category, and guided by values like happiness, liberty, and self fulfillment. Consequently, within private family life there is the individual private life of partners, who live the so called "pure relationship," characterized by democracy, symmetry and individual autonomy (Rughiniș, 2002).

Confluent love is active and contingent, as opposed to the notion of romantic love, which is "everlasting" and "unique." The postmodern individual searches for the special relationship and not for the special partner, so that what matters is what partner is suitable for mutual happiness and satisfaction. The quality of couple life became the essence of the family (Valér, 2005).

Romania is not an exception to the rule. Unlike other European countries, there is a certain lag in time, rhythm and intensity in the manifestation of changes in the demographic behavior of partnerships. The Romanian models fit in with those other Eastern-European models, which are characterized on one side by a wide spread of cohabitation, combined with high levels of extramarital fertility (Hărăguș, 2005), and on the other by young marriages and fertility at the same time. There are functioning differences between urban and rural, where the urban population has a behavior more oriented towards postmodern values of non-marital cohabitation or a family with two careers and postponement of fertility (see table no 1).

**Table no. 1. Relevant indicators for the demographic behaviour of partners
Romania and Bucharest - 1990 and 2005**

Indicator	Romania		Urban		Rural		Bucharest	
	1990	2005	1990	2005	1990	2005	1990	2005
Average age at first marriage for men (years)	25,0	28,5	25,1	28,9	24,9	27,9	26,0	30,5
Average age at first marriage for women (years)	22,0	25,2	22,6	26,1	21,3	23,5	23,7	27,9
Average age of husband at the date of divorce (years)	36,9	38,9	37,1	39,0	36,8	38,7	37,9	39,6
Average age of wife at the date of divorce (years)	33,4	35,4	33,9	35,8	32,7	34,4	34,9	36,7
Marriage rate (no. of marriages at 1000 inhabitants)	8,30	6,6	8,75	7,8	7,76	5,0	9,2	9,6*
Divorce rate (no. of divorces at 1000 inhabitants)	1,42	1,54	2,10	2,0	0,67	0,97	2,26	1,61
Percentage of birth outside marriage (%)	19,7**	28,5	17,1	25,0	22,1	32,6	20,1	25,6
Total fertility rate (no. of children/women)	1,8	1,3	1,6	1,2	2,3	1,5	1,4	1,1
Average age of mother at birth of their children (years)	25,0	26,7	25,7	27,6	24,5	25,7	26,0	28,8

• The marriages of the Romanian citizens abroad are included

• **data available from 1995

Source: „Situația demografică a României - 2005”, National Institute of Statistics, Bucharest, 2006;

„Anuarul demografic al României 2006”, INS, București, 2006.

The urban world is more inclined towards individualism, and the unconscious importation of new models of life arrangements. Consequently, there are varied influences and possible outcomes that may vary in their effects on different genders with respect to the new system of values, attitudes, and perceptions affecting the process of couple formation. With few notable exceptions, the level of adoption of the evolutionary indicators presented continued to accelerate progressively between 1990 and 2005, on both the residency location and gender differentiation, and, in most cases, gender dependent variations have also kept their same natural corresponding orientation.

At almost each significant indicator, the evolution of the population of Bucharest towards new lifestyles and social attitudes continues unabated, confirming an even higher intensity of accentuation of mentality, set attitudes, and newly accepted norms, especially where changes regarding nuptial and reproductive behavioral aspects are concerned. Therefore the population of the capital city tends to blindly and unconsciously imitate behavior patters newly imported from occidental countries, which would make it justifiable to label the newly formed Bucharest society as truly postmodern, particularly when measuring current behaviors and accepted norms and attitudes towards the process of couple formation.

On one hand, the evolution of the age factor at first marriage firmly reflects the trend toward postponement of marriage to much older ages than was previously the case, and consequentially, on the other hand, the increase of the corresponding age at divorce, which might be attributed to the change of mental attitudes with easier acceptance of alternative forms of cohabitation, be it the solitary model, or that of acquiring more than one partner along the life-cycle, either officially recognized or not. The increase of the percentage of children born outside marriage is relevant for these types of life arrangements: from 19.7% of all children born in 1995 to more than 25% of all children born in 2006. The increase of the mother's age at first birth also confirms the tendency toward deferment of this demographic event, or even to give it up altogether, if we take into consideration the marginal increase of the total fertility rate. The age of the average first-time mother in Bucharest 2005 was almost 29 years old, which is 3 years older than the same statistic from 15 years earlier.

Couple formation options correlate with a series of characteristics, including religious affiliation, as well as that of prospective partners. That is a particularly important factor that should be born in mind and taken into consideration when formulating a foundation for the conclusions of the inquiry, and one should pay specific attention to the population's religious structure, as declared through sample responses of the

Population and Households Census of March 2002, whether for the whole country, in general, or for Bucharest in particular. (Please see table no.2.)

Table no. 2 Population's structure according to religion at the Population's Census, March 2002

(% from total)

Religion	Romanian		Bucharest	
	Masculine	Feminine	Masculine	Feminine
Orthodox	87,08	86,52	96,00	96,10
Romano-catholic	4,68	4,79	1,11	1,27
Reformed	3,21	3,26	0,09	0,10
Pentecostal	1,42	1,57	0,22	0,29
Greco-catholic	0,86	0,91	0,33	0,39
Baptist	0,52	0,65	0,22	0,19
Non-believers	0,06	0,02	0,22	0,10
Without religion	0,07	0,04	0,07	0,05
Other or not declared	2,10	2,24	1,73	1,51
Total	100,00	100,00	100,00	100,00

Source: Own calculations on data from Recensământul populației și locuințelor – România-18 martie 2002, INS, Bucharest, 2003,

As can be gleaned from the table above, the majority of the country's population declares allegiance to the Orthodox faith, followed by Roman Catholicism, Reformed, and Pentecostal. Bucharest's population is found to be even more homogeneous, although still representative of the overall national structure. Therefore our best endeavors will be focused on gender differences in general, and even more sharply focused on religious affiliations, degree of adherence to stated beliefs as well as actual practice of religious ceremonies and rituals of both partners, and the effect these aspects may have on their respective social attitudes and corresponding behavioral influences.

Some methodological considerations

An inquiry was conducted in Bucharest, applied to a sample of 1453 individuals, and aimed at exploring, analyzing, and highlighting gender differences when balancing between the vast and ever changing myriad of necessities, perceptions, and expectations associated with sharing one's life with another person. The target population comprised adults between the ages of eighteen and forty-nine who declared having a partner for the last 2 months. In order to achieve an accurate representation of the selected sample, the structure of the target population of the 6 sectors of Bucharest was taken into consideration, as illustrated in table no 3:

Sector	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
Sample volume	156	268	303	230	226	270	1453

Table 3

Bucharest Target Sample Proportions per Sector

The sample was designed using a quota wherein the selection criteria were based

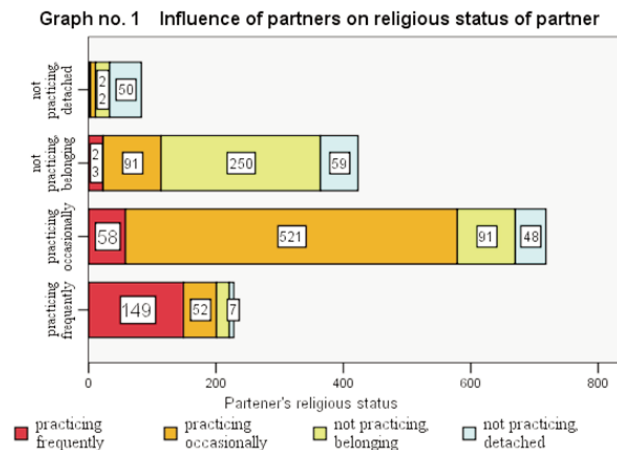
on the two main variables: gender and age. These two variables were decided upon in accordance with:

- data availability from administrative sources regarding the structure of the target population;
- simplicity and ease of identification, resulting in an easier job for the interview operators;
- strong correlation to the corresponding interest variables of the study.

The inquiry took place between the 15th and 21st of May, 2006, using the face-to-face interview method. The field research was carried out by the 3rd year Statistics students of the Faculty of Cybernetics, Statistics and Economic Informatics (Academy of Economic Studies of Bucharest) as an application of their studies of the Demography and Social Statistics and Sampling and Inquiry Techniques courses. The questionnaire used as a basis for the interviews comprised 38 questions, grouped into distinct sections regarding: general information, dating, first impression, the choice of a partner, marriage, cohabitation, intentions related to intended future reproduction considerations, and behavior and other ancillary and associated information. When analyzing the answers collected, we will present here only those differences related to gender and religious belief and practice that are statistically significant.¹

Religious status of the respondents in relation to that of their partners

By further analyzing the respondents' distribution, with particular reference to their beliefs, practices, and commitment to religion (as depicted in chart no.1) we can deduce that even if only 15.7% are frequent practitioners, a pervading feeling of belonging to their specific religion can be detected among most respondents (49.4% practice occasionally, and 29.1% have a strong feeling of belonging but rarely practice any rituals).

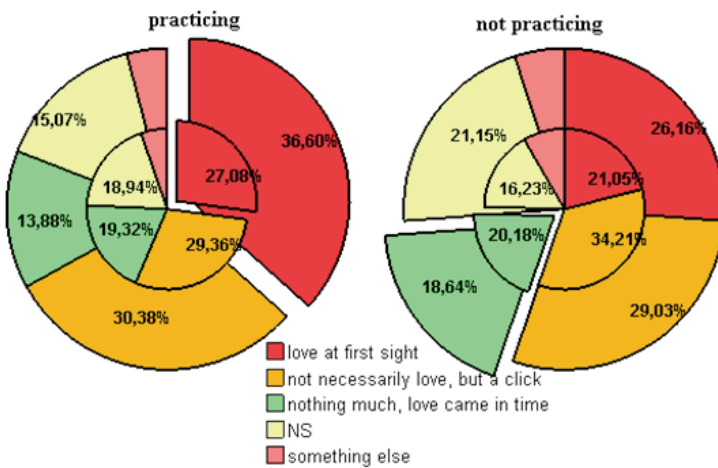


The religious behavior² of a partner coincides with that of the respondent for 65.4% of those who practice frequently, and an even higher percentage of 72.6% was detected for those who practice occasionally. A lower but still significant percentage of 59.1% was detected for those who do not practice, even though the feeling of belonging to a religion exists, while a percentage of 59.1% was measured for that part of the sample respondents who declared that they do not have a religious practice or behavior.

First impression

A larger proportion of men (32.42%) than women (25.26%) declared that they felt "love at first sight."³ Differences in attitude exist between practicing and non-practicing individuals. A rather strong trend emphasizing the existence of a strong feeling between partners at their first date, manifested more strongly by the masculine gender, representing 36.6% of male practicing partners, compared with a lower percentage of 26.16% for those who do not practice religious ritual regularly.⁴

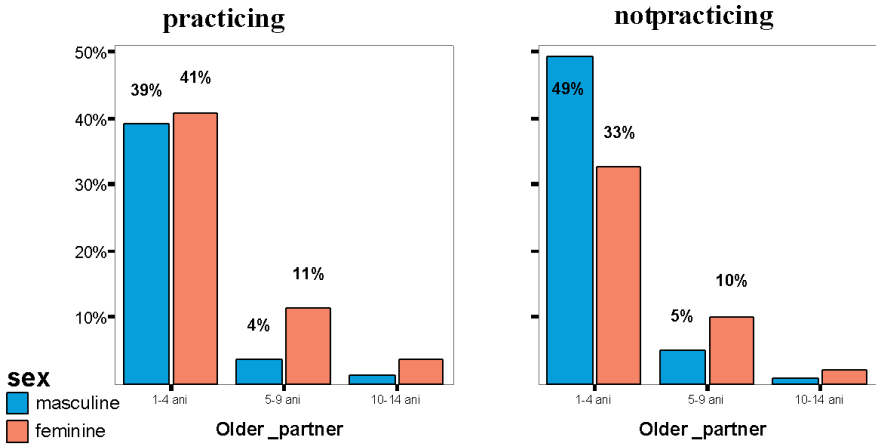
Graph no. 2. Feelings at first date function of religion
masculine (outer circle) feminine (inner circle)



Age discrepancy

Men (88.38%) in a larger proportion than women (72.85%) declared that they would accept living with someone older than themselves by a difference of 1-4 years, but less man (8.61%) than women (20.93%) would accept living with someone older than themselves by a difference 5-9 years (as depicted in chart no 3)⁵.

Gender difference has even more weight for non-practicing individuals. Male respondents in this category indicated that they would easily accept a partner older than themselves. While only 39% of practicing males would accept a partner up to four years older than themselves, non-practicing males indicated that they would accept an older partner at an even higher percentage of 49% of cases.⁶ These results confirm the contin-

Graph no. 3: The degree of acceptance of an older partner given religious status

uation of the traditional model of couple formation wherein the man is older than the woman.

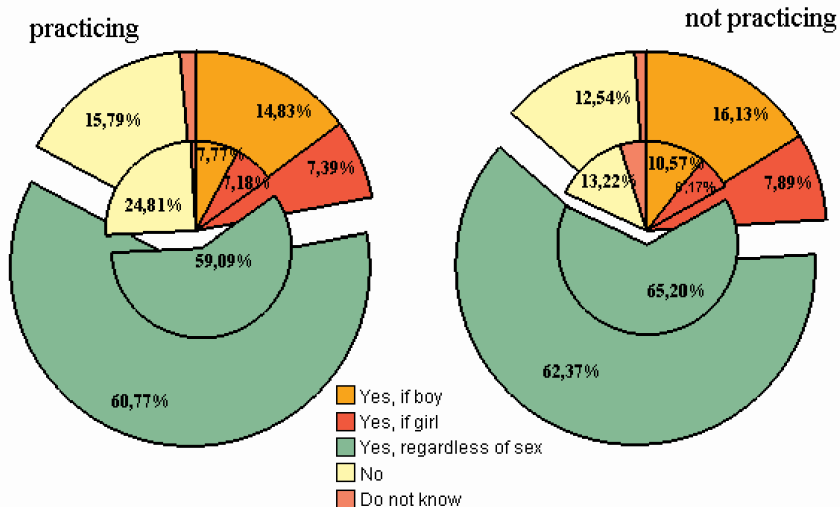
A much larger proportion of women (29.89%) than men (4.88%) would not accept living with someone younger, regardless of the degree of age difference. Men in general would accept a partner 3.4 years older than themselves on average, while women would accept a slightly larger difference of some 4.5 years on average.

More men (54.38%) than women (49.6%) declared that physical attraction does count at youth.

Premarital sex

Both genders would encourage their children to live with an intended spouse, regardless of their gender, with the exception of a small proportion of both sexes who would not.⁷

Graph no. 4. Would you advice your child to have sexual relations before marriage?
 masculine (outer circle) / feminine (inner circle)



By further analyzing the aspect of religious belief in considering sexual relationships before marriage one can detect firm indications of rejection of this particular notion much more frequently among women than men. For practicing women it almost does not matter what sex their offspring may be in influencing their strict refusal to the notion of sex before marriage, while there hardly exists any difference between practicing and non-practicing men when it comes to differentiating on the notion of sex before marriage. Out of the 101 men who would not advise their children to live with a prospective partner before marriage, 50.5% are 40 years old or older. The proportion of those who would advise their children to live with their chosen partner before marriage decreases with age. For instance, 72.1% of the 20-24 age group approve of this practice, compared with only 51% from those 40 years old or older.

As for women, even more have a distinctly different attitude, where 21.32% (compared with 14.49% for men) choose not to advise their children to live with a prospective partner before marriage⁸.

Both genders agreed that the start-up of a family should occur only when both partners have realized economic stability.

Ideal Partner's attributes

Regarding the importance of the partner's attributes, both genders place fidelity at the top of the list, followed by intelligence and sense of humor. Following that, men rank the other relevant attributes differently from women: men rank physical appearance first, followed by household skills and then material wealth, while women ranked household skills and material wealth first, followed by physical appearance.

Men					Women					
Material wealth 6,22	Household skills 7,53	Physical appearance 7,81	Sense of humour 8,06	Intelligence 8,53	Fidelity 9,2 9,25	Intelligence 8,71	Sense of humour 8,15	Material wealth 7,34	Household skills 7,41	Physical appearance 7,05

The changing nature of reasons for marriage as influenced by evolving lifestyle and values system in the post-modern urban society represented by the inhabitants of the Romanian capital is summarized below.

							Imminence of a child birth	Marriage is the expression of true love
Formality for the parent's sake		Financial and/or administrati ve reasons		Neither of the partners did want to live with parents	Next logical step after living together	When couple wants to have children		
3,89	<	3,95	Men	4,85	5,42	6,32	6,84	7,2
3,93	>	3,37	Women	4,35	5,53	6,00	6,53	7,64

As can be gleaned from the results summarized above, both genders identify similar basic reasons when deciding to commit to a marital engagement, especially the top five priorities, while both genders vary slightly when considering their sixth and seventh points on their lists of reasons.

The next natural step in human endeavor, after marriage (albeit belated and carefully considered) and giving birth to a first child, is the decision whether or not to have a second child. There are a number of factors that can influence that decision, both as incentives and as inhibiting factors. When it comes to ranking these factors, the results from the sample are summarized bellow.

Men							Workplace stability
						Own house	
				Excellent conditions for instruction and supervision in the day care network	Support in children's raising and supervision		
		Family revenues $\geq 500\text{€}/\text{month}$	State allocation for children $\geq 50\text{€}/\text{month}/\text{child}$				
	A state budget financed wage of 100 €/ month for a grandparent						
Friendly fees for kindergartens							
5.29	5.54	5.83	6.01	5.42	6.53	7.7	8.35

Women							Workplace stability
						Family revenues $\geq 500\text{€}/\text{month}$	
					Own house		
			Excellent conditions for instruction and supervision in the day care network	Support in children's raising and supervision			
	Friendly fees for kindergartens	State allocation for children $\geq 50\text{€}/\text{month}/\text{child}$					
A state budget financed wage of 100€/ month for a grandparent							
5.49	5.81	6.07	6.64	6.64	7.61	7.9	8.23

As can be deduced from analyzing the results above, the list of factors affecting the decision making process for men and women, when it comes to deciding on a second baby, varies when it concerns very personal issues, while such factors are similarly expressed where it concerns factors derived from broader social values.

In **conclusion**, couple formation behavior of men and women in Bucharest is still a modern, with some traditional accents, although post-modern values imported from Western Europe along the way to EU accession have begun to be more and more present as a natural derivative of harmonization of laws and norms, both public and private. Adding to this momentum of change is the influence resulting from foreign firms investing in the country's varied industries, allied to corporate cultural training that has naturally introduced concepts of personal freedom of expression, manifesting itself broadly as a rebellion against all things old or associated with the old regime and its perceived values. The influence of free media, in particular, has had a great impact in shaping the

attitudes of youth towards romantic love, whether through movies, literature, or the proliferation of entertainment programs of different formats.

Bibliography

1. Ajzen, Icek, *Attitudes, personality, and behavior*, (2nd Edition). Milton-Keynes, England: Open University Press, 2005.
2. Beck, Ulrich, *Risk society : towards a new modernity*. London, Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1992.
3. Bozon, Michel, « Les femmes et l'écart d'âge entre conjoints. Une domination consentie. I. Types d'union et attentes en matière d'écart d'âge », *Population*, 2, 1990, p. 327-360.
4. Bozon, Michel, « Le mariage en moins », *Société française*, no. 26, janv-mars, 1988, p. 9-19.
5. Bozon, Michel, HÉRAN, François, *La formation du couple. Textes essentiels pour la sociologie de la famille*. Paris: Editions La Découverte, 2006.
6. Brădățan, Cristina, „Sisteme de familie în țările est-europene” in *Sociologie românească*, no.1-4/2001, p. 366-374.
7. Castells, Manuel, *Le pouvoir de l'identité. L'ère de l'information*. Paris : Fayard, 1999.
8. Ciupercă, Cristian, „Modificarea rolurilor în cuplul contemporan”, in *Sociologie românească*, no.4/1999, p. 77-89.
9. Gherghel, Ana, *La monoparentalité en Roumanie. Marginalité sociale ou modèle familial alternative, these présentée a la Faculté des études supérieures de l'Université Laval*, <http://www.theses.ulaval.ca/2005/22443/22443.pdf>, consulted on 04.03.2007.
10. Ghetau, Vasile, « Socio-economic si demografic : o introducere », *Populatie si societate*, no.1, 1997, pp. 2-3
11. Giddens, Anthony, *The transformations of intimacy: sexuality, love, and eroticism in modern societies*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992.
12. Girard, Alain., *Le Choix du conjoint. Une enquete psychosociologique en France*, (3rd Edition). Paris: INED, 1981.
13. Hărăguș, Mihaela, „Modele de constituire a familiei”, in Muresan, Cornelia (coord.), *Ancheta pilot Generații și gen la Cluj. Diferențe de gen și intergeneraționale în comportamentul reproductiv și de parteneriat familial*. Cluj: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2005, pp. 63-80.
14. Laplante, Benoît, Miller, Caia, Malherbe, Paskall, “Cohabitation and the pace of the second demographic transition in Quebec. The evolution of beliefs and opinions on matters related to marriage and sexual behavior of French-speaking Catholic Quebecers and English-speaking Protestant Ontarians”, <http://iussp2005.princeton.edu/abstractViewer.aspx?submissionId=50472>, consulted on 04.03.2007
15. Leher, Evelyn, “Religion as a Determinant of Economic and Demographic Behavior in the United States”, <http://ftp.iza.org/dp1390.pdf>, consulted on 05.03.2007
16. Mureșan, Cornelia (coord.), *Ancheta pilot Generații și gen la Cluj. Diferențe de gen și intergeneraționale în comportamentul reproductiv și de parteneriat familial*, Cluj: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2005.
17. Rughiniș, Cosima, „Valori europene în relațiile intime. Studiu comparativ”, in *Sociologie românească*, no. 1-2/2002, p. 38-75.

18. Sandu, Dumitru, *Spatiul social al tranziției*, București : Polirom, 1999

19. Valér, Veres, „Orientări valorice și atitudini privind familia, cuplul și creșterea copiilor” in Mureșan, Cornelia (coord.), *Ancheta pilot Generații și gen la Cluj. Diferențe de gen și intergeneraționale în comportamentul reproductiv și de parteneriat familial*, Cluj: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2005, pp. 133-142.

Notes:

1. The following test was devised as a statistical tool comparing and analysing the significance of gender differences as obtained from the results of the survey questionnaire. The comparison of two Test's statistics is:

$$z_c = \frac{w_1 - w_2}{\sqrt{\bar{w}(1 - \bar{w})\left(\frac{1}{n_1} + \frac{1}{n_2}\right)}}$$

where:

w1= observed proportion in sample 1;

w2= observed proportion in sample 2

n1= sample volume 1;

n2= sample volume 2;

w = estimated variance based on the samples' proportions is: .

$$\bar{w} = \frac{n_1 w_1 + n_2 w_2}{n_1 + n_2}$$

The calculated value is then compared with the theoretic value, corresponding to the desired significance level.

The bilateral test's hypotheses are:

H0: $p_1 = p_2$ and H1: $p_1 \neq p_2$ (p_1 and p_2 are proportions in the target population)

Contingency Coefficient, Pearson's C was used to test the strength of the correlation. The contingency coefficient is an adjustment to phi, intended to adapt it to tables larger than 2-by-2. C is equal to the square root of chi-square divided by chi-square plus n, the sample size:

$$C = \sqrt{\chi^2 / (\chi^2 + n)}$$

C has a maximum approaching but never totally reaching 1.0 only for large tables, and some researchers recommend it only for 5-by-5 tables or larger. For smaller tables the level of association will be estimated, even when all observations are on the diagonal of a table.

2. Other important aspects can also be revealed by the analysis of the respondents' distribution of their religious status, as compared with that of their corresponding partners. The 2 value of 1081.409 (significance level of 0,0000001) calculated on the basis of a contingency table designed for the variables: „religious status of respondent” and „religious status of the partner” shows a strong relationship between the religious behavior of the partners within a couple. The contingency coefficient $C = 0.653$ indicates that association is of medium intensity.

3. The difference between the two genders is statistically significant ($z_c = 3.014$) at

a significance level $\alpha=0.05$.

4. This difference is statistically significant ($z_c=4,29$) for a probability of 99.99%

5. The difference between the two genders is statistically significant ($z_c=7.43$) at a significance level at $\alpha=0.01$.

6. The difference between the above two categories is statistically significant ($z_c=3,2$), at a significance level of $\alpha =0,0013$.

7. The difference is statistically significant at $\alpha=0.01$. Age has a statistically significant influence for $\alpha=0.01$. The contingency coefficient is 0.228, which, even if small, is still statistically significant.

8. The difference is statistically significant ($z_c=3.38$) at a significance level of $\alpha=0.01$.

Statistical Indicators System regarding Religious Phenomena¹

Abstract:

The approaching ways in religious phenomenon quantitative studies are, most of the times, based only on the evolution of adherent flows and population structure from a religious point of view. In this paper, an integrated statistical indicators system will be designed. The main purpose of the system is to enhance the quality and coherence of the religious phenomenon. The most important indicators from the integrated system are: context indicators (political, economical, socio-cultural, demographical), basic indicators, level and structure indicators, participation indicators, resource indicators (spiritual, human and pecuniary), quality, efficiency and outcomes (religious freedom, social connections, international relationships). Designing a complete, coherent system of indicators is necessary for a correct approach in studying the religious phenomenon. Statistical indicators can supply quantitative data for the operational description of the religious phenomenon. The indicators' system makes possible not only a descriptive analysis but also some advanced statistical techniques (e.g. regression and correlation method).

Claudiu Herteliu

University Assistant, PhD

University of Economics

Bucharest, Romania

E-mail: klaherteliu@yahoo.com

Key words:

indicators system, statistical indicators, quantitative, indicators, religion

Motto:

“Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted.”

Albert Einstein

Preamble

Various systems of statistical indicators exist and are unanimously accepted from the system of macroeconomic statistical indicators, financial indicators, and the corresponding educational media indicators. From this viewpoint, designing a system of statistical indicators for the religious area represents a challenge but, at the same time an implementation of statistic system analysis in the field of religious studies.

Why should one come up with statistical indicators about religion? The answers are various and pay attention to:

- a correct and comprehensive operational description
- making possible quantitative analyses
- descriptive statistic methods
- advanced statistical techniques
- studying religion as a system
- making easier comparisons (regional, international, and inter-religious etc.)

Before proceeding to the composition of the indicators system, we must answer the question: “What is a statistical indicator?”. Isaic-Maniu, Pecican, Ștefănescu, Vodă, Wagner (2003)² consider that: „the statistical indicator is an instrument that characterizes – in numbers – the structure, correlations, and time changes of various socio-economic phenomena” while Johnstone (1985)³ believes that “the indicator is operational

description of a state.”

Starting from these definitions, in the construction of the system of statistical indicators, to every indicator, we will associate a card that will include elements such as: definition, the purpose of utilization, the method and the computing bases, the data needed for the computation of the indicator, the data sources, aggregation level, interpretation of the indicator, standards of quality, and the characterization limits of the indicator. The format of the card follows:

Indicator	
Characteristics	
Definition	
Purpose	
Symbol	
Calculus method	
Formula	
Data needed	
Source of data	
Type	
Class/ category	
Aggregation level	
Interpretation	
Quality standards	

For reasons that concern the space, this material will present just the list of indicators, followed by their definition and some short comments.

Regarding the classification of indicators there are many methods through which we can achieve this structure depending on the chosen criteria. The most important criteria and the way in which indicators are structured are:

By data type:

- absolute
- relative;
- average;

By the scale of measurement:

- measured on the nominal scale;
- measured on the ordinal scale;
- measured on the interval scale;
- measured on the “continuous scale.

By the adding way:

- primary
- derived.

By time occurrence:

- of interval
- of moment
- hybrids.

Except for a few indicators (as are for instance those of the contextual subsystem), the overwhelming majority of indicators presented afterwards are unusual.

The system of indicators is composed by various subsystems. We present a possible arrange-

ment of subsystems comprising also the indicators that belong to the respective subsystems:

1. Indicators of context
 - 1.1. Indicators of the politic context
 1. Form of government (GOV)
 2. Legislative regulations of the religious area (LEG)
 3. Connection type between state and church (STCH)
 - 1.2. Indicators of the economic context
 1. Gross Domestic Product - per capita (GDPC)
 2. The amount of financial resources drawn to "religious field" as percentage of GDP (AFRGDP)
3. Unemployment rate (UR)
 - 1.3. Socio-Cultural indicators
 1. Illiteracy Rates (IR)
 2. Structure of population from the viewpoint of ethnic affiliation (ETN)
 - 1.4. Indicators of demographic context
 1. Population (P)
 2. General birth rate (GBR)
 3. General fertility rate (GFR)
 4. General wedding rate (GWR)
 5. General divorce rate (GDR)
2. Primary indicators of classification in the religious system
 1. Number of divine persons (DVN)
 2. Rites for birth (rebirth) (RTBH)
 3. Rite for marriage (RMRG)
 4. Mixed marriages (MXMRG)
 5. Ways to tackle the divorces (WTD)
 6. Rites for death (RTDT)
 7. Woman ordaining (WO)
 8. Active methods to promote "the truth" (AMT)
 9. Passive methods to promote "the truth" (PMT)
 10. Iconography type (ICONT)
3. Indicators of level and structure
 - 1.. Number of existing religious groups (NRG)
 2. Structure of the population from viewpoint of the religious affiliation (RLG)
 3. Minimum number of religious groups for the establishment of religious oligopoly (OLIG)
 4. The structure of the population from viewpoint of the active religious affiliation (ACTRLG)
 5. The balance of legally constituted families (LEGFAM)
 6. The balance of multi-confessional families (MCONFAM)
4. Indicators of participation
 1. The intensity of religious implication (IRI)
 2. The average annual time spent in religious activities (ATRA)
 3. Rate of the religious migration (RRM)
 4. The coefficient of religious mobility (CRM)
5. Indicators of resources
 - 5.1. Indicators of patrimonial resources
 1. The total number of churches and other religious establishments (chapels,

monasteries, small convents etc.) (CHS)

2. Number of establishments with activities similar to religious ones (EAR)
3. Real estate owned by religious groups (REOR)
4. Other possessions (art, cars, aircrafts, ships, boats etc.) (OP)
5. Movable property and financial resources (MPFR)

- 5. 2. Indicators of human resources

1. Number of believers (BLV)
2. Number of "active" believers (church-goers) (ABLV)
3. Number of priests/ pastors/ imams/ rabbies or other designations (PPIR)
4. Number of persons with management positions in the clerical body of the confessional organization (MNCG)
5. Number of monks or members of other forms of religious organizations

(MNK)

6. Number of subsidiaries (members like: scouts, youth, women, students etc.)

(SBSD)

7. Number of parishes or other forms of organization found in territory

(PRSH)

5. 3. Indicators of spiritual resources

1. Number of years since establishment (AGE)
2. Number of years since recognition (age) (AGER)
3. Number of centers - historic national cradles like (Putna, Curtea of Arges

etc.) (NHC)

4. Number of centers - historic international cradles like (Jerusalem, Mecca, and Bethlehem etc.) (IHC)

5. Number of canonized persons (CNZ)

6. Indicator of quality, efficiency and results

1. Types of religious organization (ORGT)
2. Types of financing (FINT)
3. Average annual number of religious celebration days (ACD)
4. Average annual number religious celebration days off the current activity

(ARCD)

5. The minimum age of one's can exercise power (MINAG)

6. Rate of canonization compared to the number of the centuries since recognition (CNZR)

7. Financial resources attracted (FRA)
8. Believers parish ratio (BPR)
9. Believers clergy ratio (BCR)
10. Clergy parish ratio (CPR)
11. Rate of administrative positions within the clergy (RAPC)
12. Average age of a believer (AVGBLV)
13. Average age of a cleric (AVGCLG)
14. Number of people socially assisted by the religious institutions (PSAR)
15. The financial size of charitable actions initiated by religious institutions

(FINSAR)

16. Number of military/ paramilitary organizations sponsored the church

(MLT)

17. The degree of religious freedom (DRF)

1. Indicators of context

1.1. Indicators of political context

1. *Form of Government (GOV)*: is intended to set up the political context in order to subsequently study if this interferes in any way with the religious area. The possible options (in an selective list) are: (con) federation, anarchy, communism, dictatorship, constitutional monarchy, oligarchy, parliamentary republic, presidential republic, totalitarian system, socialism, ecclesiastic state, sultanate, theocracy etc.

2. *Type of legislative regulation in the religious area (LEG)*: in every country, there are laws and regulations in the religious area. It might be useful to characterize, on a ordinal scale, the legislative regulations of the religious area in a certain country. The laws may regulate one of the following: - absolute religious freedom; - religious freedom; - diminished religious freedom; - bound the religious freedom; - forbid the religious freedom.

3. *Connection type between state and church (STCH)* reflects, by definition, how the relation between state and church in a certain country is regulated. It might be useful to characterize the circumstances that exist in a certain country on a nominal scale and from the perspective of the separation between state and church. The indicator is measured on a nominal scale. This means that the most appropriate option from the list will be chosen. The bindery type can be: - separation⁴; - unification⁵; - transition⁶.

1. 2. Indicators of the economic context

From the many indicators that illustrate the economic context, the following draw attention:

1. *Gross Domestic Product per capita (GDPC)* is, by definition, the total volume (from viewpoint of value) of goods and services produced by a certain country within its borders in a specific period of time, related to the population number of that country. The indicator intends to allow international comparisons because relating Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to the population number shows also information about the level of work performance, thereby excluding difficulties in comparing countries of different sizes.

2. *The amount of financial resources drawn to "religious field" as percentage of GDP (AFRGDP)* represents the total volume of financial resources attracted by the religious institutions as percentage of GDP in a period of time. The indicator is intended to measure the financial level of the entire religious area, in order to subsequently make comparisons with other macroeconomic indicators from the point of view of international or inter-religious comparisons.

3. *Unemployment rate (UR)* represents the number of active persons in search of a job and are currently unemployed. This indicator is intended to measure the level of unoccupied working force on a 100 points scale.

1.3. Indicators of the socio-cultural context

One may include the following in the category of the socio-cultural indicators:

1. *Illiteracy rate (IR)* is, by definition, the ratio of people without writing, reading, or counting abilities from the total population, being at least 10 years old, calculated for a specific moment in time. Education is one of the key factors of human development. This indicator intends to express the degree of the lack of elementary education.

2. *Structure of the population from viewpoint of the ethnic affiliation (ETN)* is by definition the ratio of ethnic communities from the target population. This is a fundamental indicator used in the socio-cultural analysis in a determinate geographic area.

1.4. Indicators of the demographic context.

The category of demographic context indicators includes:

1. *The population (P)* represents the number of people that live in a specified territory. It is one of the most used, known, and recognized indicators and describes a certain geographic location. Therefore, this indicator represents a stage for subsequent complex analyses.

2. *General birth rate (GBR)* shows the number of newborns (by intensity) within a human population, measured in a specified period of time. Mainly, this indicator (associated with other demographic indicators) will permit analyses on future promises of the studied population or the causes that lead to certain evolutions in the past.

3. *General fertility rate (GFR)* shows the level (by intensity)/number of newborns within the female population of fertile age (15-49 years) in a specified period of time. Mainly, this indicator (associated with other demographic indicators) will permit analysis on future promises of the studied population or the causes that lead to certain evolutions in the past.

4. *General wedding rate (GWR)* is, by definition, the level (by intensity)/ number of marriages within the total population, in a specified period of time. The basic cell of society is the family. The religious institutions encourage the foundation of a new family. The indicator is a classic one and permits a quantitative measurement of status.

5. *General divorce rate (GDR)* reflects the number of divorces within the total population, studied in a specified period of time. The religious institutions discourage, in general, the divorce. Mainly, this indicator illustrates, from a quantitative perspective, the impact divorces have within society.

2. Primary indicators of classification in the religious system

In this subsystem the indicators monitor the place of religious institutions in the religious system.

The list of indicators:

1. *Number of divine persons (DVN)* represents the total number of people considered saints in a religious institution. The indicator enables the inclusion of certain religious institutions in the category of monotheist or polytheist religions.

2. *Birth rituals (rebirth) (RTBH)*. This indicator helps to emphasize the differences between the forms of manifestation with the occasion of birth. The aim is to subsequently accomplish classifications and statistical calculations based on various answers. A selective list of variants of answers is: - baptism through splash; - baptism through immersion; - public confession of faith; - ritual dances; - circumcision; - ritual fires.

3. *Marriage rituals (RMRG)*. Just like the previous indicator, this one is also intended to emphasize the differences between forms of manifestation with the occasion of marriage. The possible options (selective list) are: - public ceremony; - public ceremony with an important role for godparents; - public ceremony with an important role for bridesmaid/ best man (groomsman); - laic ceremony (only in front of the officiant).

4. *Mixed marriages (MXMRG)*. Is intended to present the procedure wherewith a

religious institution tackles a wedding ceremony between two partners belonging to different religious institutions. The indicator reflects the research of the procedural differences between different religious institutions regarding the marriage between partners of different religions. The purpose is to use the information for subsequent statistical integration. Possible variants are: - accept; - accept if the partner with another religion comes from an admitted religious institution; - interdiction.

5. *Ways to tackle divorce (WTD)*. The indicator intends to research the methods of the religious institutions to tackle the case of divorce. Possible variants are: - accept; - accept in specific situations (for instance: infidelity); - interdiction.

6. *Rites for death (RTDT)*. The indicator emphasizes the different forms of manifestation on a death occasion. Possible variants (selective list) are: - inhumation with public ceremony; - inhumation without public ceremony; - terrestrial cremation; - cremation on water; - mummification.

7. *Woman ordaining (WO)* emphasize the method wherewith a religious institution tackles the ordaining of a woman. Possible variants are: - accept; - interdiction.

8. *Active methods to promote "the truth" (AMT)* reflect the active forms wherewith a religious institution promotes (or promoted) the creed, the doctrine and/or lifestyle. Possible variants (selective list) are: - missionary activities; - ceremonials/ current rites; - public conferences; - peaceful politic decision⁷; - politic decision after a war; - pedlary activities.

9. *Passive methods to promote "the truth" (PMT)* reflect the passive forms wherewith a religious institution promotes (or promoted) the creed, the doctrine and/or lifestyle. Possible variants (selective list) are: - broadcasts on media channels⁸ or specialized channels; - with the help of educational systems or using educational channels; - with the help of medical assistance systems; - with the help of social assistance systems.

10. *Iconography type (ICONT)* represents the iconographic forms (if they exist) adopted and accepted in one of the current religious practices. Possible options (selective list) are: - painting⁹; - sculpture¹⁰; - bas-reliefs; - arras, embroideries; - miscellaneous objects (amulets, pipes, trumperies etc.); - gems (chainlets, lockets, armlets etc.); - gestic (the cross sign); - smoking accessories.

3. Indicators of level and structure

In this subsystem the indicators are:

1. *Number of existing religious groups (NRG)* represents the total number of religious groups legally constituted and recognized "as is" in a distinct geographical area (usually a country). The indicator measures the level of flexibility and easiness in obtaining a "license" for a certain communion. It reflects the degree of religious freedom, compatibility and interest on which raises a certain communion within a country. Practically, it counts the number of religious groups recognized by an authority.

2. *The structure of the population from viewpoint of the self declared religious affiliation (RLG)*. The indicator is a classical one and maybe the most common used indicator for the study of religious phenomena. Based on its results, international comparisons can be made or it can be characterize the existent type of "religious market". This indicator is calculated by relating the total number of persons affiliated to a religious denomination to the total population investigated. Facultative, the result can be expressed as a percentage by multiplication with 100.

3. *Minimum number of religious groups for the establishment of religious oligopoly (OLIG)*. By definition, represents the number of confessions, calculated on a descending sorted scale depending on the ratios obtained, assuring a limit percentage () of the total number of believers. The limit percentage can be set, for example, to a level of 80%. The indicator measures the degree of saturation/ diversification existent on the “religious market” in a certain location.

4. *The structure of the population from the viewpoint of active religious affiliation (ACTRLG)*. By definition, is calculated from the balance of religious institutions and the active religious population, taking into consideration the IIR.

5. *The balance of legally constituted families (LEGFAM)* represents, by definition, the specific weight of the family that is legally registered compared to the total number of families. The indicator shows, from a quantitative perspective, how the concept of “family - basic cell of society” is perceived in the daily practice.

6. *The balance of multi-confessional families (MCONFAM)* represents the number of families that consists of at least two believers of another religious institution compared to the total number of families. It intends to illustrate the degree of opening, freedom, and overcome of confessional barriers within a family.

4. Indicators of participation

Some of the indicators of the participation subsystem are:

1. *The intensity of religious implication (IRI)* is, by definition, the number of occasions when a person demonstrates an appurtenance to a certain religious community by assisting to church-service/ divine service. The indicator measures the active implication in the religious outpourings of a communion that a person belongs to. The intensity of the religious implication is an indicator that can be used in order to measure the degree of outpouring of the religious appurtenance even if this appurtenance is just a purely formal one. Not without importance is choosing the reference period for which IRI is calculated.

2. *The average annual time reserved to religious activities (ATRA)* represents the average number of hours that a person participates in religious activities in a year. This indicator can be much more accurate than IRI as it takes into account the effective time allocated to religious activities. The more hours allocated the religious activities, the more increased the participation rate. Although in the case of the production we can speak of substitution, in this case we can also detect ambiguity (for instance: can a consistent donation be equivalent to the participation in a certain number of religious activities?)

3. *Rate of the religious migration (RRM)* represents the number of people who change or give up a religion, compared to a reference term. The indicator illustrates the level of existing effervescence on the “religious market”.

4. *The coefficient of religious mobility (CRM)* shows the average number of religious institutions to which an individual is expected to appertain throughout his life. The indicator reflects the existing inertia among the believers from a certain location. It is tightly linked to the transfer rate, but the interpretation is realized in a larger picture.

5. Indicators of resources

The subsystem of indicators that look at religious funds is:

5. 1. Indicators of patrimonial resources

5. 2. Indicators of human resources
5. 3. Indicators of spiritual resources

5.1. Indicators of patrimonial resources

The indicators focused on patrimonial resources are:

1. *The total number of churches and other religious establishments (chapels, monasteries, small convents etc.) (CHS)* represents the total volume of units/ locations having as principal destinations religious practices. The main goal is to obtain the analysis of the status quo from a patrimonial viewpoint. Also, based on this indicator, other derivate indicators will be introduced.

2. *Number of establishments with activities similar to religious ones (EAR)* represent the total volume of units/ institutions/ locations belonging to the religious institutions but activating in a religious similar domain. The main goal is to study the implication of religious institutions in other activities than direct religious.

3. *Real estate owned by religious groups (REOR)* represents the total area of real estate owned by religious groups. Because of the different types of real estate (farming land, forest, ponds, orchards, vineyards, city land etc.) it is difficult to interpret indicator values. A solution would be grouping of the real estate by types as well as the assessment of the real estate.

4. *Other possessions (art, automobiles, aircrafts, ships, boats etc.) (OP)* represents the total value of the goods owned by the religious groups. The main goal is to estimate the mobile patrimony of the religious institutions in order to subsequently create comparisons (in time, inter, inter-regional, inter-religious, international etc.). Because the products are heterogeneous, the aggregation can't be achieved unless these possessions are assessed. Although, in the most cases, the stated goal of the religious institutions isn't a patrimonial one, yet the evaluation of the possessions unveil the magnitude of that institution.

5. *Movable property and financial resources (MPFR)* represents the total value of liquidities and other types of personal property (shares, bonds, debentures etc.) owned by a religious communion. Considering the fact that banking operations are confidential, a flaw of this indicator is the one based only on the transparency demonstrated by the religious institutions in its account books. Also, the value of movable property (shares, debentures) can have fluctuant values and, consequently, the value of the indicator is valid just for the reference period and comparisons can generate interpretation errors.

5.2. Indicators of human resources

1. *Number of believers (BLV)* represents the total volume of the population self-declared to belong to a certain religious communion localized in a geographic area and corresponding to a distinct period of time. The main goal is to measure and position every religious institution that operates in a particular geographical area. Secondary goals can be: assignation of budgetary financial resources (if applicable), assignation of places in the educational confessional system etc.

2. *Number of "active" believers (church-goers) (ABLV)*, by definition, represents the total volume of population self-declared to belong to a certain religious communion and to respect a minimum limit thresholds from viewpoint of IRI. This total volume has a geographic localization and a specific period of timed referenced and well delimited.

Additionally to C is a accuracy offered by the fact that only those persons who demonstrate an active religious appurtenance at least to a superior level of a fixed limit () in a specified period of time shall be declared as appertaining to a certain communion. A person¹¹ for who's annual IRI isn't at least equal to shall be included into the "no religion" category. For example in a period of one year could be set at the level of 12. The indicator refines a bit the religious appurtenance. There are many situations when the person declares to belong to a certain religion but, in fact, attends church only for Easter or Christmas. In these conditions, it is more accurate to include these persons in the "no religion" category.

3. *Number of priests/ pastors/ imams/ rabbis (PPIR)* represents by definition the total number of persons that have attributions to pastorate the parishioners of a religious organization. The indicator intends to study a religious organization from viewpoint of organization type and its capacity to show the religious services necessary to the parishioners is more accurate.

4. *Number of persons with management positions in the clerical body of the confessional organization (MNCG)* represent the total number of persons from the clerical body that have management positions in the organization of the institution. The indicator intends to study a religious organization from viewpoint of the organization type and compares different organizational systems from the viewpoint of size of management body.

5. *Number of monks or members of other forms of religious organizations (MNK)* represents the total number of persons from the institutionalized body of a church (others than the clergy - for example: monasteries and small convents). The indicator intends to study the size of the alternative forms of institutionalized manifestation.

6. *Number of subsidiaries (members like: scouts, youth, women, students etc.) (SBSD)* represents the result of a simple count of the subsidiaries (for instance: of scouts, of youth, of women, of students etc.) affiliated to a religious institution. The indicator intends to study the amplitude of the adjacent forms of organization within a population with certain confessional affiliation.

7. *Number of parishes or other forms of organizations found in territory (PRSH)* represents the total volume of the territorial organizations belonging to a certain religious institution existing in a specific geographical area. The indicator intends to emphasize the territorial organizational efficiency of an institution. For sure, the number of territorial organizations (of the parishes) illustrates the degree of penetration of a religious institution on a certain market. Thus, a new born religion can't have "subsidiaries" in any village. On the other hand, an infrastructure that is developed at all levels of territorial administration (even in villages) doesn't necessarily suggest a positive situation. The size of aparishis also of interest. This is because, through their nature, the religious services offered by a religious institution have an intimate character.

Consequently, the services shall show the quality of the relationship between the "supplier" (in most cases the priest/ pastor/ rabbi/ imam) and every parishioner. A good communication can be achieved rarely in a religious community of thousands and more often in one of hundreds.

5.3. Indicators of spiritual resources

The following are indicators for the spiritual resources:

1. *Number of years that passed since the establishment (AGE)* represents the num-

ber of years that passed since the establishment (the entry on a certain market) of a religious institution up to the present or up to the disappearance of that religious institution. The indicator intends to emphasize the spiritual patrimony owned by a certain religion materialized in the amount (measured in years) of time passed since the establishment of a religion. The establishment can be different from a geographical location to another. This is the case of religious institutions established many years ago that entered the market on a different location much later. In this case, it can be considered that the establishment of that religious institution at the second location is the moment of entry on the market and not the actual establishment.

2. *Number of years since recognition/ age (AGER)* represents the number of years passed since the official recognition in a certain location up to the present or up to the disappearance of that religious institution. The indicator intends to emphasize a part of the spiritual patrimony owned by a certain religion materialized in the amount (measured in years) of time passed since the recognition of a religion until present time. This indicator offers more accurate information than the number of years since the establishment. This is because the two moments (establishment and recognition) can be different. On the other hand, the development of a religious institution can be more vigorous in the period of time before official recognition (see the case of Christianity) and therefore, paradoxically, a longer period of time between the two moments can be positive.

3. *Number of centers - historic national cradles like (NHC)* (Putna, Curtea of Arges etc. in Romania's case) is the value resulted from the simple counting of the centers considered historic national cradles. The indicator intends to emphasize the amplitude of the spiritual patrimony of a religious institution, amplitude measurable in the number of historic national cradles of a religious institution. The difficulty appears when it comes to differentiate the self-declared historic national cradles and the ones truly recognized.

4. *Number of centers - historical international cradles like (Jerusalem, Mecca, and Bethlehem etc.) (IHC)* represents the value resulted by simply counting the centers considered historical international cradles. Obviously, from a chronological viewpoint, a certain historic cradle shall first have a national importance (and will be included in the calculated indicator NHC), importance whose amplitude increases, in the end being counted with the IHC indicator. The problems that appear in this case are similar to those encountered by historical international cradles that are claimed by several religious institutions (for instance Jerusalem). These conflicts of interests on a certain location can lead - and unfortunately it does happen so - to armed conflicts.

5. *Number of canonized persons (CNZ)* - represent the total number of canonized persons (if applicable - even though there are religious institutions that don't have such persons) in the years since establishment. The counting of the canonized persons intends to emphasize the size of the canonization phenomenon, given the fact that the procedures are strict and the inclusion of a person in this category involves a way of living and some extraordinary accomplishments throughout one's life and even after death. The problems that may appear with the CNZ indicator are related to the fact that not all religious institutions have such a procedure and imply that the inter-confessional comparison would sometimes lose its substance. Secondly, the following situation may appear, when a common inheritance¹² leads to the duplication of the canonized persons.

6. Quality indicators, efficiency, and results

The following indicators are parts of this subsystem:

1. *The type of religious organization (ORGT)* emphasizes the organizational structure of the church and the way in which the administrative positions are filled. The possible options (selective alphabetic list) are: - autocephaly; - autocratically; - free church; - church the state; - congregational; - democratic; - meritocratic; - non profit organization; Theocratic - etc. Sometimes the placement in managerial schemes and prints is hard to achieve. From these considerations it is very important that the options from which the choice shall be made for a certain religious institution.

2. *The type of financing (FINT)* states the methods of financing for the purpose of subsequent statistical remarking. The possible options (selective list) are: - budgetary state allocations; - voluntary contributions of the parishioners; - parishioner's compulsory contributions; - personal income (from rents, from sales candles, groundsels, books etc.); - donations. It is obvious that as the sources of income diversify or, better said, the state contributions minimize, a religious institution can truly claim its independence from the state. Regardless of the fact that, currently, the church-state separation¹³ takes place in many parts of the world, the integration of income sources in mandatory or voluntary contributions (of the parishioners) is sometimes hard to make. This happens because some contributions are considered mandatory even if the religious institution that receives them sustains that they are voluntary.

3. *The average annual number of religious celebration days (ACD)*. This measures - from a quantitative point of view - the level and, subsequently, the dynamics of religious holidays. A distinction between current holidays and holidays that involve halting the current activity is necessary.

4. *The average annual number of religious celebration days off the current activity (ARCD)* represents the average annual number of religious holidays with halting of the current activity within the last "n" years. With the help of this indicator research inter-confessional or international respondents could be done. Nevertheless, this indicator could follow the impact these religious holidays have on the total of available labor background and, by default, on economic activity. Nearly each religion has a day of the week when, theoretically, the lucrative activities are forbidden. To these we add the religious big holidays (for instance Christmas etc.).

5. *The minimum age when one can exercise power (MINAG)* represents the minimum age whereof a person can be officially accepted as member in a religious institution. A very low value (for instance: 0 Years) of the indicator level suggests that, in fact, the affiliation is don not by rational choice at a more mature age but chosen by the adults responsible for that child. On the other hand, nothing prevents a person appurtenant to a religious institution to become affiliated with other religious institutions.

6. *The rate of canonization compared to the number of the centuries since recognition (CNZR)* is the number of persons that were canonized in a religious institution within an accounted period. The indicator tries to commensurate the scope of the canonization phenomenon through the fact that not only the absolute value of the canonized person counts but also the period of time needed for canonization. Some problems appear in this case regarding the fact that not all the religious institutions have procedures of canonization and/or persons canonized. In this context, the inter-confessional comparison becomes, sometimes, superfluous.

7. *The financial resources attracted (FRA)* represents the total volume of financial funds attracted by a religious institution within a period of time. The indicator intends to compare the financial level of a religious area in order to make correspondences with other macroeconomic indicators from an international or inter-religious perspective. The results of this indicator allow for statistical conclusions from a structural point of view (compared to RLG indicator) regarding the concentration/ diversification of the funds. A flaw of this indicator is that, usually, it is based on estimations. The reason is the absence of clear reports of several religious institutions regarding these levels of income.

8. *The believers-parish ratio (BPR)* represents the average number of believers of a parish or another form of territorial organization. Obviously, from a proficiency perspective, a bigger parish has more financial resources and a higher economic efficiency than a smaller size parish that involves a waste of pecuniary funds. On the other hand, we consider that, in a smaller parish, the quality of the relationships between priests/ pastors/ imams/ rabbis and the parishioners they serve is higher. In this direction, the indicatory level BPR shows a compromise between the judicious administration of financial funds, involving a rise of the indicator, and keeping good relations between the parishioners and the priest/ pastor/ imam/ rabbi. The indicator's interpretation would have to consider the fact that there are parishes with several priest/ pastors/ imams/ rabbis and that there are also priests/ pastors/ imams/ rabbis which serve in more parishes simultaneously.

9. *The believers- clergy ratio (BCR)*. The indicator brings additional information besides the BPR as it is no longer influenced by the presence of more or less than one cleric in a provost. This time, the equilibrium that one must search for in the funds management- with an efficient administration from financial viewpoint as the BCR rises - has in counteraction the fact that the human relations have a better quality as the indicatory level BCR diminishes. In the case of inter-religious comparisons, one has to take in account the management of religious institutions. This is due to the fact that there are confessions that do not have any stipendiary clericals and the administrative duties are done by the laics.

10. *The clergy- parish ratio (CPR)*. The value of this reference indicator is 1. An unitary result involves a clerical apparatus that could seem oversized. But there are religious institutions that have a pastor in a parish that deals especially with a certain social category (for instance: A pastor for youth). In such situations, the output indicator is affected accordingly. A value sub unitary doesn't mean an insufficient clerical apparatus as there are religious institutions that grant a great importance to the laic implication in the religious administration and, as a consequence, the clerical apparatus has a somewhat reduced amplitude.

11. *The rate of administrative positions within the clergy (RAPC)* is by definition the weight that a person has in the management¹⁴ of the clerical apparatus of a religious institution. The indicator wants to commensurate the financial level of a religious area in order to subsequently compare it with other international and inter-religious macroeconomic indicators.

12. *The average age of believers (AVGBLV)* is the average number of years that a person of 0 years, affiliated¹⁵ to an institution is expected to live. The indicator is a particular case of a well known indicator "life expectancy at birth" (LEB). If the AVGBLV indicator is calculated at a national level and for all the religious institutions simultaneously, then it coincides to the LEB. If the population from which LEB is calculated is the population affiliated to a specific religious institution then we shall consider this partic-

ular case AVGBLV. The reference value of AVGBLV is the indicatory value of LEB in the geographic area. Superior values of the indicator for religious¹⁶ institutions can indicate the fact that a religious institution is successful with an older population and that the life style of the persons affiliated to the respective religious institutions led to a better state of health and , consequently, to the enlargement of average age. An analogue explanation can be formulated when the indicatory value AVGBLV is inferior to that of LEB.

13. *The average age of clergy (AVGCLG)* is, by definition, the average age of the clerical body affiliated to a religious institution. The reference which can help with the precise interpretation can be constituted by taking in consideration the legal work interval of the respective country for the remunerated activities. Thus, in Romania, for men this interval is 16-65¹⁷ years. If we take into consideration that preaching activities can begin after college graduation, we can consider that the interval of interest is 23-65 years. The average active age would be, in this case, 44 years. It must be considered also the fact that there are members of clergy with lifetime activities (for instance: head of Romanian Orthodox Church - Patriarch Teoctist). Considering the reduced size of personnel that prolongs its activity after retirement age, the reference age of 44 years can be successfully used.

14. *The number of people socially assisted by religious institutions (PSAR)* is calculated as the total number of persons socially assisted directly by religious institutions or by charitable institutions controlled by religious institutions, within a specific period of time. The main goal is to expose the social and charitable role of religious institutions, as well as the scale of this phenomenon.

15. *The financial aspects/size of charitable actions initiated by religious institutions (FINSAR)* is, by definition, the whole volume of financial funds used by the religious institutions with charitable purposes in a certain period of time. The indicator seeks to measure the financial level of the efforts that religious institutions or specialized units affiliated with them made within a certain period of time. When talking about an indicator that measures the financial aspects of the charitable activity, we will certainly underestimate the reality. This is because there are many activities that don't involve financial funds but involve great voluntary time involvement of people affiliated to religious institutions. These activities are difficult to approximate as their temporal size, as well as their financial estimations¹⁸.

16. *The number of military/ paramilitary organizations sustained¹⁹ by the church (MLT)* represents the value that results from the simple addition of these types of organizations affiliated with a religious institution. The indicator seeks to study the amplitude of the forms of military organization affiliated to religious institutions.

17. *The degree of religious freedom (DRF)* is, by definition, the value of an index obtained by analyzing the religious freedom in a certain geographical area. The indicator seeks to analyze the religious freedom from the quantitative point of view on a predefined interval.

A card/table was made for each indicator presented previously. The following is an example of such a indicator's card:

Conclusion

The entire model presented above is, obviously, a perfectible one. Without claiming that we finished the discussion about the complex matter of the religious systems,

Indicator	Average Annual Time Spent in Religious Activities
Characteristics	
Definition	The annual average number of hours spent by a person for religious activities.
Purpose	By taking in consideration the actual time spent, this indicator shows religious activity participation degree more accurately than simple count of mass participation.
Symbol	ATRA
Calculus method	It counts the effective time (number of occasions and their length) which a person has spent in religious activities in a certain period of time.
Formula	$ATRA = \sum x_i \cdot t_i$ <p>Where: x_i – religious activity type (regular, wedding, baptism, funeral, Easter, Christmas, church committees, choir practicing etc.) t_i – length (in hours) of x_i activity</p>
Data needed	The number of occasions and the length persons from a specific population have spent in religious activities (mass or other activity) during a year.
Source of data	Statistical surveys, Religious bodies, National Institute of Statistic
Type	data type: average; measurement scale: continuous; computation: derivate; time point of view: moment
Class/ category	Participation indicator
Aggregation level	local, county, regional, national, continental, global, by gender, by residential areas, by religious affiliation etc.
Interpretation	As the average number of hours is rising, the participation degree is rising, too. However, even if in economical terms, when speaking of production factors we deal with substitution. Here, we can introduce fine levels of religious approaches (i.e.: a consistent donation can be equivalent of a number of religious activity participation?)
Quality standards	The advantage of using this indicator consists not only in the possibility of counting the (regular) mass hours but also in the possibility of adding hours spent in additional activities: choir, church committees, parishes councils, charity actions, propagandistic actions, self study, family religious activities etc.

we tried to create a conceptual, methodological frame, which can help with the study of this system from a quantitative point of view.

The main advantages of using the system of statistical indicators for the study of religion will be: a correct and complete operational description, the possibility of using some descriptive or analytic statistical methods, the possibility of studying religion in a systematical way and, never the less, the possibility of making comparisons (regional, international, inter-confession etc.).

One of the main difficulties that appear in the case of applying this incorporate system of indicators is due to the fact that, for most of the indicators, there aren't organized systematic gatherings of data. Or, at least, the information isn't collected in a structured way in order to make these analyses.

The scientific validation of this system can only be made as a result of emendation and improvements that may come from a practical study or from the academic community, institutions or persons interested to study this matter.

Selective bibliography

Anghelache, C., Isaic-Maniu, A., Mitrut, C., Voineagu, V. *Sistemul conturilor nationale*, Ed. Economica, Bucharest, 2005

Isaic-Maniu, A. (coord.), Pecican, E., Ștefănescu, D., Voda, V., Wagner, P. *Dictionar de Statistica Generala*, Ed. Economica, Bucharest, 2003

Jonhnstone, J.N. Indicators, Educational. In: T.Husén, T.N. Postlethwaite (editors) *The International Encyclopedia of Education*, Pergamon Press, Oxford, vol. V, 1985, p. 2432-2438

* * * *The Holy Bible*, New International Version

* * * Law no 53 dated January 24th 2003 – Labor Code – and its later updates,

Bucharest, 2000

* * * Law no 19 dated March 17th 2000 - and its later updates, Bucharest, 2003

* * * http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Separation_of_church_and_state accessed on July 15th, 2006

Notes:

1 The main line of this paper (a list of indicators) was presented at 13th Students' Symposium on the Study of Religion & 1st European Students' Symposium on the Study of Religion, 2006, University of Marburg - Germany

2 Isaic-Maniu, A. (coord.), Pecican, E., Ștefănescu, D., Voda, V., Wagner, P. Dictionar de Statistica Generala, Ed. Economica, Bucharest, 2003

3 Jonhnstone, J.N. Indicators, Educational, In: T.Husén, T.N. Postlethwaite (editors) The International Encyclopedia of Education, Pergamon Press, Oxford, vol. V, 1985, p. 2432-2438

4 For example, the situation of: USA, France, Germany, Israel, Japan, Mexico etc.

5 For example, the situation of : Egypt, Finland, UK, Greece

6 For example, the situation of Russia

7 Similar to the case of Saints Constantine & Helen

8 Like: written press, radio, cinema, computer games, books, Internet etc.

9 On different surfaces: glass, wood, canvas, walls, paper etc.

10 On different surfaces: wood, stone, metal etc.

11 Although a more accurate definition of an active believer would be one that takes credit of: - presence to confessions/divine services; - involvement in adjacent activities (choir, committees etc.); - financial backup; - abidance by the meatless days; - proselytism; - activities of promoting the church/communion; - being employee of a religious institution; - activities of corvee; - retiring in monasteries.

12 For example, the situation of the Orthodox Christian Church and the Catholic Church

13 One exception in this case would be Iran.

14 Best criteria for differentiate a management position from a usual position is perhaps an extra salary.

15 This is about an official affiliation (for example: Orthodox Church) or it is just a claimed affiliation of child's tutors.

16 Although there could be some other explanations. Thus, in Romania, the elderness of Greek-Catholic believers could be explained by the fact that they had the opportunity to declare themselves affiliated to the Greek-Catholic Church mainly those believers who were affiliate to this church before it was declared outlaw by the communist in 1948. Forty years later, the Greek-Catholic Church was reinstated, so it regains its believers in those who survived this period.

17 According to the Romanian Law no 53 dated January 24th 2003 - Labor Code - and its later updates and according to the Law no 19 dated March 17th 2000 - and its later updates (according to http://www.cdep.ro/pls/legis/legis_pck.frame accessed in July 16th 2006).

18 There are estimations of financial flows that would be necessary for counterpart of services otherwise offered pro-bono by religious affiliated people. Another reason for this, would be that The Holy Bible itself says in Mathew 6:2-3 "So when you give

to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing [...]”; and therefore charity activities are mostly not mediated.

19 It is obvious that the affiliation (supporting) could be an unofficial one.

LEONARD SWIDLER

Club modernity for reluctant believers

Abstract:

Written for the people shearing the same reality, the same mental world of Modernity, this paper starts from the premise that we, as human beings, are not always consciously aware of the world we live in, of its constantly changing characteristics or attributes. It has already been demonstrated that our knowledge is contextual and limited. Thus, in order to accurately depict at least some of the attributes of Modernity, and consequently, to observe the major paradigm shift towards an age of dialogue, entailed by this expending-modernity, it became necessary to describe the values promoted by Modernity. In this paper we aim at discussing notions such as freedom, critical-thinking, history and the increasing need to be in dialogue with those who think differently from us, values which guide us mentally and determine our actions through Modernity.

INVITATION

These pages are written for persons who live in the mental world of Modernity.¹ Modernity, as I understand it, is a world which cherishes 1) *freedom* at the core of being human, 2) *critical-thinking* reason as the arbiter of what to affirm or not, 3) *history*, process, dynamism seen at the heart of human life and society, 4) the increasing need to be in *dialogue* with those who think differently from us-and yet sense that there is somehow more to life, to reality, than meets the eye, that there is a depth or spiritual dimension that is not captured in our every-day experiences.

Further, I am reflecting and writing for persons who have either been brought up as religious, or are now finding religion intriguing, but are having increasing difficulty in squaring it, or important portions of

Leonard Swidler:

Professor of Catholic Thought and Interreligious Dialogue at the Religion Department, Temple University, Philadelphia. Editor and co-founder (with Arlene Swidler) of the Journal of Ecumenical Studies (quarterly), 1964. Founder and Director of the Institute for Interreligious, Intercultural Dialogue, 1978-. Editor of the book series: Religions In Dialogue, New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990-. Founder and Chair of Consortium for Interreligious Dialogue, in March, 1994. Co-Founder and Co-Director of the Global Dialogue Institute, 1997-.

Author of the books:

Dialogue for Reunion (1962), The Ecumenical Vanguard (1965), Freedom in the Church (1969), Bloodwitness for Peace and Unity (1977), Aufklärung Catholicism 1780-1850 (1978), Biblical Affirmation of Women (1979), Küng in Conflict (1981), The Passion of the Jew Jesus (1984). Editor and author of: Toward a Universal Theology of Religion (1987), A Catholic Bill of Rights (1988), Yeshua: A Model for Moderns (1988), After the Absolute: The Dialogical Future of Religious Reflection (1990), Death or Dialogue. From the Age of Monologue to the Age of Dialogue (1990), For All Life. Toward a Universal Declaration of a Global Ethic: An Interreligious Dialogue (1999), The Study of Religion in an Age of Global Dialogue (2000).

Key words:

Modernity, freedom, critical thinking, history, dialogue, hermeneutics of suspicion, post-modernity, global village, Christianity, knowledge.

it, with one or more of the above core characteristics of Modernity. In brief, I am writing for “Reluctant Believers.” I am inviting all such readers to join me at, not “Club Mediterranean,” but “Club Modernity.” The latter, in contrast to the former, is not a geographical place to go to, but a mental world to inhabit, which of course then consequently determines how we act in the world (including whether or not we apply to Club Mod!).

So, if the above description fits you as a “Reluctant Believer,” and my planned reflections interest you, I invite you to come with me and join the Club Mod.

1. Modernity Is the Atmosphere We Live In

Anyone reading this essay is living in the mental world of Modernity with the four characteristics mentioned above: a sense 1) of radical freedom, 2) of automatically asking whether something makes rational sense, 3) of perceiving all human experience in its specific historical context, and because of the relationality of all knowledge, 4) the need to engage persons with different views and experiences in dialogue so as to learn more.

We cannot avoid Modernity, even if we do not allude to it, are not consciously aware of it. Modernity is all around us. It is the very air that we breathe, even when we might be vigorously trying to reject some part of it. In our bones we feel *free*, and feel outraged when we learn of others being robbed of their freedom. We cannot help but involuntarily ask of every new or old idea or bit of information that comes along whether it *makes sense*, whether we “buy it.” So too we are increasingly aware that reality around us is *constantly changing*, that old givens don’t necessarily hold anymore, and that consequently we constantly ask whether old saws are still valid, or are something of a past context. Also increasingly we do not automatically discount those who are different from us, but are more and more inclined at first to tolerate them, then to open out to them, and then even to *seek them out*.

Modernity makes up our mental world like water is where fish live, or the air is for us mammals. We don’t even notice it, unless it is severely damaged and we start to choke and even die. We automatically resist when our freedom is threatened, and protest when something unreasonable is being forced down our throats. We would do the same if our radios, TVs, or now increasingly our cell phones or computers, were taken from us and we were forced to go back to living in the older context, or if we no longer could learn new things from those elsewhere in the world. This is all true even if we don’t think about it-until part of it might be taken away.

Consequently, if a hoary tradition is to find a helpful, creative place in our life, we need to undertake two important steps. First, we need to reflect more intensely and consciously on just what our mental world of Modernity is like. We need to learn in greater depth what its elements are and how they intertwine to constitute the atmosphere in which we “live, move, and have our being,” as St. Paul wrote in quoting an ancient Greek poet. The contemporary philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002) put it this way: “In fact history does not belong to us; but we belong to it.”

When we become more self-aware of the mental context in which we live, we will then be forced to ask ourselves questions about the “explanation of the ultimate meaning of life, and how to live accordingly, based on some notion of the transcendent,” which is my terse definition of religion. In my case, and likely the readers of this work (book), that religion is Christianity. The questions we will have to ask of our religion, of

Christianity, will automatically be raised by the elements of Modernity: Can Christianity promote my freedom; can it make reasonable sense; can it adapt to the changing world; can it help me expand my understanding through dialogue with the Other? If it can't answer those questions adequately, it will not be able to provide us with the "explanation of the ultimate meaning of life, and how to live accordingly."

In looking at the major characteristics of Modernity below I will frequently use examples from Christianity because that is the religious area of thought that most English readers are likely to be most familiar with. Those who might be attracted to Judaism, Islam.... Can perhaps mentally substitute their own examples.

2. Freedom at the Core of Being Human

We now are increasingly learning that at the heart of the universe there is a radical freedom, an indeterminacy. Already at the early part of the 20th century we learned of the "Heisenberg Principle of Indeterminacy," roughly stated: In investigating subatomic matter we cannot accurately know both the speed of an electron and its location. This may seem quite uninteresting to the non-physicist, but it has huge implications. It means that at the very foundation of our physical reality there is a radical freedom. Hence, when we humans *experience* or *feel* a radical freedom at the heart of *our* being, it is not some anomaly, not something strange. Our human sense of radical freedom—despite all the restraining limitations we may also experience—is something that is very much in sync with the very physical foundation of our bodies—and the whole universe.

Despite the arguments of famous psychologists of determinism like Ivan Pavlov, B.F. Skinner, and Jacques Monod, and philosophers of determinism like Arthur Schopenhauer, and theologians like St. Augustine, Martin Luther, and Jean Calvin, the vast majority of men and women are convinced that there is a core of freedom, of choice, at the center of our being human. Our whole civilized world of whatever culture is built on that bedrock of freedom. Let me point to one example standing in for all the other elements of civilization—All our legal systems are built on the presumption of a fundamental human freedom and responsibility: You know that this Ferrari is not yours. However, you take it anyhow for a joyride or to a chop shop, but are caught; the law determines that you will pay a penalty because it is presumed that you had a choice and *freely* decided to steal the car.

On a larger scale, think about the Nuremberg War Trials and other War Crimes Trials since then, as, for example, against the perpetrators of genocide in Rwanda, Bosnia, Iraq. The defense of the SS guards at Auschwitz, and others, that they were "just following orders" was not found persuasive. They were held responsible for their despicable crimes against humanity—because they were considered *free* in their actions.

In the theological sphere, nobody *really* follows those theologians who teach determinism, predestination. What preacher gets up in the pulpit on a Sunday morning and tells his congregation that there is nothing they can do about whether they are going to go to heaven or not; God decided that when he created them (I am deliberately using the traditional male sexist language here because all these things were/are normally done by males, including a "male" god)? The obvious conclusion by the congregation, if they believed him, would be to save their money by firing him and closing the church!

Even those theologians (like Luther and Calvin and their intellectual descendants) who teach that we humans can do nothing whatsoever to avoid eternal damnation will

nevertheless on Sundays enthusiastically preach that we should open ourselves to God's gracious mercy (although they also teach in self-contradictory fashion that God determined ahead of time that he would give us the grace to accept his offered mercy-or not!). No, no Christian preacher really seems to believe that we humans are not radically free, and hence are responsible for our "salvation," despite their sometimes confusing and self-contradictory teaching-not if he hopes to keep his job.

Is there a way for us humans to explain to ourselves how we are free, how it happens that we have the ability to make choices? There have been many such attempts, of course, but let me see if I can make it fairly clear from just your and my personal reflection-I mean, not by running neurological tests or any other experiments, but by simply recalling our common human experience and analyzing it for its implications.

First, let me say up front that I am not persuaded by that august ancient Greek philosopher Plato. He argued that we humans have certain inborn ideas and that they are the "really real," compared to the "shadowy" sense images that we experience in everyday life. Rather, I am persuaded by his equally, if not more, august student, Aristotle, who argued-in the words of his, in turn, much later also august student, St. Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century: *Nil in intellectu quod non prius in sensu*, "Nothing is in the intellect which was not first in the senses."

We humans, for example, are able to perceive through our senses a wide range of dogs, and then "abstract," that is, literally "pull away" (Latin: *ab* "from," *tractus* "pulled") from the myriad differing sense details (e.g., size, weight, color....) a common notion "dog" that fits all individual members of the species. Our abstract reasoning allows us to line up the variety of individuals, see their commonalities and their differences, compare them, and thereby choose one, several, all, or none of them. If we could not think abstractly, we would not be able to make comparisons, and from that, chose. We would not be free, but determined by our internal instincts, which operate much like computer programs, and just as ineluctably.

Another way to say "choosing" is to say "loving," in the broad sense. When our knowing faculties, e.g., senses or reason, present us with an aspect of reality (Truth), our appetitive faculties, i.e., our will or appetites, move to unite us with what they perceive as the Good. Here is a simple example: My sense of sight sees an ice cream cone, and from my past experience of the sense of taste I perceive it as Good; my appetitive faculty then moves to unite me physically with the Good, the ice cream cone. Thus, love, or choice, is a unitive force. It brings the "actor" together with what it perceives as the Good-whether it be the ice cream cone, a Mozart concerto, a friend....

Yet, even when we are presented with what our appetitive faculties perceive as the Good, we still have the capacity to not move to unite with that Good. We can refuse the ice cream, turn off the Mozart CD, not visit a friend, though we cannot thereby stop being drawn toward unity with them. That is one reason why some existentialist philosophers-who stressed the centrality of freedom for humans-have spoken of "our damnable freedom."

We humans have of course always been radically free, but in much of the history of humanity, most women and men were told that for the most part they were not free and physically were prevented from exercising most of their freedom. Only a very few elite humans-mostly males-were relatively fully free. Vast numbers of humans were "unfree." For example, in the "inventor" of democracy, ancient Athens, only about 10% of the population could actually take part in the government, were *demos*, and perhaps two-thirds of the population were either slaves or *metics* (those who had civic responsi-

bilities but no rights). Slavery goes back thousands of years to even before writing. It is only in the late eighteenth century as a result of the “abolitionist” movement, which was started in England by Christians, that it has been *almost* eliminated—something that both Christianity and Modernity can take pride in! Further, women have by far been the largest unfree group of humans, for throughout most of human history the vast majority of women have been greatly less free than men. Here too, Modernity can take satisfaction for working with significant success (though with far to go yet) to free women from sexist bondage. Unfortunately Christianity has either continued to be resistant to this freedom movement, or come to it late.

When the inner core of human freedom finally began to break through to a tipping point of freedom in the eighteenth century Western Enlightenment, it became unstoppable. Everybody wanted to exercise her/his radical human freedom. Almost all the civil and religious forces resisted viciously the expansion of human freedom. One egregious example was when Pope Gregory XVI in his encyclical *Mirari vos* in 1832, harshly condemned freedom of conscience and religious liberty as absolute madness. *Deliramentum* was the Latin term he used. In this he was quoted with even greater rage by his successor Pope Pius IX in 1864, in his *Syllabus of Errors*. Nevertheless, even the Catholic Church relented and totally reversed itself (without admitting it, of course) in the 1965 *Declaration of Religious Freedom* at the Second Vatican Council, insisting that religious liberty and freedom of conscience were at the heart of the Catholic tradition!

3. Critical-Thinking Reason the Arbiter of Truth

In the beginning of Christianity, there was no Christianity! There was Judaism, and one of its major interpreters, Jesus, or rather, *Yeshua ha Notzri*, Jesus of Nazareth, who was a student of the then two great rabbinic schools, if not the Masters of the schools themselves: Hillel and Shammai. Yeshua himself then became a great Rabbi. In the beginning, the following of Yeshua all took place within Judaism, but after his crucifixion and resurrection, his followers included only a small portion of the Jewish community and an ever increasing number of non-Jews, Gentiles. Already during Yeshua’s lifetime there was disagreement about where truth lay—following Yeshua’s teaching, or not. This division increased dramatically after his death and rather quickly moved out of the Semitic world with its largely “picture-language” way of thinking and speaking and major emphasis on, not “what should I think?” but “what should I do?” (which of course was also precisely how Jesus thought and taught). It moved into the Greek, Hellenistic world with its largely abstract, philosophical way of thinking and speaking and heavy emphasis on “what should I think?”

During the first century after the death of Yeshua all of the writings that eventually were judged to make up the New Testament were written—as were many other documents—but were not included in the canon of the New Testament. What was included, and what not, was decided gradually by the Christian community at large, the *Ekklesia Katholika*, as it was referred to, the Universal Church, and became definitive only around 367 C.E. Even during that formative first century, however, there was a great variety among the communities of Yeshua followers concerning what the truth about him was. This was reflected in the many different Christologies, that is, explanations of the meaning of Jesus the *Christ* (*Messiah* in Hebrew), expressed in the New Testament itself.

All through this time great debates took place about what was the Christian truth and how it was to be expressed. A great step toward clarity was taken in 325 C.E. when

the Roman Emperor Constantine called the first Ecumenical (Greek *oikumenos*, universal) Council in a suburb of the new imperial city of Constantinople named Nicaea. By then percentage of the number of Jewish followers of Yeshua had greatly diminished in comparison to the vast number of Gentiles. These “new” followers of Yeshua lived not in his Semitic mental world of “picture language” and “what to do?” but in the Greek, Hellenistic thought world of “philosophical abstractions” with a heavy focus on “how to think.”

The great debates about the meaning of the teaching and life of Yeshua thereafter continued to mine the now canonized New Testament writings, reaching a climax in the Council of Chalcedon (another suburb of Constantinople) in 451, although three more Ecumenical Councils took place thereafter, the last one being Nicaea II in 787 C.E. However, already by the middle of the fifth century there reigned the so-called Vincentian Canon: *Quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est*, “What has been believed everywhere, always, and by all.” Hence, in sum, the path to truth was now largely through Greek philosophical thinking as expressed in the conciliar statements. After the split between Eastern and Western Christianity, confirmed in 1054 C.E., the statements of the papacy became more and more the locus of truth in Western Christianity, in Catholicism. Thus, in Catholicism the papal *Magisterium* became the final source of Truth, whereas in Eastern Christianity, Orthodoxy, the *Traditio* as reflected in the Ecumenical Councils remained the final arbiter. With the sixteenth century Protestant Reformation in the West, however, there came a shift away from *Traditio* and *Magisterium* to *Scriptura* for the Protestants, while the Catholics stuck with the former two.

This split led to terrible bloody wars for a century and a half all across Central and Western Europe, climaxing with the close of the Thirty Years War in 1648. In the meanwhile other momentous changes were taking place in Europe which would lead it to world domination: the 16th century World Exploration Revolution, the 17th century Scientific Revolution (e.g., Copernicus, Galileo, Newton), the 17th-18th centuries Philosophical Revolution (e.g., Descartes, Locke, Kant), the 18th century Industrial Revolution, the 18th century Economic Revolution with the rise of Capitalism (Adam Smith). Thus in the 18th century Enlightenment the measure of Truth was no longer *Traditio*, *Magisterium*, or *Scriptura*, but *Ratio*, Reason. What we were being asked to affirm and to determine how to act was now: Did it pass the test of reason, did it make sense, did it square with our experience and thoughtful analysis?

Now the statements of the Pope, of the Ecumenical Council, and Tradition in general, and even the source of both, the Scriptures were subjected to the questioning of Reason. The Enlightenment was a sweeping movement of intellectual reform based on the supremacy of reason on many levels mainly in England, France, and Germany. Among other things, it contributed significantly both to the French Revolution and the American Revolution. In America Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, James Madison, and Thomas Paine counted themselves as men of the Enlightenment. Later critics of the Enlightenment charged it with being superficial (Immanuel Kant superficial?), naively claiming a universal human rationality, anti-historical in understanding, and sweepingly critical of Christianity. *Ecrase l'enfâme!* “Crush the infamous one! (the clergy) wrote Voltaire, the French anti-clerical philosophe *par excellence*.

However, one should be careful to avoid reducing the entire Enlightenment to such superficiality, anti-clericalism, and negativity toward history. This is especially true of the German *Aufklärung* (the English term “Enlightenment” is simply a direct translation of

the German term *Aufklärung*, which came from one of the most influential philosophers of Modernity, Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), when he wrote a book asking *Was Ist Aufklärung* ? “What is Enlightenment?” in 1784).

The *Aufklärung* in Germany was largely a reform movement both in civil society and in the Church, Protestant and Catholic (its leading thinkers included such luminaries as Gottfried Leibniz, Friederich the Great, Moses Mendelssohn, Gotthold Lessing, Herman Reimarus, Immanuel Kant). For example, the *Aufklärung* reforms carried out in all of German-speaking Switzerland and all of present-day Baden-Württemberg, Hesse, and part of Bavaria from 1802 to 1833 (then together making up the largest diocese in the world) under the leadership of its Administrator Ignaz von Wessenberg (1774-1860) looked amazingly like the reforms of Catholicism in Vatican II (1962-65).² It emphasized 1) a liturgical reform based on scholarship and the use of the vernacular, 2) promoting the popular use of the Bible, and a greater use of biblical scholarship, 3) an ecumenical outreach to Protestants, 4) the modernization of religious education, 5) collegial church decision-making, 6) the elimination of mandatory clerical celibacy, 7) the papal office as one of unity rather than authoritarian domination. Thus, the *Aufklärung* in the Germanies was not anti-church (as in much of the French Enlightenment and the French Revolution), but pro-(*Aufgeklärte*-Enlightened) church!

4. History Transforms All Human Reality

a) Development of “Scientific” and Philosophical History

Partly as a reaction to the Enlightenment’s stress on the universality of human reason, there arose at the same time, especially in Germany, a balancing stress on the particularity of individual communities, customs, languages, literatures, histories. As the *Aufklärung* was reaching its high plateau in the late 18th century (German scholars also speak of the *Spät-Aufklärung* - Late-Enlightenment-which ran well into the second quarter of the 19th century in Germany), the fore-runners of what became known as “Historicism” (*Historismus* in German) appeared, particularly Johann Georg Hamman (1730-1788) and Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744-1803).

A key notion of Historicism is that human life (as all reality) is changing, dynamic, evolving. Human beings have evolved out of billions of years of the Universe. Though the current estimate of the age of the Universe as 13.7 billion years was not arrived at until recently, there developed already in the late 18th early 19th centuries a keen awareness that we humans are the product of our pasts, and therefore have, in addition to our commonalities, significant differences.

Of course, the writing of history in Western Civilization goes back at least to the Greek Herodotus (484-425 B.C.E.), the “Father of History,” and his younger compatriot Thucydides (460-400 B.C.E.). However, it is really in the early part of the 19th century that there arose modern, “scientific” historiography. It was Leopold von Ranke (1795-1886) who led in this new Historical School which emphasized 1) the critical use of primary documents and original sources; the task of the historian was to ascertain the value of the sources used: Were they eyewitnesses? Were they reliable? Were they partisan?... 2) Then, the “facts” were to speak for themselves. The historian was 3) to strive to describe the past as objectively as possible: *Wie es eigentlich gewesen ist*, “How it actually was.”

The Historicists saw the past histories of each community as significantly formative of the community and its members, so that it was not just our common humanness

that shaped us. Hence, the 19th century Romantic movement lifted up the past as an essential element of our humanity; e.g., the Middle Ages and the Renaissance were looked at with new, positive-seeing, eyes, so that as a result we now have an immensely more accurate picture—and increasingly so—of the past of, not just Western Civilization, but of the entire world.

At the same time, the sense of history, of dynamism, evolution, process pervaded the philosophies springing up in Germany. One thinks of Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814), Friedrich Schelling (1775-1854), and then preeminently Georg Wilhelm Hegel (1770-1831). Each of them were seriatim Professors at the new University of Berlin, Schelling and Hegel also having been students at my Alma Mater, the very old University of Tübingen. Of course, (in)famously there followed Karl Marx, who originally was part of the “Young Hegelians,” but soon turned Hegel’s philosophical idealism “on its head” in his “dialectical materialism,” maintaining, nevertheless, the stress on history, dynamism.

b) History Pervades Religious Thought

This centrality of history appeared also in German Christian theology. To begin with, Schelling and Hegel were philosophical theologians, and they in turn had a huge influence on the “Protestant Tübingen School of Theology” (the Catholic “Tübingen School of Theology” will be touched on below) in theologians like Ferdinand Christian Bauer (1792-1860) and David Friedrich Strauss (1808-1874), both of whom continued to delve deeply into history in order to articulate their theology, following to a large extent Hegel’s view of world history. But doubtless the most influential Protestant theologian of this period, and up to today, was Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834).

Fundamentally, Schleiermacher understood dogmatic theology as the history of theology. For example, he argued that the Christian dogma of the Trinity did not so much describe the way things were “out there,” in this case, in God’s Self. Rather, the doctrine of the Trinity was an expression of the fourth-century Christian community’s encounter with the divine as it came through the New Testament and the first three centuries’ of Hellenistic followers’ understanding of it.

The focus on a critical analysis of documents and their backgrounds as promoted by scholars of Historicism such as von Ranke was applied to the Bible (actually begun already by Hermann Samuel Reimarus [1694-1768], but published only posthumously by Lessing in 1774-1778) was combined with the historicizing of theology by Schelling, Hegel, Schleiermacher, et al. to create what for a hundred years came to be known as Protestant “Liberal Theology.” It was temporarily seriously challenged after the disastrous World War I (1914-1918) by Karl Barth and other Protestant theologians, but their influence largely evaporated by the last third of the 20th century.

It needs to be noted that these developments in German Protestantism was in many ways matched in German Catholicism. To begin with, there were the *Aufklärung* Catholics exemplified by Ignaz von Wessenberg referred to above and others, who were committed to the reform of Catholicism in ways that definitely embraced the *Aufklärung*, as well as an appreciation of the importance of history. Besides von Wessenberg and his clerical and lay colleagues, another center of *Aufklärung Katholizismus* with its concurrent sensitivity to history was the Catholic Tübingen School of Theology, including preeminently Professors Johann Sebastian Drey (1777-1853), Johann Baptist Hirscher (1788-1865), Johann Adam Möhler (1796-1838), and a little later, Möhler’s student and

successor, the widely respected church historian Karl Josef Hefele (1809-1893). Hefele was the author of the magisterial seven volume history of the Ecumenical Councils, and consequently a dogged opponent of the 1870 Dogma of Papal Infallibility (he and the other German bishops left Rome rather than vote for the dogma, and he was the last German bishop finally formally to accept the dogma. After he became the bishop of Rottenburg (in which Tübingen lay) in 1869, his student Franz Xavier Funk (1840-1907) became his successor and followed the same progressive historical approach.

The blending of the spirit of the German *Aufklärung* and the emphasis on history in theology could best be seen in Johann Adam Möhler's first book *Die Einheit der Kirche* (*The Unity of the Church*) which saw the Christian Church, its teaching and practices as an organism, and hence a growing, changing, adapting entity. At the same time he proudly described himself as *Aufgeklärt*, Enlightened, and throughout the 1820s was highly critical of what he considered the backward, authoritarian attitude of Rome. This understanding of a human community, including the Christian Church, as an organism was very typical of the thinking of the 19th century, especially in Germany.

c) "Hermeneutics of Suspicion"

Almost at the same time Historicism brought forth a counter view to the ideal of "objective" history, increasingly seeing underlying layer after layer of "real" driving forces in history, which later was named "the hermeneutics of suspicion." One of the first exponents of such a hermeneutic of suspicion was Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872), who-though he started out as a student of Hegel and his idealism, he later turned to materialism-understood Christianity as a wish projection. Marx followed him in abandoning Hegel's idealism for his own dialectical materialism and looked at religion as a false consciousness foisted on the oppressed to keep them from rebelling (colloquially put, religion was "pie in the sky bye and bye"); for Marx, the determining element of human life was economics. Emil Durkheim (1858-1917) saw religion as simply the necessary rules of survival of the community writ large as the decrees of God; only those societies which had rules against killing, stealing, lying, and the like could survive, and to make sure that the rules were followed, society declared them to be "from God." Then there was Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) who viewed God as nothing other than "Big Daddy in the Sky," and religion as a psychological crutch; "Man was not the image of God, but God the image of Man."

The obvious truth in these and other "hermeneutics of suspicion" drew them many followers, but their "single-noted" quality eventually made them in turn subjects of suspicion. They were seen by many, if not most, to be too simplistic and reductionist. For example, if indeed, as Genesis states, that men and women are made in God's image, then of course God must also in turn be something like humans. Again, to be sure, economics is a major force in human affairs, but so too are race, education, culture, weather, sex.... Because human life is extremely complicated, any "simple," that is, "single," explanation is bound to be one-sided, reductionist, and hence, badly mistaken despite, or perhaps even because of, the validity of its insight.

Nevertheless, it became increasingly clear that there are forces at work in human life and society that we are learning about more and more. As we learn about each of these forces, we see human life and affairs influenced by more and more elements that we were largely unaware of before. We see our world developing as a result of a whole congeries of forces operating on varying levels: psychological, social, economic, political, ecological, technological.... All of this is very fluid, dynamic, evolving, historical.

d) History Pervades Epistemology

With the rise of Historicism, our understanding of Truth was also pervaded by history. Truth was increasingly seen as dynamic, fluid, organic, contextual. What happened to our understanding of Truth was in retrospect quite commonsensical. But first, to avoid confusion, a word about how we use the term Truth:

Normally we use the term “true” to refer to our *statements* about some aspect of reality. We say a statement is true if it accurately describes some aspect of reality. For example, if the door to a room is in fact closed, and I state: “The door is closed,” we then say that my statement is “true.” However, we can also make many other “true” statements about the door, such as: the door is made of wood, is blue, weighs seven pounds, is off its hinges, and on and on endlessly. Well, this was always obvious. However, throughout the 19th and 20th centuries we in the West became increasingly aware that all statements about reality were, even if true, necessarily limited. It began slowly to dawn on us that if this was true about relatively simple physical reality like the door, how much more must it be true of our much more complicated human reality!

For example, we began to realize that we could properly understand statements of the past only if we read them in their historical setting. We could understand the *text* only in its *con*-text. A case in point: In order to understand why certain things were stressed in the description of the Holy Trinity at the Council of Nicaea in 325 C.E., the reader needed to know a good deal about the fight between Arius and Athanasius concerning how the nature of Jesus was to be understood—was he God, man, both, in what way....? It would not be at all helpful today simply to repeat the Nicæan formula if we did not understand its historical setting. Hence, it was slowly realized that a statement could be “true” only in a limited sense, that is, insofar as it made sense only when seen within its limiting historical circumstances.

Further, we also began to realize that it was vital to notice what kind of language was being used in a statement about some important reality, for that also would “limit” its “truth.” To stay with our understanding of God as an example, biblical scholars increasingly realized that when the Hebrew Bible spoke about the “Spirit of God,” or the “Word of God,” it was speaking in metaphorical terms, not ontological terms. In fact, the customary language of the Jewish world was metaphorical, picture language. Think for a moment about what kind of language that devout Jew Jesus used. He always used picture language. Like a good rabbi, he told stories which communicated his points. When, for example, he told his followers that if their eye scandalized them they should “pluck it out!” he clearly meant that metaphorically. Otherwise we would have precious few sighted Christians in the world!

When the Hebrew Bible spoke of the “Spirit” (*Ruach*) of God brooding over the deep in Genesis 1:1, or when it spoke of the “Wisdom” (*Hochmah*) of God creating the world in Proverbs 8:22 ff., or the “Word” (*Dabar*) of God in Genesis 1, or the “Teaching” (*Torah*), or the “Presence” (*Shechinah*—in early Rabbinical writings starting around the time of Jesus³) of God, each of these “images” of God were just that, images, symbols, “fingers pointing to the moon.” No Jew, including Jesus and all of his Jewish followers, would ever have misunderstood them as ontological statements, any more than they thought that the Kingdom of God was ontologically a mustard seed, a net full of fish, a pearl....

To mistake the kind of language used in a text was to misunderstand the text. Hence, we again began to realize further how all statements are limited in the “truth”

they convey insofar as they are necessarily cast in a particular kind of language: ontological, symbolic, practical, abstract, legal....

Karl Mannheim (1893-1947) developed the notion of the “sociology of knowledge,” which meant that a person’s “place in the world” affects how s/he perceives the world. For example, a uneducated Chinese Buddhist woman will see the world significantly differently than an educated German Jewish man. The two persons are not only geographically but also “culturally” sitting on the other side of the globe and seeing a particular aspect of it through their own “lenses.” If each is careful in describing what they see, both of their statements will be true, that is, they will accurately describe what they perceive. However, they will not be the same, for one will be seeing “that” part and the other “this” part. Both will be “true,” but not the same. It is as if people around the globe were all observing an object in the center, and described it. If each person were careful, his/her statement describing the object would be “true,” but of course only limitedly so, for each could see only her/his side, and not that which the person on the other side saw and carefully, and therefore also “truthfully” described, in his/her “true,” but of course also only limitedly so, statement.

Similarly, German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002) and the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005) developed the science of Hermeneutics, arguing that all knowledge is interpreted knowledge. When one thinks at all about the process of knowing, it is clear that it is a relational activity. There is the *knower*, the *known*, and the relationship between the two, the *knowing*. It is also clear that the knower is necessarily involved in the gaining of knowledge.

What then about the writing of history? Is that a fatally flawed enterprise that should simply be abandoned? By no means, for as Winston Churchill once remarked: “The longer you look back, the farther you can look forward.” After quoting him, the well-known American historian Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. went on to answer, ironically, our question: “But all historians are prisoners of their own experience. We bring to history the preconceptions of our personalities and our age. We cannot seize on ultimate and absolute truths. So the historian is committed to a doomed enterprise—the quest for an unattainable objectivity.” But Schlesinger doesn’t leave the matter there. He cites Oscar Wilde once remarking that “The one duty we owe to history is to rewrite it,” and then continues: “The great strength of history in a free society is its capacity for self-correction. This is the endless excitement of historical writing—the search to reconstruct what went before, a quest illuminated by those ever-changing prisms that continually place old questions in a new light.”⁴

Does all this mean that we can never know any object? No, but it does mean that all knowledge is limited knowledge. Hence, there can be no unlimited knowledge of anything. All knowledge necessarily is limited knowledge. When this realization begins to dawn on someone, or a whole community or culture, then not only the possibility, but rather the necessity, of Dialogue arises.

5. Excursus: Post-Modernity?

But just before I turn to the idea of Dialogue, let me at this point raise the question: Why do I find the term Post-Modernity essentially vacuous? First, any “movement” which cannot articulate what it is about, but can only say what it is not about, strikes me as intellectually adolescent, that is, immature. More importantly, as it slowly began to become clear what most “Post-Modern” writers seemed to be talking about when they

used the term Post-Modernity, it appeared to refer to three things: 1) Hermeneutics of Suspicion, 2) a stress on particularity, and 3) an *a priori* rejection of any “over-all” understanding of anything.

Hermeneutics of Suspicion: Have these writers been unaware of the scholarship of the past century and a half or more? As seen above, Hermeneutics of Suspicion began flooding into Western thought already before the middle of the 19th century. The stress on the Particularity of history started even earlier in the 18th century and has continued unabated into our 21st century in critical thinkers like Gadamer and Ricoeur. Yes, all knowledge is interpreted knowledge, and is affected by our “place in the world,” and hence is limited. Knowledge, we increasingly know, is far more complicated and layered than was realized before the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries, and because of our ever deeper understanding of how we humans understand reality, we are coming ever closer to an endlessly more fully accurate picture of reality.

For over two hundred years we have been becoming increasingly aware of ever further dimensions of our human *Ratio*. *Ratio* is not at all limited to abstract syllogistic reason or the like. We are constantly learning that there are depths under depths in the intelligibility of both our humanity and indeed of the entire cosmos. Cosmologists now are even speaking about all reality being ultimately units of “information.” Perhaps Pythagoras (572-497 B.C.E.) was not so crazy when he talked about the world being composed of numbers!

As to the rejection of any and all attempts to understand an object of study in some “over-all way” is concerned, the rejection also strikes me as quite naive, as being unaware of how we humans *necessarily* think. We always want to try to relate one thing to others. It is an unavoidable move by our *Ratio*, whether it is the first step of analysis or the subsequent step of synthesis. We *automatically* try to mentally break things down into their component parts and then try to understand how they are related together. Our very language tells us that is how we think. We say that we can or cannot “grasp” what is being explained. That is, we “grasp” the various portions of an idea by detaching them from the rest, and then attempt to understand how the parts are related. For instance, the idea of “falling” is understood to contain the “parts” of above, below, movement from the former to the latter. The same “automatic” intellectual movement is reflected in other synonyms of “to grasp,” such as to “comprehend” (Latin *comprehendere*, to put our mental arms around something), or “conceive” (Latin *con-cepere*, to grasp around).

No doubt we make many defective “syntheses.” We often will not be aware of certain dimensions of a subject, and hence “get it together” in a way that is only partially accurate, or perhaps is even terribly mistaken. The “*wie es eigentlich gewesen ist*” historians will strive to “tell it like it is” as best as they can, and may well stop there as historians of a specific area—just like workers on an assembly line. However, they will have to tell themselves not to follow their natural movement of the mind to relate the studied portion to contiguous portions of the story. Or, in philosophy, phenomenologists deliberately puts a mental “bracket” around the object they are studying, but the purpose of such an *epoché* (Greek, to hold back) is later to relate it to a larger context.

Far from being “Post-Modern,” it should be clear that all these developments of the past two hundred years were/are in fact a continuation, a deepening of Modernity. We are becoming more Modern than ever! Hence, at the beginning of the 21st century we are not at all “Post-Modern.” We are “Increasingly-Modern,” “Expandingly-Modern”!

6. Dialogue: Radicalizing All Thought

As it became increasingly apparent to more and more thinkers in the West, and then everywhere, that all statements about reality are necessarily limited, it also became increasingly clear that the only logical alternative to a silencing total relativism was: Dialogue. If my perception of reality—including pre-eminently the most complex of all human reality, Religion (“an explanation of the *ultimate* meaning of life, and how to live accordingly”)—is necessarily limited, then if I am going to continue to learn more “truth” about reality, I cannot avoid learning it from the Other, including the religiously Other.

Of course there are all of the “external” reasons why Dialogue is becoming more and more important today: For example, world travel has been expanding massively in recent decades. When I was a graduate student in the 1950s there were shipping companies which specialized in providing whole ships in the summer for students (e.g., Holland American Line), which shipped a few hundred thousand students back and forth between the U.S. and Europe. For us students, this was “cool.” (Yes, we used the word back then too!) For decades now, however, hundreds of *millions* of all kinds of people from all over the world fly everywhere with very little fuss about it. Further, it used to be in my student days that getting a long-distance telephone call from somewhere in the United States was a cause of great excitement. Overseas telephone call? You had to book an overseas call ahead of time! And it cost the proverbial arm and a leg. Today we telephone around the world without hesitation. More, we constantly send instant e-mail all over the world and think nothing of it. We are now moving into free telephoning via our computers, we have cell phones everywhere, podcasts, and an endless stream of new communications technologies. The whole world comes into our living rooms when we turn on the TV news. All the items we buy-and sell—are from all over the world.

All this is in stunning contrast to the way almost the whole world lived just a century ago—when my father was born! The vast majority of people were born, lived, and died within a days’ walk from their home village. Now, we indeed do live in a Global Village.

Serious talk about Dialogue means that I want to talk with you who thinks differently from me precisely so I can learn from you. In the past we basically talked only with ourselves, that is, we spoke only with persons who thought as we do—or *should* think as we do! Now, however, that we more and more are aware that all of our knowledge is limited, that we the knower are necessarily involved in the process of knowing—that is, as Gadamer and Ricoeur analyzed—that all knowledge is *interpreted* knowledge, we not only are grudgingly acknowledging that dialogue with the Other is “permitted,” we are being forced to recognize that it is *necessary*! Not only is the epistemological revolution, the “turn toward the subject,” of the 19th century, finally beginning to catch up with the major culture-shapers of the world, but since the “Fall of the Wall” in 1989 and even more so since 9/11/01, more and more people and institutions are becoming *aware* of the need for dialogue—which, of course, was always present.

The world at large is rejecting the position of Absolutism in all forms, including most dramatically in Religion. One might counter that extreme Absolutism in religion is massively on the rise today—after all the predictions that religion was on the wane. However, it is precisely the religious extremists, whether bomb-throwing Catholics and Protestants of Northern Ireland, the Hindutva fanatics in India, the Islamists/Jihadists

around the world, or....., that the vast majority of Catholics, Protestants, Hindus, Muslims.... are increasingly rejecting! There is validity in the old saying: You can fool *some* of the people *all* of the time; you can fool *all* of the people *some* of the time; but you cannot fool *all* of the people *all* of the time!

To be sure, this shift from, "If you differ from me, you are wrong!" to, "If you differ from me, I should look to learn from you!" is a major Paradigm Shift. In fact, it is much more. It is a true, a literal "re-volution," a "turning-around" from a position held by everyone from the beginning of humanity-Absolutism-to the position of Dialogue being increasingly espoused by the world's shapers of culture: Education, the Arts, Communication, Politics....Religion. As with all Paradigm Shifts, and vastly more with the "Global Revolution of the Dialogue Shift," resistance to the Shift is intense. All the current violent Absolutisms are prominent destructive signs of that resistance, as is also at the other end of the spectrum of resistance, the casting of "relativism" as the current *bete noir* by Pope Benedict XVI. Yes, as I noted above, "complete relativism" is a rationally and practically impossible position. However, in tilting at that chimera, that wind-mill, the great danger is that charging forth under such a banner will engender even more fear, thereby stoking still more the fires of violence, first psychological and then consequently (for the way we perceive the world determines how we will act in the world) practical.

To rephrase very succinctly what Dialogue is: *Dialogue is a whole new way of thinking!* Humankind is moving from the *Age Global Monologue* into the dawn of the *Age of Global Dialogue* wherein I increasingly feel the need to talk with those who think differently from me, including-nay, *especially*-religiously, precisely so I can *learn* from them, and they from me (now that is a revolution!), because I increasingly am aware that what I know, even when it is in fact true, is necessarily limited. And this limited characteristic of all knowing is most particularly the case with that most complicated, most comprehensive body of knowing (which then directs our actions), religion.

7. More to Reality Than Meets the Eye?

So, if this is the mental world you live in, that is, Modernity, and yet, one way or another you are not satisfied that our experience of Reality through our senses and rational thought completely plumbs its depth, that there is something much more to it than "meets the eye," then you are among the vast majority of humans who have ever lived, including now. You are looking at what we humans, at least in the West, have referred to as Religion—"an explanation of the *ultimate* meaning of life, and how to live accordingly." Here, of course, we are entering the realm not of Knowing but of Believing. That does not mean that we leave our rational intellects at the door. That is impossible after we have crossed the Rubicon of Modernity. We cannot go back, nor would we wish to.

Religion for the Modern Person means using our senses and intellects—both discursive and intuitive—which will carry us with proof to the ever moving edge of Reality where we cannot penetrate any further with "knowing," with proof. Many of us will stand there with the *feeling* (not something that we can "prove," of course) that there is much more to Reality than we are able to discern with proof. Then we must utilize all of our faculties to coolly look at the evidence for and against the notion that there is more to Reality than "meets the eye," or not. Ultimately we decide (for ultimately, not to decide in this case is to decide negatively): Yes, it makes more sense to affirm that

there is a greater depth to Reality than I can “prove” (e.g., “God” exists), or, No, it makes more sense to reject that idea (e.g., “God” does not exist). However, the yea-sayers cannot “prove” that they are right and that the nay-sayers are wrong—nor can the nay-sayers “prove” that they are right and the yea-sayers are wrong. Rather, we all must remain constantly in dialogue with both ourselves and each other. I invite both to come join Club Mod.

Notes:

1. Some may question my use of Modernity rather than Postmodernity. This is not an oversight on my part. Rather, I am deliberately choosing Modernity, and will argue later on why I find the term postmodern wanting in comparison.
2. See Leonard Swidler, *Aufklärung Catholicism 1780-1850* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1978), and Leonard Swidler, *Making the Church Our Own. Reforming the Catholic Church from the Ground Up* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 2007).
3. For details on all this material see Leonard Swidler, *Biblical Affirmations of Woman*, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1988). It is interesting to note that all the terms—Ruach, Hochmah, Torah, Shechinah—except Dabar are feminine.
4. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., “Folly’s Antidote,” *New York Times*, (January 1, 2007), Op Ed page.

MICHAEL SHAFIR

Conu' Shafirida față cu reacțiunea: Joseph de Maistre sau Fandacsia Descătușată Master Shafirida Stands Up to Reaction: Joseph De Maistre or Unleashing Unreason *

Abstract:

Was Joseph de Maistre a conservative thinker?; an actor who might at any time switch roles with his alleged British counterpart Edmund Burke in a show called "Reactions to the French Revolution"? Or was de Maistre (as Sir Isaiah Berlin saw him) a milestone on mankind's rush to the "Age of Unreason" in general, and to the Nazi folly in particular? To answer this controversy, Professor Michael Shafir called on the witness' stand an unexpected expert in conservatism and the folly of revolutions: Romanian playwright Ion Luca Caragiale. Using as evidence before the court Caragiale's famous farce "Master Leonida Facing Reaction", this exercise in literary counterfactualism demonstrates, according to Shafir, the fig of reason and faith is too small to cover the wastelands of unreason and Social-Darwinist-like psychopathology.

Spre deosebire de Edmund Burke, contele Joseph de Maistre (1753-1821) poate fi considerat ca aparținând în totalitate curentului de gândire reacționar, prin care înțelegem reacția de gândire contra-revoluționară stârnită de Revoluția Franceză, mai degrabă decât să folosim termenul în sens pejorativ, așa cum au făcut-o comuniștii. De Maistre a cunoscut și în bună parte a acceptat și s-a inspirat din scrierile lui Burke, dar, asemenea contemporanului său Louis de Bonald, el nu se mulțumește numai cu propovăduirea conservatorismului și a virtuților pragmatismului și ale moderației, precum Burke. Din contră, Joseph de Maistre devine nu numai avocatul înflăcărat al virtuților fostului regim, dar potrivit unora dintre interpreții scrierilor sale, este în același timp și profetul gândirii proto-fasciste și chiar fasciste, ce avea să se nască în Europa către sfârșitul secolului XIX și începutul secolului XX. Aceasta, cel puțin, este interpretarea pe care o dă gândirii lui de Maistre, marele filosof britanic Sir Isaiah Berlin, într-un celebru articol publicat în 1990 sub titlul "De Maistre și originile fascismului" (Berlin, 1990). Emil Cioran va vedea de asemenea în de Maistre un precursor al "răului", unul care este mult mai apropiat de era noastră decât de cea în care a trăit (Cioran, 1957, pp. 9, 47).

Pentru a face lucrurile mai clare și mai familiare, în această seară mi-am ales un referent puțin obișnuit: nemuritorul Conu' Leonida. Dacă Edmund Burke ar fi scris dra-

Michael
Shafir

Professor
Ph.D.,
Faculty of
European
Studies,
Babes-
Bolyai
University,
Cluj-

Napoca, Romania.

Author of the books:

Romania: Politics, Economics
and Society. Political
Stagnation and Simulated
Change (1985), Between
Negation and Comparative
Trivialization: Holocaust Denial
in Post-Communist East-Central
Europe (2002).



Key words:

Conservatism, Counter-Reaction,
Enlightenment, Social-
Darwinism, Fascism, Nazism,
Roman-Catholicism, Divinity,
Fall-from-Grace, Sin, Absolutism,
Sanction, War.

maturgie, nu ar fi putut reda mai bine esența gândirii conservatoare decât a făcut-o Caragiale în celebra lui farsă, și nu numai acolo. Pentru că—și asta comuniștii au încercat să ascundă—Conu' Iancu a fost, la rândul său, un conservator. Asemenea lui Burke, Caragiale a atenționat asupra pericolului fanatismului ideologic, al “prizonieratului ideational” dispus să arunce după băiță bebelușul cu tot cu copaia. Ascultați ce spune *Aurora Democratică* la “Ultimele știri,” acelea care-i clarifică Conului Leonida cine se află în spatele împușcăturilor pe care le-a auzit în stradă: “Reacțiunea a prins iar limbă. Ca un strigoi în întunec, ea stă la pândă ascuțindu-și ghearele și așteptând momentul oportun pentru poftetele ei antinaționale... Națiune, fii deșteaptă” și, adresându-se consoartei Efimița : “și noi dormim, domnule!” (Caragiale, 2000, p. 92).

Desigur, este marea măiestrie a dramaturgului român că tocmai în gura “revoluționarului” de Conu' Iancu este pusă cea mai ridicolă descriere a mecanismului prin care individul devine “prizonierul ideii.” Să-l ascultăm: “Omul, bunioară, de par egzemplu, dintr-un nu-știu-ce ori ceva, cum e nevrinos, de curiozitate, intră la o idee; a intrat la o idee? Fandacsia e gata; ei! și după aia, din fandacsie, cade în ipohondrie. Pe urmă, firește, și nimica mișcă” (Caragiale, 2000, p. 89).

Este, desigur, întotdeauna periculos să atribuim elemente ale gândirii unui filosof sau altuia, altei epoci decât celei în care a trăit, tot așa cum nu mai puțin periculos este să sustragem anumite elemente ale scrierilor cuiva și să le transbordăm în alt context istoric, făcând abstracție de celelalte elemente ale filosofiei sale. Poate cel mai elocvent exemplu în acest sens ne-a fost oferit de nimeni altul decât marele Karl Popper și modalitatea în care acesta l-a tratat pe Hegel, transformat într-un adevărat inamic al “societății deschise” și în precursor al gândirii fasciste (vezi Popper, 1950, Capitolul 12, pp.223-273; Avineri, 1968; Germino, 1970). Și interpretarea oferită de către Isaiah Berlin scrierilor lui de Maistre este pusă sub semnul întrebării din aproximativ aceleași motive. O face, de exemplu, biograful lui de Maistre, Owen Bradley (1999) și, mai pe meleagurile noastre, Aurelian Crăiuțu într-un studiu publicat în volumul *Elogiul libertății*, apărut la editura Polirom în 1998.

Crăiuțu (1998, p. 94) scrie pe bună dreptate că nu vom putea găsi în scrierile lui de Maistre elemente caracteristice gândirii fasciste cum ar fi elogiul maselor și al omului nou, practica plebiscitară, supremația ideologiei și (mai ales), ostilitatea față de religie. Cu alte cuvinte: “să te ferească Dumnezeu de furia poporului!...Ce să vezi, domnule? Steaguri, muzice, chiot, tîmbălău, lucru mare, și lume, lume, de-ți venea amețeala, nu altceva” (Caragiale, 2000, p. 80). Autorul român preferă însă să acorde un spațiu relativ restrâns acelor aspecte ale gândirii lui de Maistre care depășesc cu mult conservatorismul lui Burke și mai ales să facă abstracție de faptul că, așa cum arată Berlin în articolul său, există elemente practic identice între de Maistre și gânditori considerați azi de a fi făcut fără îndoială parte din spectrul ideologic fascist, cum ar fi francezii Charles Maurras și Maurice Barres (Sternhell, 1972, 1978).

Biografia lui de Maistre nu ajută nici ea prea mult la elucidarea acestei probleme. Născut într-o familie de nobili din Savoia (în acel timp un regat independent de Franța),

de Maistre a avut o educație relativ liberală pentru timpul său, venind între altele în contact cu francmasoneria, pe care avea să o denunțe cu multă înverșunare în scrierile sale de mai târziu. Totuși, în 1792-1793, potrivit biografului său Owen Bradley, a participat îndeaproape la loji masonice, și a cunoscut îndeaproape gândirea iluministă, al cărei mare adversar va deveni. A primit o educație iezuită, în care s-a strecurat un aspect interesant: a făcut parte dintr-un ordin laic, printre ale cărui îndatoriri s-a numărat și conducerea către eșafod a condamnaților la moarte. După cum vom vedea, acest lucru avea să își lase o amprentă adâncă asupra personalității lui de Maistre, în lucrările căruia tema morții, a călăului și a eșafodului devenind pe alocuri obsedantă. La fel ca și tatăl său, de Maistre avea să devină senator al statului Savoia. După izbucnirea Revoluției Franceze și cucerirea de către Franța revoluționară a Savoiei în anul 1792, de Maistre avea să-și urmeze ca un supus credincios ce era monarhul, mai întâi în exil la Torino și la Roma, și în cele din urmă la Cagliari, în Sardinia, unde regele trăia ca un fel de pensionar finanțat de către casele regale ale Angliei și Rusiei. De Maistre, care nu a reușit niciodată să câștige pe deplin încrederea curții regale din cauza trecutului său de cochetărie cu masoneria, va fi trimis ambasador la St. Petersburg în 1802, unde va și produce cele mai importante dintre lucrările sale, revenind acasă numai în 1817, cu patru ani înainte de moarte (Berlin, 1990). Între aceste lucrări, cele mai importante sunt *Considerații asupra Franței* (1796) și *Serile de la Sankt-Petersburg sau convorbiri despre cârmuirea lumii de către Providență* (publicat postum în 1821).

Ce împărtășește de Maistre cu Burke este fără îndoială respingerea iluminismului și a Revoluției Franceze ca întruchipare a acestuia. Nu este singurul care o face, vom găsi aceeași viziune la de Bonald sau la Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803) care va vorbi, ca și Burke, împotriva celor pe care Herder îi va numi “marii simplificatori” ai istoriei. Toți acești gânditori, ca și alții ai timpurilor imediat post-revoluționare, vor ataca crezul potrivit căruia oamenii ar putea construi o societate perfectă pornind de la zero, o societate bazată numai pe legile naturii, pe rațiunea umană și pe cuceririle științei, și în același timp una ignorând pe de altă parte trecutul, tradiția, regulile și valorile transmise din generație în generație. La fel ca și ei, de Maistre respinge ideile a priori care pleacă de la o viziune idealizată a naturii umane și susține ca în loc de a impune astfel de modele asupra societății trebuie plecat de la realitatea empirică înconjurătoare, de la istoria pe care o cunoaștem, de la zoologie și de la observarea celor existente. Altfel, cum ar fi zis Conu' Iancu, se va ajunge la o “soțietate” în care există o “lege a murăturilor,” potrivit căreia nimeni nu mai plătește bir, și este “treaba statului” să facă rost de banii din care “fiește-care cetățean ia câte o leafă bună pe lună, toți într-o egalitate”, căci “el ce grije are? Pentru ce-l avem pe el? E datoria lui să-ngrijască să aibă oamenii lefurile la vreme” (Caragiale, 2000, pp. 85-86).

Dacă gândirea lui de Maistre s-ar rezuma la atâta, probabil că nu l-am mai fi studiat, sau l-am fi studiat împreună cu Edmund Burke. Dar gândirea lui de Maistre nu se rezumă deloc la acest aspect, în ciuda faptului că de Maistre cunoaște scrierile lui Burke și îl citează atunci când îi convine. Berlin observă pe bună dreptate că din punct de vedere temperamental, savoyardul este mai degrabă asemănător “inamicilor lui, iacobini” decât conservatorilor. Ca și iacobinii, contele “era o persoană care credea [în ceea ce credea] total, una care ura cu violență, un *jusqu'au boutiste* în tot ce făcea.” Aparent, la fel ca și Burke, gândirea lui de Maistre propovăduiește virtuțile credinței și ale tradiției. Numai că, spre deosebire de Burke, la de Maistre nu este vorba de orice credință și de orice tradiție, amândouă rezultate din necesitățile specifice ale diferitelor societăți. Există o singură credință valabilă, cea Romano-Catolică, și o singură tradiție care se impune din

însăși natura umană: omul este, după cum vom vedea, un păcătos și un corupt și de aceea societatea trebuie să funcționeze în baza autorității, a ierarhiei, a supunerii și a impunerii. Burke nu putea să fie un model pentru de Maistre, dacă ar fi să amintim numai faptul că un protestant nu avea cum să constituie un exemplu demn de urmat pentru de Maistre (*adevărata necredință nu-și află locul decât în sânul adevăratei religii*, avea să scrie contele în 1809, în *Eseu despre principiul regenerator al constituțiilor politice și al altor instituții seculare*), a cărui gândire este bazată pe trei piloni principali: Biserica (și prin Biserică înțelegem numai și numai Biserica Catolică), Moharhia absolută ca întruchipare a ordinii divine, și Pedepsa, ca mijloc al implementării și al sancționării devierii de la calea cea dreaptă.

Dacă iluminiștii credeau că știința va putea duce la rezolvarea problemelor societății umane, și că este posibilă acea societate în care “nimeni nu mai plătește bir”, de Maistre plasează pe primul loc primatul instinctului, al dogmelor, al prejudecăților (care, potrivit gânditorului savoyard reprezintă experiența generațiilor), al credinței oarbe. Dacă iluminiștii sunt optimiști în ce privește viitorul omenirii, de Maistre este pesimist. Dacă iluminiștii credeau că o armonie eternă și pacea între oameni sunt posibile, de Maistre susține că un conflict între oameni este o necesitate divină care este rezultatul faptului că suntem cu toții niște păcătoși decăzuți din grația divină datorită păcatului original. De aici provine și inevitabilitatea suferinței, a vărsărilor de sânge, a războaielor. Dacă iluminiștii propovăduiau idealurile păcii și ale egalității sociale bazate pe interesul comun al societății și pe caracterul bun al omului în stare naturală, pentru de Maistre conflictul violent și ciocnirea de interese sunt condiția normală a omului decăzut din grația divină și ea se extinde și asupra națiunilor din care omul face parte. În fapt, cum bine percepe Cioran în prefața lui la lucrările lui de Maistre (p. 14), nici Iluminismului nu-i lipsește o anumită dimensiune de providențialism: atât providențialismul de natură religioasă, cât și cel de natură laico-științifică, au drept scop și mizează pe mântuirea omului (sau pe eliberarea sa) prin intermediul transformării naturii de către logos. Cioran afirmă: “trezirea de la concepția teologică sau metafizică la cea a materialismului istoric este o simplă schimbare a unui providențialism cu altul.”

Protestantismul este în ochii lui de Maistre cel mai mare inamic al speciei umane, deoarece și-a ridicat mâna împotriva Bisericii Universale. Însuși Iluminismul nu este altceva decât copilul nelegitim al marilor distrugători: Calvin, Luther și Jan Hus. Protestantismul este expresia revoltei rațiunii individuale împotriva credinței, a cărei natură este universală, a revoltei conștiinței individuale împotriva supunerii, care este oarbă și bazată numai și numai pe respectul autorității. De aceea, protestantismul nu este la urma-urmei altceva decât o rebeliune, o revoltă care dă naștere haosului. Acolo unde nu există arhireul, nu va exista nici regele. Catolicii, afirmă el, nu s-au revoltat niciodată împotriva unui suveran, numai protestanții au făcut acest lucru. Pentru a demonstra acest lucru, de Maistre face uz de un sofism: atunci când catolicii s-au revoltat împotriva unui suveran, au făcut-o deoarece acesta era un uzurpator, deci nu s-au revoltat împotriva autorității legitime. Ca și cum în istorie nu ar fi existat uzurpatori catolici!

Mai mult, de Maistre merge până într-acolo încât ia apărarea Inchiziției, care în ochii lui nu ar fi fost altceva decât un instrument de re-educare blajină, care a readus la sânul adevăratei credințe multe suflete rătăcite. Datorită Inchiziției, Spania nu a fost nevoită să treacă prin conflicte religioase destructive, așa cum au fost cele din Franța, Anglia sau Germania. Războiul de 30 de ani a adus multe nenorociri Germaniei, deoarece nici o țară nu se poate revolta împotriva Adevăratei Biserici rămânând în același timp o țară măreață.

Calea către adevăr, potrivit gândirii lui de Maistre, nu poate fi cunoscută prin mijloace raționale ci numai prin intermediul revelației divine. În consecință, de Maistre va respinge orice idee de contract social, fie ea și numai un contract între generații, așa cum acesta se reflectă la Burke. Ca și Burke, de Maistre va respinge extremismul ideilor abstracte, dar, spre deosebire de Burke, această respingere va fi la de Maistre una care este nu mai puțin extremă decât așa-zisul extremism iluminist. Ceea ce caracterizează ființele umane, afirmă de Maistre, este pe de o parte incapacitatea lor de a se ridica la gradul perfecțiunii Creatorului, și pe de cealaltă parte faptul că întreaga lor existență se desfășoară în virtutea și în prezența păcatului originar, a căderii și în consecință a inevitabilității morții. Omul nu va fi niciodată capabil să înțeleagă destinul ce i-a fost hărăzit de către Creator, și de aceea de cele mai multe ori el se va întreba de ce este pedepsit fără a fi vreodată capabil să poată pătrunde în secretele existenței. Ceea ce ni se pare absurd se datorează faptului că suntem niște ființe limitate în capacitatea noastră, și de aceea de multe ori suntem numai instrumentele unui scop divin pe care nu îl înțelegem. Până și Revoluția Franceză cu atrocitățile sale nu este decât instrumentalizarea acestui scop divin, iar teroarea ei sau cuceririle teritoriale ale unui Napoleon nu sunt decât o exemplificare, pe de o parte a catastrofelor ce pot surveni atunci când omul încearcă să-și construiască propria soartă numai în baza unei idei abstracte care ignoră tradiția și credința, iar pe de cealaltă parte a necesității supremației autorității statale, pe care un Napoleon, inconștient că este instrumentul Creatorului, o va impune în cadrul imperiului. “Nu vom obosi să repetăm,” avea să scrie de Maistre în *Considerații asupra Franței*, că nu oamenii sunt cei care conduc revoluția, ci revoluția e cea care-i conduce pe oameni. Spuneam bine când afirmam că *ea merge singură*. Această frază înseamnă că niciodată divinitatea nu s-a arătat atât de limpede în nici un eveniment uman. Dacă ea se folosește de uneltele cele mai josnice, înseamnă că pedepsește ca să regenereze” (Maistre, 2000, p. 25. Sbl. autorului). Este interesant să observăm că, sub o cu totul altă formă, cea a ideii de libertate și a continuei sale expansiuni, aceeași idee a omului inconștient de scopurile al căror instrument este o vom găsi și la Hegel.

Nimic nu este întâmplător în viață, dar omul este incapabil să înțeleagă faptul că divinitatea își are propriile ei legi. Dacă un om bun trebuie, totuși, să sufere, el nu poate pretinde divinității să-și schimbe legile, deoarece asta ar crea un haos. Tot așa cum cineva care suferă de o maladie nu se așteaptă ca medicina să-și schimbe legile din această cauză, ci, din contra, își caută lecuirea în cadrul acestor legi, tot așa omul care trebuie să facă față nedreptăților sociale nu trebuie să ceară ca aceste nedreptăți să fie eliminate printr-o schimbare a societății. Faptul că el suferă nu este o dovadă că societatea nu ar fi guvernată de legi bune. Legea nu poate preveni apariția nenorocirilor personale și nu poate opera în așa fel încât să fie adaptată la cazurile particulare, deoarece ea ar înceta atunci să fie lege. “Legea dreaptă nu este cea care are efect asupra tuturor, ci aceea care este făcută pentru toți. Efectul său asupra cutărui sau cutărui individ nu mai este decât un accident...[A]m putea dovedi clar că relele de tot felul se abat asupra omenirii ca o ploaie de gloanțe asupra unei armate, fără să aleagă...” Dumnezeu nu poate “să fie obligat să suprimă pentru noi legile gravitației, numai pentru ca pe această terasă se află trei oameni care n-au furat sau n-au ucis niciodată,” le explică interlocutorilor săi unul din participanții la dialogul imaginar de la Sankt-Petresburg (Maistre, *Serile....* , pp. 150, 153).

Principiul divin al funcționării societății umane se bazează pe existența în lume a unei sume totale de păcate, care trebuie să fie ispășite printr-o sumă totală de suferință. Rezultă de aici că suferința individuală poate fi rezultatul ispășirii colective, iar dreptatea nu poate fi împărțită în mod egal pe lumea asta, în așa fel încât numai păcătoșii să sufere.

Atâta timp cât "răul" există pe lume, va trebui să curgă sânge, iar acest sânge va fi atât cel al păcătoșilor cât și cel al nevinovaților, care ajung în felul acesta să plătească pentru răscumpărarea păcatelor speciei umane. Așa se se explică teroarea lui Robespierre îndreptată asupra aristocrației, dar și asupra propriilor săi susținători. Este, așa cum indică Berlin, o viziune pe care o putem denumi teodicee, potrivit căreia existența în lume a răului și a nedreptății nu infirmă bunătatea divină.

Prin urmare, responsabilitatea nu este una individuală, ci una colectivă. Cu toții suntem parte din celălalt și celălalt este parte din noi, păcatele noastre se răsfrâng asupra celorlalți iar păcatele lor asupra noastră. Nu cred că de Maistre știa că această viziune nu era câtuși de puțin catolică. "Kol Israel arevim ze le'ze" (orice evreu este responsabil pentru faptele celorlalți evrei), ne spune tradiția ebraică. Cu atât mai mult, potrivit savoyardului, vor cădea păcatele părinților asupra copiilor.

Dar pentru de Maistre, la baza tuturor acestor aspecte stă insuficiența naturii umane. De Maistre este, așa cum bine percepe Crăiuțu, un pesimist, ceea ce îl plasează la polul opus optimismului funciar al Iluminismului, care alungase din repertoriul său noțiuni "desuete" cum ar fi păcatul originar. Omul are atât o natură bună, cât și una rea. Ea este bună atunci când omul urmează calea Creatorului, dar este rea (de Maistre, care folosește mult metafora, îl descrie ca fiind un "centaur monstrous") atunci când omul se îndepărtează de Creator și încercă să-și impună propria sa voință limitată și perversă. De altfel, este tot atât de neverosimil să vorbești despre "OM", cu cât este neverosimil să vorbești despre Natură sau despre Natura Umană. Aceste noțiuni nu sunt altceva decât abstracții. "Cine este, mă rog, această Doamnă,?" se întreabă zeflemitor de Maistre (*apud* Berlin, 1990) referindu-se la pretenția iluministă de a construi societatea bazată pe legile naturii. Natura, afirmă el, este departe de a fi furnizorul tuturor lucrurilor bune din viață, așa cum o afirmă iluministii, și este în același timp departe de a fi sursa cunoașterii, a vieții sau a fericirii, așa cum cred aceștia. Ea este plină de mistere, crudă în metodele sale, brutală, o sursă de durere și de haos care servește numai voința Creatorului și nu poate fi înțeleasă în afara revelației acestuia.

Ce este nobil într-un sălbatec, se întreabă de Maistre într-o clară aluzie la "nobilul sălbatec" al lui Rousseau. Sălbatecul nu este nobil, ci un specimen subuman, plin de cruzime și de brutalitate. Este gunoiul speciei umane, un exemplu de ce se poate petrece cu omul căzut din grația divină. "Nu-ți poți opri privirea o clipă asupra sălbaticului fără să nu citești cuvântul 'blestat', și nu doar în sufletul său, ci chiar în învelișul trupului său." Ceea ce caracterizează sălbatecul sunt paricidul, spintecarea partenerului de viață, scalpajul, canibalismul. Ce scop servește sălbatecul în viața noastră? Nici un alt scop decât cel de a ne fi un avertisment al Creatorului împotriva treptei la care poate decădea specia umană. "După cum materiile cele mai mârșave și cele mai demne de scârbă pot să sufere încă o și mai mare stricăciune, tot așa viciile firești ale omului se regăsesc și mai josnice la sălbatic. Hoț, crud, desfrânat ca și noi, dar altfel decât noi. Doar trecând peste firea noastră devenim noi ticăloși; sălbaticul își urmează firea, este însetat de nelegiuire, nu are remușcări" (Maistre, *Serile*.... pp. 165-166) Ficțiuni ca cele ale autorului *Discursului despre inegalitatea condițiilor* (cum prescurtează de Maistre titlul lucrării lui Jean-Jacques Rousseau) nu pot ascunde adevărul: "Sălbatecul nu poate fi decât un om decăzut și pedepsit" (Maistre, *Serile*, p. 181). Găsim, oare, în această descriere a sălbaticului, ecouri preliminare ale rasismului și ale Darwinismului social care vor caracteriza Nazismul? Să amânăm deocamdată răspunsul la această întrebare.

Și care sunt acele drepturi inerente ale omului în stare naturală în numele cărora o Europă întreagă a fost aruncată într-un masacru sălbatec, se întreabă mai departe de

Maistre. Inerente căror oameni? Nu există nici un fel de drepturi abstracte care pot fi deduse în absența unei autorități care să regleze asemenea drepturi, fie aceasta o autoritate umană, fie ea una divină. Tot așa cum nu există o doamnă numită Natură, nu există nici o ființă numită "Om". "Am văzut, în viața mea, francezi, italieni, ruși, etc., ba chiar știu, mulțumită lui Montesquieu, că *poți fi persan*, dar, în ce privește omul, declar că nu l-am văzut în viața mea; dacă există, există fără știrea mea" (Maistre, 2000, pp. 70-71 sbl. autorului). Toate acestea nu sunt decât abstracții, himere în numele cărora au fost și sunt comise atrocități. Sclavia, afirmă el, nu a fost desființată de către asemenea noțiuni abstracte, ci atunci când autoritatea Bisericii Catolice a putut fi impusă peste tot. Cam subțire și desigur inexactă istoric această afirmație, ca și cum catolicii nu s-ar fi numărat niciodată printre marii traficanți de sclavi.

Raționalismul, ne mai spune de Maistre, dă naștere ateismului, individualismului și anarhiei. Societatea umană nu poate exista în afara unei ierarhii recunoscute și respectate, o ierarhie în cadrul căreia individul își recunoaște superiorul ierarhic și îi respectă ordinele. De unde această dispoziție de a respecta ordinea ierarhică? Ea nu poate fi explicată de către nici un fel de filosofie raționalistă, ci derivă din faptul că nu există societate în afara statului, nu există stat în absența unui suveran, nu există suveranitate în absența infailibilității, și nu există infailibilitate în absența lui Dumnezeu. Papa este reprezentantul lui Dumnezeu pe pământ, și orice autoritate legitimă își are rădăcinile în Creator și reprezentantul său pe pământ.

Tocmai aceste afirmații îl determină pe Isaiah Berlin să scrie că filosofia lui de Maistre este reacționară, obscurantistă și, în cele din urmă, va produce ideea fascistă. Este adevărat că ideea fascistă este de neconceput în absența infailibilității Fuhrerului, Duceului, Conducătorului. Dar absolutismul nu este, totuși, identic cu fascismul, și dacă ar fi, atunci ar trebui să-l acuzăm și pe Hobbes de aceeași paternitate ideologică. Berlin însuși recunoaște indirect acest lucru atunci când scrie în același articol că în termeni moderni, ideile lui de Maistre sunt poate cel mai bine exemplificate de regimurile lui Francisco Franco în Spania și ale lui Antonio de Olivera Salazar în Portugalia. Acestea au fost însă mai degrabă regimuri autoritare cu o puternică tentă religioasă decât regimuri fasciste.

De Maistre respinge bineînțeles noțiunea de contract social ca stând la baza societății umane. Cum poate exista un contract, întreabă el pe bună dreptate, dacă nu există mijloace de a impune sancțiuni pentru nerespectarea lui? Ori, asemenea mijloace nu pot exista în afara societății, a unor convenții sociale deja existente înainte încheierii contractului. Societatea, deci, trebuie să preceadă oricărui contract. Pentru sălbatecul izolat care pasămite ar exista în stare naturală, contractul nu poate avea nici un fel de înțeles. Societatea poate crea contracte, dar nu și invers. Numai protestanții au putut fi capabili să creadă că societatea umană este o creație artificială a omului, plasând-o astfel la același nivel cu o bancă sau cu o întreprindere.

Societatea, afirmă de Maistre în nenumărate rânduri, și cu clare ecouri de influență burkiană, nu este o asociație artificială de interese particulare și de urmărire a propriului interes, ci se bazează pe dispoziția umană de a se autosacrifica pe altarul unor valori mai puternice decât propriul interes. Cum altfel s-ar explica faptul că soldații îndeplinesc ordine de care sunt conștienți că pot duce la propria lor moarte? Ar fi grotesc, afirmă el, să presupunem că în acest caz ei ar fi mânați de propriile interese particulare, de urmărirea unor avantaje personale. Și tot așa cum soldații sunt dispuși să-și sacrifice viețile pe câmpul de luptă, mecanismul se aplică și felului în care funcționează societatea în general, membrii ei respectând și îndeplinind ordinele superiorilor lor ierarhici. Ei nu își pun întrebări, ci acționează în virtutea unei forțe tradiționale, misterioase și irezistibile,

care este forța puterii organizate.

Este ridicol să crezi că această forță irezistibilă, forța puterii și a autorității, poate depinde de fleacuri artificiale cum ar fi convenția socială. Societatea nu este o asociație creată în scopul profitului mutual, este mai degrabă un fel de casă de corecție și de pedeapsă. Ea nu este dominată de puterea rațiunii. Nu rațiunea, ci puterea este cea care creează și menține societatea, iar atunci când dintr-un motiv sau altul se creează un vid de putere, mai devreme sau mai târziu acest vid este umplut de o nouă putere care se va naște din haosul revoluționar precedent. Iacobinii, cu teroarea lor, sau Napoleon, sunt poate criminali sau tirani, dar ei exercită putere, reprezintă o autoritate, obțin respectarea ordinelor lor. Și, mai presus de toate, ei sunt capabili de a aplica sancțiuni, de a pedepsi. Din acest punct de vedere, asemenea tirani sunt de o mie de ori preferabili unor intelectuali critici, care nu fac altceva decât să circule tot felul de idei destructive, să creeze dezordine dar nu să o și înlocuiască cu altceva.

Orice putere vine de la Dumnezeu. Iacobinii au fost niște nemernici și niște criminali, dar teroarea a restabilit autoritatea, a menținut Franța în granițele sale, ba chiar le-a și extins, și în consecință ea are o valoare mai mare decât ar putea-o avea ideile liberale și idealiste ale Girondinilor, care au scăpat din mână puterea. Orice guvernare este mai bună decât haosul, afirmă de Maistre, pentru că haosul duce la revoluție și la subminarea valorilor creștine tradiționale. Cea mai rea formă de guvernare este totuși preferabilă anarhiei. Și în cele din urmă, despotismul cel mai teribil este preferabil dezintegrării societății.

Revoluția însăși, care în ochii lui de Maistre este cel mai mare rău din toate posibile, este o pedeapsă divină menită să îndrepte răul și să ducă la o renaștere și la o regenerare. Ca orice alt eveniment din istoria umană, și ea este plină de mistere și dă naștere unor forțe care nu își înțeleg menirea. “Nu oamenii conduc revoluțiile, ci revoluțiile utilizează oameni.” Robespierre a fost un om care a posedat un “geniu infernal”, afirmă de Maistre, un “monstru de putere” care a devenit “beat de sânge și succes,” dar în același timp el a fost o “pedeapsă colectivă” trimisă de Dumnezeu asupra francezilor și singura modalitate de a scăpa Franța de dușmanii care se coalizaseră împotriva ei. Numai fanatismul pe care Robespierre l-a putut inspira francezilor i-a putut duce să lupte ca niște fanatici “mânjiți de sângele de pe eșafode.” Fără el, ei ar fi rămas niște mediocri. Ce înseamnă însă pentru de Maistre a fi mediocru? Acest lucru poate fi înțeles cel mai bine din comparația pe care el o face între Ludovic al XIV-lea, “Regele Soare”, monarhul absolutist care a știut să-și impună voința asupra tuturor, și Ludovic al XVI-lea, care s-a străduit, potrivit lui de Maistre, să fie pe placul tuturor și a terminat, în consecință, pe eșafod.

Nu este greu de înțeles de ce Isaiah Berlin vede, deci, în de Maistre premergătorul nu numai al fascismului, ci și al nazismului. Conducerea absolută și fanatismul conducătorilor, care este atât de admirat de către de Maistre a caracterizat într-adevăr regimul hitlerist iar elogiul terorii și al violenței, precum și înobilarea războiului ca o culme a sacrificiului uman pot ușor fi interpretate în acest sens. Să luăm, spre exemplu, ce are de spus de Maistre despre luptă și despre război, combinând aceste afirmații cu descrierea sa despre natura umană, și vom avea numai câțiva pași de făcut pentru a “progresă” în direcția nazismului:

În fine, domnilor, funcțiile soldatului sunt îngrozitoare, dar țin de o lege măreață a lumii spirituale. Nu trebuie, deci, să ne mirăm că toate neamurile lumii au căzut de acord că acest flagel, războiul, reprezintă ceva mult mai sfânt decât alte lucruri...

Băgați de seamă și că această lege a războiului, oricum destul de grozavă, nu este decât un capitol din legea generală care stăpânește lumea.

Marea lume a supraviețuitoarelor este stăpânită de o violență vădită, de un fel de furie dinainte scrisă, care înarmează toate ființele în *mutual funera*. [Ca să-si provoace reciproc moartea]. De cum ieșiți din regnul lipsit de simțuri, dați de legea forței violente, înscrisă pe înșeși fruntarele vieții... Pentru fiecare mare încrengătură a speciilor animale s-a ales un anumit număr de animale a căror menire este să le sfâșie pe celelalte: astfel, există insecte de pradă, reptile de pradă, pești de pradă, patrupede de pradă. În fiecare clipă, ființa vie este sfâșiată de o altă ființă. Omul este așezat deasupra acestor numeroase rase de animale. Mâna lui devastatoare nu iartă nici o ființă vie; ucide ca să se hrănească, ucide ca să se îmbrace, ucide ca să se împodobească, ucide ca să atace, ucide ca să se apere, ucide ca să se distreze, ucide ca să ucidă.... Omul vrea tot și deodată: îi cere mielului măruntaiele ca să-și pună corzi la harfă; balenei, fanoanele, ca să-i pună în corsajul tinerei fecioare; lupului, dinții ucigători, ca să șlefuiască opere de artă; elefantului, colții, ca să facă o jucărie copilului; iar mesele și le acoperă cu cadavre.... Omul este însărcinat să-l sugrume pe om. Dar cum va putea el să îndeplinească legea, el, o ființă morală și miloasă, el, născut pentru a iubi, el, care se înduioșează de soarta altora și de a sa, căruia îi place să plângă și care născocoște năuciri care să-l facă să plângă? În fine, el, căruia i s-a spus că *se va cere înapoi și ultima picătură din sângele pe care îl va fi vărsat pe nedrept? Decretul* va fi împlinit de război. Nu auziți *pământul* cum strigă, cum cere *sânge*?... *Pământul* n-a strigat în zadar, războiul izbucnește. Omul, cuprins pe negândite de o turbare *sfântă*, cu totul diferită de ură sau mânie, înaintează pe câmpul de luptă fără să știe ce vrea, nici măcar ce face.... Pământul întreg, neconținut udat cu sânge, este un altar fără margini, pe care trebuie jertfit la nesfârșit tot ceea ce trăiește—fără măsură, fără încetare, până la sfârșitul lucrurilor, până la moartea morții.” (Maistre, *Serile*....pp. 189-192. sbl. autorului).

I-a lipsit, desigur, lui de Maistre, o Efimița, altfel nu încape nici o îndoială că merita aici remarcă: “ Ei! Cum le spui dumneata bobocule, să tot stai s-ascuți ” (Caragiale, 2000, p. 84). Lipsește Burke. Lipsește Caragiale. Nu lipsește (dar deloc!) “fandacsia”! O fandacsie care sfințește și ce e mai puțin sfânt—războiul, transformat din necesitate impusă în necesitate existențială. Ba chiar mai mult, în instrument divin. Un *jihadd* maistrian!

Iată, deci, răspunsul la întrebarea pe care o puneam mai înainte, și anume dacă putem găsi la de Maistre rădăcini ale Darwinismului social. Cred că citatul demonstrează destul de clar că răspunsul este afirmativ. Este pe de cealaltă parte adevărat că Darwinismul social exclude religiozitatea, care la de Maistre este foarte pronunțată. Totuși, o religiozitate care face apologia nobleței războiului și a vărsării de sânge ca o inevitabilitate se îndepărtează serios de valorile creștine pe care de Maistre susținea că la propovăduiește. Probabil că aceste aspecte îl fac pe Berlin să afirme că “de Maistre vorbește aparent într-un limbaj al trecutului, dar conținutul acestuia presează asupra viitorului.” Spre deosebire de simpaticul nostru Con' Leonida, el nu se îmbracă frumos ca să meargă la “rivoluție” mergând “pe jos pân'la teatru.” De Maistre îmbracă zale și pleacă la război călărind. Pe cal sau tanc, asta depinde de epocă.

Să trecem, deci, la problema războiului. De Maistre este fascinat de el și în repetate rânduri se întreabă cum se explică atracția, pe care el o numește “magică”, a omului de a își sacrifica viața și de a își ucide semenul care nu i-a făcut personal nici un fel de rău. Oamenii care ar vărsa lacrimi dacă le-ai cere să taie o găină, nu au nici un fel de ezitare să ucidă pe câmpul de luptă, scrie el. Călăul ucide câțiva vinovați de crime abominabile,

soldatii ucid mii de oameni nevinovați, fără nici un fel de discriminare, și cu entuziasm. De unde această dispoziție? De ce sunt oamenii dispuși să se revolte din cauza unor lucruri triviale, dar sunt dispuși să se supună ordinelor superiorilor lor de a ucide și de a fi la rândul lor uciși? Dacă omul, așa cum susțin iluminiștii, ar fi mânat de urmărirea propriului interes, de mult s-ar fi născut acea pace universală pe care interesul comun o impune. Răspunsul trebuie căutat, deci, în altă parte. Omul este mânat nu numai de urmărirea propriului interes, ci și, în măsură egală, de dorința de a se autojertfi, de a se imola. Războiul este legea teribilă și eternă a lumii. Rațiunea este incapabilă de a-l explica. În pofida ei, războiul rămâne o atracție misterioasă și irezistibilă. Deși irațional, el a guvernat și va continua să guverneze istoria omenirii. De aici se impune concluzia că războiul nu este o invenție umană, ci este rezultatul voinței divine. "Războiul este sfânt prin urmările sale generale și particulare, de ordin miraculos...Războiul este sfânt prin slava trainică ce-l înconjoară și prin atracția nu mai puțin nedeslușită, ce o are asupra noastră. Războiul este sfânt prin apărarea dată marilor căpetenii... (Maistre, *Serile*..., pp. 192-193).

Din nou: iată, pentru a folosi sintagma lui Berlin, trecutul folosind limbajul viitorului. Cultul violenței și al forței va caracteriza ideologia fascistă și cea nazistă.

Dar dacă violența îndreptată către exterior este explicabilă prin natura ei divină, cum va explica de Maistre violența folosită în cadrul societății? Nimic nu a determinat interpretarea gânditorului savoyard drept un precursor al nazismului mai mult decât acest aspect. De Maistre face apologia călăului ca figură care personifică necesitatea pedepsei într-o societate dominată de păcat.

Dacă, așa cum afirmam mai înainte, găsim la el o societate care se bazează pe stâlpii credinței și ai autorității, cel de-al treilea stâlp, fără de care ceilalți doi nu pot să-și îndeplinească menirea, este stâlpul pedepsei, întruchipat de către călău. Puterea celorlalți doi stâlpi depinde de puterea acestuia, o ființă umană cu care nimeni nu vrea să se afle în contact, care trăiește izolat de toți ceilalți. "Toată măreția, toată puterea, toată subordonarea," scrie de Maistre, "depind de călău. Îndepărtați din societate acest agent misterios, și societatea va dispărea. Dumnezeu, care a creat suveranitatea, a creat și pedeapsa."

Călăul este omul "hărăzit să aplice nelegiuirilor pedepsele hotărâte de justiția umană". Dar el este inexplicabil atâta timp cât existența sa este cercetată numai cu ajutorul instrumentului rațiunii. "Acest om există pretutindeni fără să se poată explica cum de s-a ajuns aici, căci rațiunea nu descoperă în natura omului nici un motiv care să hotărască alegerea acestei meserii." Există în călău ceva de natură divină, ne lasă de Maistre a înțelege:

Mintea sa, sufletul său, sunt oare alcătuite ca și ale noastre? Nu au oare ceva deosebit și străin firii noastre? În ce mă privește, nu am nici o îndoială. Pe dinafară este ca și noi. Se naște ca și noi, dar este o ființă neobișnuită, și pentru ca să existe printre oameni e nevoie de o hotărâre specială, de un FIAT al puterii ziditoare. Este zămislit întocmai ca o lume. Numai gândiți-vă la părerea oamenilor despre el și înțelegeți, dacă sunteți în stare, cum de călăul se poate preface că nu cunoaște sau cum de poate înfrunta această părere! De-abia i s-a dat o locuință, de-abia a intrat în ea, că ceilalți se și dau înapoi, până la limita de la care nu îl mai pot vedea. În mijlocul acestei singurătăți, al acestui gol care s-a creat în jurul său, trăiește părăsit, doar cu femeia și cu micuții săi care îl fac să cunoască glasul omenesc; în lipsa lor ar cunoaște doar geamătul... Se dă un semnal lugubru, un umil trimis al dreptății vine să bată la ușa lui, anunțându-l că este nevoie de el. Pleacă. Sosește în piața acoperită de o mulțime grăbită și fremătătoare. I se dă pe mână un otrăvitor, un

paricid, un profanator. Îl ia, îl întinde, îl leagă pe o cruce orizontală, ridică mâna. Se face o liniște îngrozitoare și nu se mai aud decât scrâșnetele oaselor care sunt zdrobite și urletele victimei, pe care apoi o dezleagă, o așază pe roată. Mădularele sfărâmate se prind de spițe, capul atârână, părul se zbârlește, iar gura, căscată, nu mai lasă să scape decât din când în când frânturi de cuvinte însângerate care cheamă moartea. Călăul a terminat. Îi bate inima, de data aceasta de bucurie....O fi om? Da. Dumnezeu îl primește în templele sale și îl îngăduie să se roage. Nu este un ucigaș, și totuși nici un suflet nu-și îngăduie să spună, de pildă, *că este plin de virtute, că este un om cinsit, că este respectabil*, etc. Nu i se potrivește nici o laudă, căci oricare laudă presupune să ai relații cu oamenii, iar el rămâne în afara lor. Și totuși, orice glorie, orice putere, orice ierarhie se bazează pe cel ce execută- el este spaima și legătura ce permite întovășirea oamenilor. Excluzând acest agent de neînțeles și în aceeași clipă haosul se înstăpânește în locul ordinii, tronurile se prăbușesc și societatea dispare. Dumnezeu, întemeietorul suveranității, este deci și întemeietorul sancțiunii (Maistre, *Serile...*, pp. 159-160. Sbl. autorului.)

Cu alte cuvinte: Omul trebuie să fie conștient în orice clipă a vieții sale că misterul înfricoșător care este creația divină necesită o neîntreruptă purificare și că omenirea este condamnată la o suferință perpetuă, la a i se aduce aminte ceas cu ceas de propria ei stupiditate care a dus la căderea din grația divină, de propria ei răutate și de propria ei neputință. Războiul, tortura, suferința sunt inevitabile. Stăpânii au datoria de a-și îndeplini sarcina ce le-a fost plasată pe umeri de către Creator (care a creat o ordine ierarhică), să impună legea fără milă și scrupul, iar călăul este agentul prin care această lege divină este impusă.

Vă rog să facem acum următorul exercițiu: Înlocuiți "legea divină" cu "legea naturală" a supraviețuirii celui mai puternic; înlocuiți, apoi, "călăul" cu Gestapo sau cu SS. Sau alt exercițiu: înlocuiți "legea divină" cu "legea istoriei" al cărei motor este "lupta de clasă." Înlocuiți mai apoi "călăul" cu NKVD sau Securitatea. Să aveți o săptămână bună! și... să nu carecumva intrați la fandacie!

***Prelegere la Seminarul de Cercetare Interdisciplinară a Religiiilor și Ideologiilor, Catedra de Filosofie Sistematică, Facultatea de Istorie și Filosofie, Universitatea Babeș-Bolyai, Cluj, 19 ianuarie 2007.**

Surse:

Avineri, Shlomo, 1968, "Hegel Revisited" in *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. III, No. 2 (April), pp. 133-147.

Berlin, Isaiah, 1990, "Joseph de Maistre and the Origins of Fascism," in *The New York Review of Books*, Vol. XXXVII, nos. 14-17, 27 September, 11 October, 25 October, www.nybooks.com/articles/3510; www.nybooks.com/articles/3491; www.nybooks.com/articles/3464.

Bradley, Owen, 1999, *The Social and Political Thought of Joseph de Maistre* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press).

Caragiale, Ion Luca, *Opere II. Teatru • Scieri despre teatru • Versuri* (București, Academia Română, Editura Univers Enciclopedic).

Cioran, Emil, 1957, *Joseph de Maistre: Textes choisis* (Monaco, Editions du Rochet).

Crăiutu, Aurelian, 1998, *Elogiul libertății: Studii de filosofie politică* (Iași: Polirom).

Germino, Dante, 1970, "Hegel's Theory of the State: Humanist or Totalitarian?", *Statsvetenskapling Tidskrift*, Vol. XIX, pp. 293-313.

Maistre, Joseph de, 2000, *Considerații asupra Franței* (București: Editura Albatros).

Maistre, Joseph de, f.a., "Eseu despre principiul regenerator al constituțiilor politice și al altor instituții seculare" în Joseph de Maistre, *Istorie și Providență* (București: Editura Anastasia), pp. 49-56.

Maistre, Joseph de, f.a., "Serile de la Sankt-Petersburg sau convorbiri despre cărmuirea lumii de către Providență" în Joseph de Maistre, *Istorie și Providență* (București: Editura Anastasia), pp. 135-219.

Popper, Karl, 1950, *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press).

Sternhell, Zeev, 1978, *La droite révolutionnaire: Les origines françaises du fascisme 1885-1914* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil).

Strenhell, Zeev, 1972, *Maurice Barres et le nationalisme français* (Bruxelles: Éditions Complexe).

Delia Popa

Emmanuel Levinas, Les aventures de l'économie subjective et son ouverture à l'altérité

Emmanuel Levinas, The adventures of the subjective economy and its opening towards alterity

Lumen Publishing House, Iasi, 2007

Despre subiectivitatea etică

Ne aflăm într-o cultură, cea română, unde nu și-au găsit încă nici asimilatorii și nici interpreții multe dintre modelele filosofice ale ultimului secol, și nici măcar gânditorii ce beneficiază deja de institute de cercetare, de cursuri universitare speciale dedicate exclusiv exegezei operelor lor. Desigur, cultura română filosofică nu s-a format pe modelul rabinic sau chiar scolastic, al studierii și interpretării de texte, fapt ce-i afectează modalitatea raportării la operele scrise, în sensul unei superficialități hermeneutice, a unui anume infantilism mefient vizavi de ceea ce s-a scris – fie că-i vorba de text religios, filosofic ori literar. O bună interpretare a unui text trebuie să creeze un text nou, de un curaj ideatic, profunzime și expresivitate stilistică, comparabile cu textul de referință, în așa fel încât să se închege un dialog. Altminteri așa-zisa interpretare se risipește în simple cimilituri afectate, litanii pline de vervă ale unor asimilări impresioniste, preluări de clișee și redundanțe, devenind o versiune slabă, și parțial inutilizabilă, a textului referință.

Comprehensiunea nu e niciodată pură, nu se reduce adică la o intuiție masivă a textului, iar pretenția ei nu poate fi verificată nicidecum altfel decât sub proba unei interpretări convingătoare. Pasivității purei înțelegeri, a unor texte de vivacitatea și adâncimea celor filosofice, îi urmează îndeaproape reacția activității de interpretare, astfel constituindu-se dialogul ideilor, asupra căruia nu trebuie să cadă în fapt autoritatea vreunei teze ultime, tocmai pentru că în marginea fiecărei voci se manifestă contexte, persoane și circumstanțe noi, nicidecum reductibile la pura ocurență interpretativă. Astfel, dincolo de faptul că se anumite idei intră în coliziune, situația revelatoare e aceea că două voci coabitează în aria aceluiași fond sonor, și că în ele reverberează proximitatea convergen-



Vianu Mureșan

Associate professor, Ph.D., Avram Iancu University, Cluj, Romania.

E-mail: valmuresan@yahoo.com

Key words:

subjectivity, alterity, philosophy, experience, Emmanuel Levinas, Delia Popa

tă a alterităților. Iar dacă asupra interpretării se poate reveni oricând, în numele unor noi dezvăluiri de sens, care ar confirma cu argumente noi operațiunea de înțelegere, proximitatea cu textul rămâne aceeași chiar dacă încă nu s-a produs nici înțelegerea, nici interpretarea, întrucât scrisul acestuia este aproape neînțelesului celuilalt, semnul unor rostiri ce au lăsat în urma lor o garanție, că nu se va retrage, că nu va prefera ascunderea ori distanța. Un text exprimă deopotrivă narațiunea alterității, în care e preluat întregul ei context și intenționalitatea ei relațională, după cum este și indiciul misterului ireductibil al acesteia. Prezența indeneșabilă a textului mărturisește prin ea însăși absența persoanei auctoriale, ca timp și circumstanță.

Intenție, contextualizare.

Lévinas și-a câștigat pe bună dreptate locul între primii filosofi europeni ai secolului XX. Deși abia întrezărită anvergura și gravitatea gândirii lui, mai apar, sporadic totuși, și în cultura noastră texte ce-i pot deveni în mod legitim parteneri de dialog, ori pot măcar să-i rezume elocvent sensul. Este vorba și de cartea la care ne vom referi aici, despre care trebuie spus de la bun început că și-a rezervat conversației cu autorul în cauză doar câteva minute din ceea ce ar putea fi o zi filosofică, limitându-se fatalmente la un mănunchi sumar din ceea ce ar fi putut fi spus despre opera acestuia. Cartea Deliei Popa – *Emmanuel Lévinas, Les aventures de l'économie subjective et son ouverture a l'altérité*, orig. în franceză, ed. Lumen, Iași, 2007 – se adresează cuiva care știe destule despre ideile filosofului francez și dorește să achiziționeze câteva ocurențe sau nuanțe noi ale unora dintre ele, sau cuiva care nu vrea să afle prea multe, mulțumindu-se a-i identifica poziția în raport cu fenomenologia, ontologia fundamentală și, eventual, a realiza cum pot fi solicitate conceptele acestora, prin contra-interpretare, să servească elaborării unei gândiri etice. Adică, e o carte ce presupune un cititor deja familiar cu limbajul fenomenologiei, lucru fără de care lectura e aproape imposibilă, dar care nu ține neapărat să devină expert. Nu e o carte de introducere și nici de popularizare, cât mai curând una de rafinare a înțelegerii câtorva teme mari, recurente, din opera lui Lévinas. Asta și pentru că ea a fost scrisă în Franța, unde există un *Institut de studii levinasiene* și o vastă literatură preocupată de lămurirea diverselor aspecte ale scriiturii acestuia – comentarii și conferințe pe teme talmudice, tratat filosofic, cursuri universitare, eseistică.

Să încerci regândirea lui Lévinas înseamnă, în lipsa unor ghizi ce-au străbătut deja traseul, asumarea unei rețele conceptuale vaste și adesea încălcite, a unui tip de gândire dintre cele mai meticuloase, ordonate și metodice în întreaga filosofie modernă – fenomenologia. Înseamnă deopotrivă și intuirea sensului unor conjuncturi socio-istorice care, denunțând cu vehemență crizele sistemelor teoretice, dar și eșecul poziționării umane în lumea intersubiectivității, reclamă un nou model filosofic. Însă nu unul care să se rezume a fi un simplu exercițiu de diagnosticare a crizelor culturale și celor sociale, cum adesea se limitează să facă unii gânditori, și nici doar producerea și antrenarea în disputele academice, științifice ori filosofice a unor concepte noi, exercițiu în sine steril, reductibil eventual la caracterul unei simple estetici a minții, al unui joc al gândirii ori al hermeneuticii conceptuale.

Cu toate că este între cei mai marcat speculativi dintre filosofi ai secolului XX, poate și ca moștenitor al unei tradiții iudaice, în care cultul semnificației terminologice și textuale ține de însăși fundamentul existenței religioase, compune conținutul unui legământ cu Dumnezeu, cu toate că este autorul unor inovații terminologice dintre cele mai surprinzătoare, putând părea unora chiar rebarbative, Lévinas nu-și limitează filosofia la pura

dezbateră de idei. Asumând drept obiect al disputei unele dintre conceptele fundamentale ale metafizicilor tradiționale – precum *Unitate*, *Totalitate*, *Identitate*, *Esență*, *Transcendență*, *Infini*, *Ființă*, *Quidditate*, *Întreg*, *Substanță*, *Intenționalitate*, *Subiect*, *Ego*, *Monadă*, *Cogito*, *Adevăr*, *Noema* etc. – el transformă totuși discursul teoretic, în bază pentru asumarea legitimă a unei atitudini relaționale. Îi solicită să devină temei pentru poziționarea în mediul social-istoric, în diversele scheme în care este întâlnită Alteritatea, sau să devină terapie în vederea trezirii, a elevației la starea recunoașterii unui *a priori* relațional. Starea de fraternitate originară a subiecților și responsabilitatea, chiar asimetric asumată, pregătesc condițiile unei noi paradigme etice. O metafizică ce dorește să dezvolte caracter relațional social, o *filosofia prima* ce vrea să fie înțeleasă ca etică a responsabilității interumane, iată scopul filosofiei levinasiene.

Delia Popa găsește culoarul adecvat asumării unei corecte poziționări față de filosofia levinasiană, practicând în prealabil un decupaj semnificativ în vastitatea câmpului tematic pe care l-a desfășurat filosoful lituanian-francez de-a lungul a peste șase decenii de filosofare. Adică, e vorba în această neobișnuită teză de licență, susținută în 2000 la Universitatea franceză Nice-Sophia Antipolis, sub coordonarea profesorului Jean-François Mattéi, și transformată într-o carte, de o *analitică a conceptului subiectivității*, pe de-o parte, și, pe de alta, o configurare a *câmpului relațional intersubiectiv*, ce devine temeiul instituirii etice. În prima incursiune subiectivitatea este condusă prin marile ei ocurențe moderne, de la caracterul de *cogito* sau acela de *monadă*, până la cel de *intenționalitate* și *Dasein*, astfel devenind limpezi disputele pe care Lévinas le-a angajat cu Descartes, Leibniz, Husserl ori Heidegger, cu intenția de-a oferi un nou conținut, o nouă definiție subiectului – anume ca *subiect sensibil*, *afectat originar de alteritate*, *responsabil prin situație și vinovat de răul celuilalt*. În cea de-a doua incursiune, Delia Popa va indica modalitățile în care noul subiect – sensibil mai degrabă decât intențional, etic mai degrabă decât cognitiv, înscris într-un orizont relațional interuman mai degrabă decât exilat în aura Ființei, heideggeriene – își gestionează caracterul de vulnerabilitate, deschidere în vederea poziționării în relația cu Celălalt – *aproapele*, *străinul*, *copilul*, *femeia*, *sărmanul*, *suferindul*, *muritorul*, *victima*.

Mai trebuie explicat și faptul că direcțiile pe care a evoluat filosofia levinasiană, devenind dintr-o analiză a conceptelor husserliene și a celor talmudice o metafizică etică, au fost determinate de crizele umanității europene, de conjuncturile istorice în care violența a adoptat forme raționale, sistematice, cu scopul anihilării alterității de diverse grade – indivizi, grupuri, minorități, etnii. Delia Popa notează cu atenție încă din introducere aceste contingente istorice, cărora Lévinas însuși le-a căzut victimă, în care vedea încarnat un anume spirit agonistic al istoriei europene recente. Acest cadru l-a făcut să ofere gândirii metafizice mai mult decât concepte speculative, să ofere sarcini etice¹ și chiar eschatologice.

Structură.

Structura lucrării indică fără echivoc orientarea pe care o vor adopta tezele conținute în ea, într-o ordine pe cât de limpede, pe atât de convingătoare. Prima parte, cristalizată de termenul ce indică experiența metafizică a apăsării (*la pesanteur*) este ghidată de dialogul levinasian cu ontologia fundamentală heideggeriană, purtat de-a lungul întregii lui cariere teoretice, mai cu seamă în lucrări precum *De l'existence a l'existant* (1947), *Le temps et l'autre* (1947), *Totalité et infini* (1961), *Autrement qu'être et au-delà de l'essence* (1974). Delia Popa controlează fără nici un fel de crispări distincțiile practi-

cate de filosoful german între domeniul ființei (*l'être*) și cel al fiindului (*l'étant*), nu uită să țină cont de lămuririle impuse de diferența ontologică, indică sensul, bogăția analiticii existențiale a *Daseinului*, dar atâta cât trebuie pentru a expune adaosul levinasian la ontologie, regăsit în conceptul nou al *ilyalității* (*il y a*). Aici este vorba nu de nivelul subzistentului în sine – o ființă ce ar constitui temeiul de la sine înțeles al oricărei posibilități de ființare –, și nici de nivelul existențial contingent cu experiența în lume a *Daseinului*, revelat în principal ca abandon, angoasă, ființare în proiect și în vederea morții. Decis să reînnoiască modalitatea tematizării ființei, Lévinas îi oferă în primă instanță semnificația unui *aici* absolut indeterminat, a unui dat pozitiv prezent eliberat de alternativa absenței ori neantului, a ceva ce stăruie deasupra elementelor individuale, ceva ce se petrece de la sine zădărniciind orice tendință de evaziune. *il y a* indică sunetul de fond al actualității, ce sugerează imposibilitatea liniștii totale, adică imposibilitatea absenței, ce abate astfel chestiunea ontologică de la alternativa a *fi* sau a *nu fi*, pe care Heidegger prefera s-o gândească după modelul leibnizian al unei priorități disjuncte. Noua ocurență a ființei „*s'affirme la où il n'y a rien d'autre que du pur exister, la où, surtout, il n'y a personne*”². Este o prezență nedivizată în individuali, scăpată alternativei reale, dar și una necondiționată de experiențele subiective ori luările de atitudine intenționale, într-un cuvânt, o existență ce nu face parte dintr-un proiect de lume, dar care totuși determină și posibilitatea și condițiile oricărui proiect de lume. Modalitatea acestei determinări a fost asemuită de Lévinas, într-o convorbire cu Philippe Ném³, cu acea apăsare pe care-o produce existența indeterminată *an-arhică*, starea anterioară creației, orizontul întemeietor brut, invizibil și amenințător⁴.

Desigur, în descrierile pe care Lévinas le oferă acestuia este evidentă o moștenire metafizică ce-și întinde rădăcinile până către zorii gândirii, când se impunea nevoia oferirii de temei pentru ceea ce există sau ar putea să existe. Indiferent cum l-ar numi, acesta ocupă aceeași poziție pe care în oricare schemă de gândire o are ființa posibilă, fie ea determinată ori nu. Faptul ar putea fi imputat gânditorului francez, însă Delia Popa n-o face, ea rezumându-se a expune modalitățile în care acel *il y a* iese la iveală în spațiul experienței umane, cu reprezentări atât sensibile, cât și inteligibile. Ideea nu transportă în sine nici o noutate filosofică, ea constituind una dintre multele versiuni europene ale ideii de Sine obiectiv, de „*existență care se face fără noi*”, realitate înglobantă ce își subsumează chiar și gândirea ce-i oferă sens, atrăgând subiectul în aura dăinuirii ei neutre, eliberându-l de propria alteritate⁵. Ideea, cu toate că între cele mai vechi și constante din întreaga metafizică, și nu numai europeană, are doar valabilitatea unei scheme explicative, asumându-și un răspuns la problema lui „*Ce este acel ceva de dinaintea ființării individuale, a cărui realitate nu se supune nici unei condiționări și de la care se revendică posibilitatea existenței determinate?*”, problema principiului sau, un pas anterior, a pre-originarului. Un răspuns convingător nu ne poate parveni pe linia acestor construcții onto-poetice cu care și Heidegger și Lévinas se joacă atât de grațios, pentru că întreaga lor terminologie suferă de imprecizie. Poezia posibilului, a existentului în sine ori a orizontului neutralității ontologice este fermecătoare, câtă vreme concedem că e nevoie să prindem în formulări de limbaj modalitățile experienței noastre vizavi de situațiile ontice originare, fără ca prin asta să se producă totuși o eliberare a gândirii din sfera purei imagineri.

Experiența subiectivă a insomniei – la care pot fi adăugate rușinea (*la honte*), ocară, lăncezeala (*la paresse*), oboseala (*la fatigue*), lentoarea, dezgustul (*la nausée*) plictiseala, descurajarea (*la lassitude*) etc. – încărcate de semnificații metafizice în filosofia levinasiană, este cadrul în care se revelă ceva din caracterul autarhic, depersonalizant al acelui *il y a*. Insomnia are cel mai apăsător caracter de *fapt ce se întâmplă* în afara unei

asumări intenționale și peste planurile subiectivității. După cum somnul privează subiectul de proprietatea asupra actelor sale, nefiind ca atare un act, ci o stare ontică acaparată, într-o schemă simetrică incapacitatea somnului expune un tip de ființare fără de proiect și intenție, manifestă agresiunea lină a existenței fără existent, indică faptul că subiectul este captiv întâmplării în ordinea ființei. Dacă înțelegem conștiința ca „*puterea de a dormi*”⁶, atunci insomnia e starea de depozitare a conștiinței de propria ipseitate docilă, indicând o iluminare fără concept, o stare de trezvie lipsită de sens. Pentru că, deși nu poate dormi, insomniacul nu veghează totuși, experiența acestuia producându-se dincolo de un plan compus și oferit relației sale cu timpul, trebuie să vedem în insomnia orizontul de experiență în care disjunția *a fi-a nu fi* își estompează contururile. Insomniacul ființează în ne-ființa somnului, dar tot atât de bine se poate spune, că în această neputință de a dormi iese la iveală potența ființării lipsite de somn. Negativitatea insomniai revelează pozitivul ființării a ceea ce, în modalitatea lui ontică, ființează fără de somn. „Răul” ființei pure devine manifest⁷ în această dănuire lipsită de angajament a subiectului insomniac, lipsit circumstanțial de onoarea consecvenței cu proiectele conștiinței sale.

În cartea Deliei Popa analitica corporeității este terenul pe care se experimentează registrul neutru al existenței, *l' il y a*, ca stări afectate de lipsa oricărei asumări și evazive în raport cu proiectele intenționalității subiective. Corpul e investit aici cu demnitatea unui senzor, în care se cristalizează o întreagă suită de trăiri, ce par a denunța demnitatea transcendentală a eului, obligându-l să-și înscrie fenomenalitatea pe anume portative ale exteriorității ontice, de unde apoi recade în sine, sub forma analiticii acelor stări. Astfel se degajă sensul lor filosofic, poziția și rolul acelei poetici a ființei relaționale, pe care mai sus am indicat-o ca fiind adevărata realizare culturală a discursului levinasian. De asemenea, în corporalitatea umană devine manifestă și capătă expresivitate contingentă originară a viului cu elementul lumii, dar și caracterul expus, vulnerabil al acestuia la presiunile constante exercitate de „forța biologică brută”⁸. Faptul de a fi expus forței omnipotente a vieții, incapacitatea evaziunii, slăbiciunea și caracterul derizoriu al omului – mai mult văzut în instanța lui de trăitor, de vietate în fenomenalitatea biologicului decât ca ego sau subiect, intențional poziționat într-o lume asumată ca proiect – sunt intuiții vechi ale înțelepciunii biblice sau păgâne, pe care Lévinas le reciclează într-un spectaculos șir de ocurențe, în semnificări mereu proaspete și tentante. Autoarea studiului despre filosoful francez reușește să argumenteze⁹ că în cadrul gândirii acestuia *corpul* este tot atât de viabil, ca organ al unor experiențe filosofice radicale, precum *cogito*-ul cartezian sau *eul* intențional în anterioritatea imediată a spațiului cultural pe care sistemul lui se constituie. Simplu formulată, teza conform căreia prin corp experimentăm regiuni ale ființei, ne permite și să înțelegem dialogul lui Lévinas cu ontologia, dar și să vedem unde înțeapă acesta să edifice un nou proiect¹⁰, etica în calitate de *filosofia prima*.

Nu știm, și nici nu se poate afla ce este o situație ontologică în sine, desprinsă de condițiile în care noi, ca subiecți, o reprezentăm. Ca atare lecțiile despre diversele registre ale realului nu sunt altceva decât expuneri poetice ale experienței subiective, plasate într-un cadru ontic sau altul, de unde se iese un proiect filosofic sau altul. Analitica experienței *ilyalității* derivă dintr-un atare apriorism schematic, fals atâta vreme cât se spune ceva de către un subiect, despre un real căruia principal i se suspendă relaționarea la subiect, în încercarea de a-l gândi eliberat de orice contingentă. Totuși, pentru a urma linia filosofiei levinasiene acest concept trebuie înțeles și explicat, iar Delia Popa o face, întrucât degajarea proiectului situației etice în lume, în cadre nemijlocit relaționale, se susține pe critica permanentă făcută ontologiei ca sistem.

Partea a doua a cărții se constituie ca un discurs despre *egologie*, supune investiției economia eului, găsind ca semnificativ conceptul ușurătății (*la légèreté*). Transferul de la ontologie la egologie este întreprins într-o manieră firească, continuând analitica situării corporale a omului în structura lumii. Eul nu este pură instanță transcendentă, suspendată în sfera abstractă a ipseității, ci un fapt de viață, conștiință încarnată suferind contingențele lumii naturale, în cadrele căreia se produce individuarea. Înrobii lumii prin nevoi și lipsuri, incapabil de libertate totală, prins în structuri sociale de coabitare, expus schimbărilor, agresiunii și inițiativelor alterității eul este afectat în calitatea monadică a existenței sale, somat să se deschidă exteriorității, să intre în dialog și să manifeste grijă față de prezența celuilalt, fapt care este într-o oarecare măsură și grijă pentru propriul caracter etic al fondării de sine relaționale. Contrar poziției heideggeriene, ce asumă o conduită specifică fondului de idiosincrasii gnostice, deplorând starea de abandon, aruncarea omului în lume, expunerea finitudinii și morții, ceea ce înseamnă contestarea implicite a principiului antropocentric, și ca atare a salvării, Emmanuel Lévinas pune existența în lume sub semnul bucuriei de-a fi. Plasarea eului în structuri relaționale face ca, prin dialogul ce se instituie, asumarea alterității să ofere ocazia transferului constat al grijii de sine – specifice eului izolat, insular, monadic – în grijă față de altul, iar teama pentru sine să devină teamă pentru celălalt. Astfel viața în lume își recalifică sensul, nu mai este solitudine angoasată expusă morții, ci bucurie a existenței împreună cu celălalt și în vederea vieții aproapei. Responsabilitatea este tocmai faptul de-a trăi pentru celălalt ca și cum viața lui ți-ar fi destin propriu. După cum este modificată direcția heideggeriană a *ființării-în-vederea-morții*, dându-i-se forma bucuriei vieții, în mod asemănător Lévinas modifică sintaxa ce compune definiția clasică a filosofiei pentru a corespunde modelului viețuirii relaționale. Pentru eul etic filosofia este *înțelepciune a iubirii*, iar asta împlinește semnificația paradigmatică a ființării sub spectrul *bucuriei de-a fi*.

Însă bucuria este doar forma principală a unei poziționări de sine în cadrele vieții. Experiența imediată și constantă a eului încarnat este determinată de *lipsă, nevoie, foame*, este adică o experiență a negativității în sinele constituit mundan. Acestui eu îi lipsește lumea, după cum își lipsește sieși în modalitățile *aspirației și dorinței, a voinței și muncii*. Dacă am împrumuta termenii lui Sartre, am zice că prin aceste afecțiuni negative ce se manifestă în interiorul eului, acesta își relevă neantul, se exprimă în formele neființei proprii revelate la contactul cu exterioritatea. Lipsa, forma negativă pe care o ia un lucru în economia eului, indică slăbiciunea, insuficiența ontică a acestuia. Prin muncă ori prin vreo altă relație de schimb și apropiere exterioritatea lucrului lipsă poate fi convertită în interioritate a posesiei. Foamea și sațietatea indică aceeași relație între neființa prezentă și ființa absentă, aceasta din urmă diseminată în lucruri, utilități, elemente pentru hrană. O semnificație fundamentală capătă mâna¹¹ în procesul muncii, în care se sparge izolarea eului de mediul său, în care se afirmă voința ordonatoare la întâlnirea cu elementele.

Prins la întretărirea meridianelor trasate în ființă de elementali, formele primare, ireductibile, ale naturii ambientale, și expus modificărilor capricioase pe care aceștia le produc în condițiile efective ale ființării, vulnerabil în fața celuilalt, de a cărei voință se izbește în pura manifestare a propriei libertăți, nomad prin structura afectivă a propriei sensibilități, omul instalează în orizontul lumii centre de stabilitate – cum este *casa, locuința* – în care se reculege și își manifestă ospitalitatea, în care se adăpostește de agresiunea exteriorului, unde introduce obiectele construite sau agonisite cu mâna, unde întâmpină cu aceeași mână, ce disciplinează distanțele, corpul celuilalt. Important e de remarcat aici, așa cum face Delia Popa, că locuința este metafora corporalității eului, și

că acest eu nu mai are acum statutul de instanță transcendențială în care orice alteritate se constituie prin examenul aprezentării analogice, în baza unei asumări intenționale, situație criticabilă principal, căci astfel celălalt este un fals altul, un simplu altul al meu, *Altul-în-Același*, alter-ego. Intenția lui Lévinas e să elibereze¹² instanța alterității din economia transcendențială, să o recunoască în transcendența ei ireductibilă. Adică, celălalt trebuie *întâmpinat* și nu pur și simplu reprezentat, iar întâmpinarea înseamnă dialog și responsabilitate, dusă până la extrema captivității în responsabilitatea față de el, nu doar intenție de cunoaștere sau manipulare prin impunerea voinței proprii. Sfera transcendențială, izomorfă ideii de totalitate în fenomenologia husserliană, este expusă acum spațiului indefinit al alterității externe, a cărei libertate în raport cu eul transcende economia intențională, a cărei diferență și străinătate bulversează suficiența cunoștinței, a cărei infinitate somează și amenință, tot pe atâta pe cât se donează sensibilității și manifestă afecțiune. Casa devine locul deschiderii spre celălalt, prin întâmpinarea lui ospitalieră și angajarea lui în dialog, compunându-se astfel ca un spațiu etic în vastul orizont al ființei.

În filosofia lui Lévinas, limbajul nu va mai fi locul în care se manifestă ori prin care se enunță ființa, și nici doar mijlocul prin care se transmit cunoștințe de la o persoană la alta, ci principala formă a situației etice în relația eului cu alteritatea. Celălalt este întotdeauna cineva care vorbește, iar vocea lui instaurează o anume intimitate cu ireductibilul interiorității acestuia, una ce poate fi oferită, dar nu asimilată și, cu atât mai puțin, substituită. Chiar problemele fundamentale ale gândirii se ivesc din dialogul intersubiectiv, filosofia nemaifiind acum monologul minții izolate la întâlnirea ei cu tainele lumii. Celălalt este, prin ireductibilul și transcendența lui, întrebarea fundamentală oferită de viață conștiinței, și în jurul acesteia se conturează vasta rețea de răspunsuri, în a căror sintaxă se compune o metafizică de tip etic. Limbajul spune lumea celuilalt, îi oferă ceea ce în fapt nu devine moștenire particulară a nici unui eu. Mai mult, în dialog se produce adeziunea comună la ceea ce din alteritate rămâne impropriu, căci rostirea provoacă¹³ revelația alterității sinelui ce se oferă celuilalt, după cum în ascultare se întâmplă ca celălalt să fie găzduit ca alteritate în Același.

Nu poate fi omisă chestionarea corpului în relația cu timpul, unde *pasivitatea* lui și caracterul *vulnerabil* constituie însăși principiul ființării. Sigur că vârstele oferă prin sine evidența contingenței temporale, însă nu simplul fapt al schimbării în direcția univocă a îmbătrânirii și morții este tot ceea ce poate fi spus despre timp. De vreme ce eul ființează în relație, temporalitatea oferă ocazia realizării diferenței radicale între timpul lui și timpul celuilalt – fie prin relația parentală, fie în erotism¹⁴. Simpla trecere impune îmbătrânirea, asta făcând ca moartea să fie nu numai posibilă, dar mereu iminentă, și totuși continuitatea trecerii relevă și miracolul irealizabil al unei nesfârșite amânări (*ajournement*), iar ceea ce pare să izbească prin urgență, frapează mai curând prin îndepărtare. Deși imediat posibil oricând, tocmai momentul morții e cel ce se amână indefinit de-a lungul întregului interval al vieții. Dubla mișcare, de iminență și de amânare¹⁵ a morții, permite ca intervalul de ființare să releve, pe de-o parte, transcendența timpului și, pe de alta, faptul că experiența morții nu se manifestă în timpul eului, că acesta nu participă la ea, nu-și poate aduce momentul morții în propriul interval de temporalitate. Moartea se revelează prin celălalt. Dar tot prin celălalt, copilul, fertilitatea vieții învinge contingența timpului propriu, oferindu-l viitorului absolut al urmașului filial. Părintele este într-un fel copilul lui, nu doar că îl are, va repeta cu îndârjire Lévinas.

Dacă vrem să regândim într-un câmp comun cele două prime părți ale cărții Deliei Popa, ar trebui să așezăm conceptele ei structurante pe o axă care să lege ființa, *elementul*,

lumea, casa, corpul și eul, iar acestuia să-i fie atașate în permanență structurile relaționale în care se întâlnește cu *ceilalți*, ca alterități ireductibile. La capătul unei astfel de analize se va putea remarca felul în care ontologia este condusă, luând cu sine o versiune critică a egologiei transcendente, către etica relației și în cele din urmă înspre o celebrare a alterității. Părțile a treia și a patra ale cărții, ordonate de conceptele *proximității* și *libertății* își asumă tocmai acest lucru. Autoarea nu omite să indice semnificația feței în relația intersubiectivă, și nici că libertatea eului nu este idealul sau năzuința ultimă a filosofiei levinasiene. Responsabilitatea este un concept mai definitoriu decât libertatea, tocmai pentru că structura sensibilității eului îl deține deja pe celălalt ca amprentă afectivă în sine, fapt indeneșabil și dincolo de opțiune. Acestui fond al sensibilității încărcate de „*urmele absenței celuiilalt*” îi revine manifestarea cumva naturală a responsabilității, chiar dacă pentru modalitatea expunerii ei concrete nu există o rețetă definitivă.

Desigur, autorul francez își repetă lecția până la exasperare, poate tocmai pentru că intuiește incapacitatea de-a impune un atare model, mai cu seamă după ce a predicat cu atâta asiduitate în contra violenței discursului sau a voinței intersubiective. Dacă cineva nu își înțelege cumva printr-o revelație rațională natura de subiect responsabil, iar această raportare nu i se pare a fi dincolo de opțiune și libertate, un dat metafizic adică, pur și simplu nu ai cum să-l înveți etica levinasiană fără a-l agresa în subiectivitatea lui. Iar dacă modelul levinasian nu poate fi învățat, există riscul ca sistemul lui etic să ajungă mai devreme sau mai târziu o estetică a relațiilor sociale, pe care să o practicăm sau nu într-un angrenaj mai larg se modelează alternative coexistente. Printr-o răsucire ciudat platoniciană, *binele* levinasian este situat deasupra *ființei*, asta dând eticii întâietate în raport cu ontologia. Pasul imediat următor, dacă vrem să degajăm etica de prezumții metafizice neîntemeiate și să generăm o schemă socialmente validă, este atragerea *frumosului* în sfera conduitei relaționale, estetica cotidianului putând oferi mai mult echilibru, mai multă previzibilitate reciprocă decât presupusa metafizică etică, cu care la drept vorbind majoritatea subiecților n-au nimic de-a face. Cel puțin în primă instanță, frumosul relațional manifestă aceeași putere coercitivă ca și un interdict moral, sau, dacă-l plasăm într-un registru activ, are chiar mai multă putere persuasivă, induce mai multă aderență, putând salva de la agresiune persoana celuiilalt. Pentru că nu atât intențiile, ascunse în sfera mentală sau afectivă, sunt cele care-l condiționează nemijlocit pe celălalt, ci gesturile efective, a face ceea ce e frumos îi oferă o oarecare protecție, se constituie într-o garanție, la fel de puternică sau slabă ca oricare alta, cu condiția ca ea să facă parte din planul general al unor valori sociale, cu sau fără tutela instanței divine, pe care orice sceptic o poate desființa prin câteva sofisme.

Delia Popa nu preia toate redundanțele și insistența indefinit nuanțată a lui Lévinas asupra ideii sale etice. Ea îl valorifică mai curând prin dialogurile sale critice neîncetate cu fenomenologia, cartezianismul și ontologia fundamentală heideggeriană. Din această perspectivă lectura este instructivă, mai cu seamă pentru cine urmărește metabolismul marilor idei filosofice în contextul culturii europene moderne, atât de diversă și polimorfă, încât relativismul și toleranța reciprocă au învins dogmatismele metafizice ori cele religioase, pentru a salva o zestre culturală mai largă, în care diverse comunități sau persoane particulare se regăsesc. Pentru a oferi cuiva spectrul întregii gândiri levinasiene ar fi nevoie de un conciliu foarte numeros al vocilor specializate. Cartea Deliei Popa este una din acestea, iar singura limită ce i se poate imputa este că se oprește atunci când ar mai putea fi spus câte ceva relevant. Dar nu cumva tocmai asta face orice carte, să se oprească la marginea a ceea ce abia urmează să fie spus, și care cu puțină șansă va ajunge să fie spus de o alta?

Oricum, odată parcursă această lucrare de debut, nu poți să nu resimți admirație pentru calitatea discursului, de-o densitate conceptuală ce nu ajunge nicicând să fie pro-

lixa, de-o fluentă ideatică fermecătoare, fără a seduce totuși. E o carte care certifică un spirit întru totul pregătit să dialogheze la cel mai înalt nivel cu filosofia actuală fenomenologică, cu un control riguros al terminologiei, însă cu o prea mare deferență față de sensurile gata compuse și o delicatețe feminină față de gândul odată proferat, căruia nu-i contestă nici îndreptățirea, nici nu-i solicită să-și presupună singur ipoteza contrară. O carte ce-și îmbrățișează matern subiectul, părând a trăda o intimă adeziune a acestuia la direcția asumată de un destin personal.

Note:

1. „C'est sa force provocatrice qui rend compte du fait désormais avéré qu'elle aura marqué toute une période philosophique d'après la seconde Guerre mondiale, nous mettant en un troublant contact avec ce qui l'a précédée et nous orientant cependant vers un avenir qui pourrait être autre si ceux qui s'y vouent daignaient le concevoir et le vivre autrement. L'ardu débat théorique qui porte l'œuvre d'Emmanuel Lévinas s'est mué ainsi très tôt en un espoir concret, articulé sur une éthique nouvelle.”, ed cit. p. 7

2. *ed, cit*, p. 39

3. E. Lévinas, *Éthique et infini*, Paris, 1990

4. Delia Popa, *ed. cit.*, p. 42

5. „Le moi se voit ainsi objectivé, spectateur passif de son malaise, qui n'a acquiescé ni à sa passivité, ni à la trame neutre qui le serre tel un etau.”, idem., p. 43

6. Lévinas, *Le temps et l'autre*, ed. fr. pp. 30-31

7. „Si la description de l'insomnie ... rendent sensible le mal dans lequel est vécu le fait anonyme d'exister, la paresse et la honte sont plutôt liées à la peine de s'en tenir constamment à lui, comme dans un engagement quotidien. Avant toute autre inscription dans une région ou une autre du réel, l'incontournable reprise d'être est éprouvée à travers elles comme une insupportable emprise de l'être.”, D. Popa, *ed. cit.*, p. 55

8. idem, *ed. cit.* p. 59

9. „... le corps peut imposer à la pensée le fait de son adhérence à l'être, à travers l'épreuve d'une épaisseur matérielle qui le concerne originairement.”, idem, p. 60

10. „En se penchant sur la phénoménologie propre à la structure incarnée de l'humanité, où un corps est inhérent à chaque esprit, Lévinas essaie de retrouver les contours de sa figure complète, qui lui permettraient d'opposer une résistance aux dérives idéologiques qui la guettent (...) Ce lieu de la passivité originelle s'articulera ainsi comme chair de la vie et les signes sensibles dans il est porteur se révéleront être ceux d'un langage immémorial, écriture depuis toujours oubliée, inscrite au plus profonde de ce que nous sommes.”, idem, p. 61

11. „La main qui se tend en tâtonnant n'est cependant pas un mouvement de transcendance, mais un mouvement vers soi, qui cherche l'acquisition. La prise immédiate de la matière qu'elle opère est le commencement de la technique, dans l'ignorance de toute connaissance, dans la pratique d'un pouvoir qui précède le savoir. Par elle le sujet séparé ne se délivre pas de l'être, mais s'affirme contre lui, comme volonté qui, pour réussir à vaincre la résistance de l'incertain, ne repose pas sur un simple accroissement de force mécanique, mais sur une distance temporelle qu'elle se donne par rapport à son obstacle.”, idem, p. 85

12. Autoarea observă întregul filon al filosofiei moderne, centrate pe subiectivitate, atins de critica levinasiană în intenția renovării concepției despre relația eu-altul, în care

celălalt, odată eliberat din strânsoarea egoității va dobândi încetul cu încetul superioritate (Altesitate), calificat printr-o asumată disimetrie a angajării etice: „La critique de la représentation faite par Lévinas touche à la partie objectiviste de la théorie husserlienne que Heidegger critiquait déjà, à la doctrine cartésienne des idées claires et distinctes sur laquelle elle se fonde et surtout à la théorie kantienne de l'aperception transcendante qui en constitue une des principales inspirations. Cette dernière, caractérisée par Lévinas comme une forme vide au sein de son être synthétique, et comme pulsation de la pensée raisonnable est à la fois le paradigme et la force de l'identité du Meme. Car elle n'est pas seulement la forme universelle de tout exercice de pensée pris dans sa teneur transcendante – elle donne aussi la mesure d'une intelligibilité qui suppose toujours un a priori dans sa réalisation.”, *ed. cit.*, p. 97

13. „Le langage prolonge l'œuvre de l'égodisme vers un au-delà de l'égodisme, signification qui dépasse le statut d'une désignation pour acquérir celui d'un don originel.”, *idem*, p. 111

14. Asupra relației cu alteritatea femininului, originară în opinia lui Lévinas, Delia Popa insistă într-un subcapitol special în cea de-a treia parte, unde e analizată prietenia, iubirea, parentalitatea, unde se face trimitere la strălucitul excurs levinasian asupra proximității trupului celuilalt în actul mângâierii.

15. „Pouvoir ajourner l'instant de la mort et le spectre de sa menace c'est disposer d'un temps d'au-delà du présent et intercaler entre le moi pensant et le moment de son anéantissement un intervalle qui est la source même de la vivacité de la vie. Malgré l'écoulement du temps qui passe et amenuise la distance qui me sépare de ma mort, cet intervalle demeure intact – ce qui est à comprendre comme merveille même du temps, se faisant comme perpétuelle futurition d'un futur arrêté et comme ajournement de la suprême défaillance, malgré l'irréductible de la finitude qui la porte.”, *idem*, p. 128

MIHAELA PARASCHIVESCU

Nicu Gavriluță - România în Starea Bardo: publicistică și dialoguri culturale

Romania in the Bardo State: Journalistic Writings and Cultural Dialogs

Provopress, Cluj-Napoca, 2006.

Nicu Gavriluță's book brings together articles that appeared in Iasi local press and interviews on TV and on the radio during a special period of time for Romanians, 17 years of transition from a post-communist past to a would-be prosperous future. Let me just mention that even prior to a post-modern Romania of many centers, Iasi was always a powerful point in which one would take the pulse of the cultural life of the country. So, it is no wonder that in Iasi we find Nicu Gavriluță and other important cultural figures that we encounter in this book.

The author uses the "Bardo state" as a metaphor for the Romanian transition. Since etymologically "bardo" means "in between two poles/limits/worlds", this state of in-betweenness defines Romania's position in the passage from "the old totalitarian world to the new, cosmopolitan world of the EU". Romania's "bardo" state of transition is tough reality, and Nicu Gavriluță is a Romanian attempting to make sense of the changes around him. Only in so doing, he has both a critical eye and an open spirit. Gavriluță speaks of things important and approaches questions that are on everyone's mind. He examines social mentalities that may even grow pathological dimensions.

In the rush for prosperity, old traditional values often get discarded. Work is one of them. So, how does one survive when the money is less and the cost of living higher? Gavriluță opposes two types of mentalities. There are the ordinary Romanians who survive the hardships of transition "due to the spiritual significance that work continues to have in their images and representations of the world". Thus, work is a human duty before God. The perception of the sacredness of work goes hand in hand with the belief that human achievement as the fruit of work is a manifestation of God's presence in our world. Gavriluță concludes: "Work becomes a hierophany to the one who has the spiritual eyes to see and enough reason to understand". It is this kind of mentality that the author points to as the good example in the efforts to build a better future. He advocates good work, decency and faith. In reverse situations are those who succumb to the



Mihaela Paraschivescu

Ph. D. candidate, Faculty of
Letters, University of Bucharest,
Romania.

E-mail: mihaelap2005@gmail.com

Key words:

philosophy and religion, social
mentalities, Romanian transition,
cultural life, Nicu Gavriluță

temptation of avoiding work. They find unorthodox ways and take advantage of the imperfections of a system to get-rich-quick. For them the author anticipates that success will turn eventually into a burden.

Nicu Gavriluta does not hesitate to criticize those tendencies in his fellow countrymen that prevent them from moving forward. Amongst these is the inclination to talk and complain rather than work and do. He sanctions this “chronic mental illness of Romanian transition” consisting in the stubborn hope that we can possibly talk away what is bad in our lives.

In a world upside down, those with the money are opinion leaders and initiators of new ‘cultures’. Gavriluta is very critical of kitsch and of the culture en-masse and particularly of the newly emerging human types that others blindly follow and that the media helps multiply. This “media mutant”, a “postmodern barbarian”, alien to reading and writing, totally engrossed in consuming movies and music, wasting time in clubs, ‘reading’ porn magazines and playing computer games, is also a Romanian citizen with full voting rights. Gavriluta is worried about the kind of future this new citizen will vote for. The nation’s future-in-the-making is a multitude of individual present times and destinies.

The book captures a multifaceted reality in its social, political, cultural and religious aspects. Indeed, in one of his essays, Gavriluta talks about the existence of “several Romanias” as the country turns various faces to the world: a traditional rural Romania, an urban one, formerly industrialized and currently inhabited by the unemployed, an official Romania as part of country reports, a country of football hooligans, hip-hop and local ‘manele’ fans, etc. It is the general concerns of such a diverse society that Gavriluta focuses on, natural events (like the floods in Moldavia) or cultural ones (the DaVinci Code, or Mel Gibson’s film) that the author interprets for his readers with the patience and depth of understanding of his educational background in philosophy and special interest in hermeneutics.

The present collection of texts makes up two rather unequal halves of a book of diverse discourse for a variety of readers. Indeed, Professor Gavriluta wears several hats as author of this book. He is the inquisitive journalist, the objective essayist, to finally take up his academic chair in chapter five entitled “Seven Dialogs on Hermeneutics, Religion and Politics”.

This last chapter is a change in register and occasions encounters with Professor Stefan Afloroaei and his understanding of hermeneutics and alterity, as well as of method (or rather lack of) and hermeneutics in Mircea Eliade and others, of cultural models and rapport to failure and evil. Readers of this part of the book ‘meet’ with Liviu Antonesei and his interest in the relationship between education and culture, and with Nicu Gavriluta as an advocate of the usefulness of philosophy and religion in the contemporary world. Mircea Eliade is also a figure present in Nicu Gavriluta’s discourse (itself very Eliadean in spirit). The book ends in the confident tone of Eliade’s (and Gavriluta’s) view of the wisdom and art of dying, and of the openness of spirit towards otherness in a world of conflict.

I feel that this book review does not do justice to the wealth of the author’s personal reflections (so much is left unsaid!), but I am however hoping I have opened a window to Professor Gavriluta’s keen perception of the world.

CĂTĂLIN VASILE BOBB

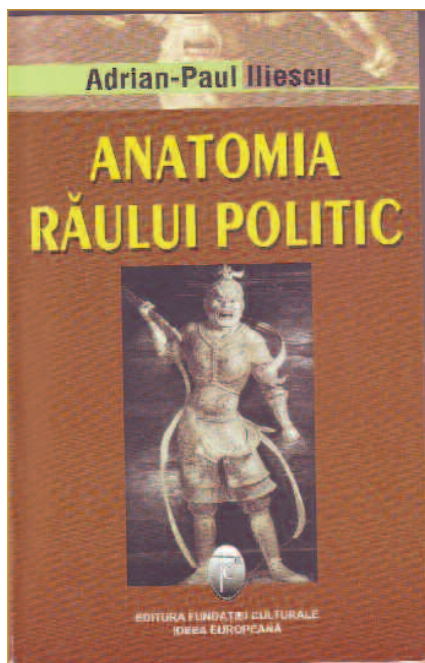
Adrian-Paul Iliescu
Anatomia Răului Politic
Anatomy of the Political
Evil

Editura Fundatiei Culturale
Ideea Europeana, București

Despre cei Buni și cei Răi în România

În lucrarea sa *Anatomia Răului Politic* Adrian-Paul Iliescu își propune să exorcizeze toți demonii mentalității românești: „Maniheism; Monolitism; Tribalism; Exclusivism; Elitism; Sultanism; Clientelism; Conformism; Oportunism; Paternalism; Obsesie pentru status; Obsesie identitară (p. 355)”, procedând chirurgical printr-o vivisecție, deci fără anestezie. În ce ne privește, nu putem decât să-i dăm dreptate. Acest tip de raliere totală, din păcate, respectă întocmai logica aderării necritice la un punct de vedere, atitudine pe care Adrian-Paul Iliescu se străduiește din răsputeri să o demonteze. A accepta, fără presupuziții, o teză sau alta înseamnă a mărturisi un crez de cele mai multe ori format din prejudecăți. Însă, în acest caz, tocmai inversul se produce. Un straniu proces de demitizare se petrece: tentația regalității (omul providențial), paradisul pierdut (perioada interbelică), generația '27 (corifeii genialității românești), gândirea, destul de brutală, de dreaptă (de la Al. Paleologul la H.R. Patapievici), ura „metafizică” față de gândirea de stânga (evident comunistă) încep să se dilueze, atenueze, dinamiteze. Poate că aici, în acest moment, cartea lui Adrian-Paul Iliescu, funcționează întocmai ca un „panaceu” (desigur, nu universal) împotriva „mistificării speculative a realității (p. 20)”, împotriva „alchimiei stranii a metamorfozării Adevărului Unic într-o minciună grotescă cu efecte malefice (p. 21)”. Însă tot aici există un punct pe care *Anatomia Răului Politic* nu-l cuprinde: și anume analiza a peste patru decenii din istoria României, respectiv perioada comunistă.

Asumând, într-o descendență wittgensteiniană, rolul filosofiei ca „terapie” împotriva „gândirii captive”, Adrian - Paul Iliescu aduce la lumină *sursele răului politic*: tradițiile și practicile *sultaniste* pe care politica noastră le practică de la 1848, până astăzi. Simultan, el prezintă *modalitățile* prin care aceste surse se impregnează în *mentalul societății românești*: monolitismul absolut al opiniilor, lipsa normelor, instituțiilor, regulilor formale și *efectele* pe care acest mental le încorporează în viața de zi cu zi: „descurcăreala” specifică românului în orice situație, fie a politicianului, fie a intelectualului, fie a omului de rând.



Cătălin Vasile Bobb

Teaching Assistant, Department
of Philosophy, Babes-Bolyai
University, Cluj, Romania.

E-mail: catalinbobb@yahoo.com

Key words:

good, evil, Romanian politics,
Adrian-Paul Iliescu, maniheism

Oricine va reacționa în fața unor asemenea concluzii catastrofale despre bunul/răul român (deși această dihotomie este cu totul respinsă de Adrian-Paul Iliescu). Însă, să nu ne pierdem speranța, nu e vorba de sentințe pe care Adrian – Paul Iliescu ar dori să le impună la modul absolut (lipsa dialogului reprezintă o altă carență specifică mentalității românești), ci de adevăruri observabile, contextualizabile, chiar dacă ele se păstrează mai bine de un secol și jumătate. Tradiția profund maniheistă (alb/negru, bun/rău, sacru/diabolic) pare a caracteriza în totalitate societatea românească. Deși obiectul declarat al *Anatomiei răului politic* respectă două paliere, elita intelectuală, respectiv elita politică, reverberațiile atitudinale, unde adevărul *ontic* prevalează asupra oricărei situații de fapt, unde *celălalt* reprezintă mereu răul absolut, unde *geniul* este chemat să rezolve pentru veșnicie orice problemă, unde *democrația* nu are nici o tradiție, se revarsă asupra fiecărui bun/rău român. Până ce nu vom înțelege, ne spune Adrian-Paul Iliescu, „intuiția ontică fundamentală a unei *neomogenități* și *plurivocități* originare a lucrurilor (p. 340)” și deci a adevărului, societatea noastră este chemată să mimeze un soi de democrație inexistentă. Avem oare o cultură a dialogului (atât de necesară unei democrații), pare a se întreba Adrian-Paul Iliescu, avem oare o tradiție profund liberală care ar avea ca maximă „cred că am dreptate și că tu greșești, dar admit că s-ar putea ca eu să greșesc și tu să ai dreptate”? Răspunsul, cu jumătate de gură, nu-i foarte greu de intuit.

Arheologia politică de la 1848 până astăzi întreprinsă de Adrian-Paul Iliescu dă un răspuns cel puțin neliniștitor posibilei întrebări: *avem elite morale?* Probabil că politicul nu întreabă mai niciodată morala ce e de făcut în acest caz, însă ar trebui să se ghideze după anumite norme și reguli stabile, precise, permanente și nu îndatorate *situației de moment*. Luând la întâmplare un moment istoric cu totul înălțător din politica românească, și anume împrumutarea țărănilor la 1917, se poate observa că soluția problemei agrare este dată „nu pe calea dezbaterii publice și a concilierii intereselor legitime, ci pe calea stratagemelor uzitate de camarile în vederea soluționării unei situații de criză (p. 136)”. Evident, exemplele se pot multiplica exponențial, însă nu asta ne interesează, ci de a găsi în acest expozeu al politicii românești un exemplu de maximă probitate morală, gata oricând a fi urmat. Din păcate, astfel de exemple lipsesc cu desăvârșire. Însă nu e vorba, în *Anatomia răului politic*, doar de lipsa oricărei coerențe morale în rândul politicii românești, ci, lucru oarecum mai grav, de „falimentul elitelor culturale”. Câteva exemple grăitoare: Hașdeu, Conta, Eminescu, Iorga, Goga, (antisemiți), N. Ionescu, Cioran, Eliade, Noica (exaltați ideologic) etc.

Lucrurile nu se prezintă cu mult mai bine în cultura actuală. Adepții dreptei (H.R. Patapievici, Mircea Mihăieș, Lucian Boia, Adrian Cioroianu, Andrei Cornea etc.) atât de prezenți în mediatica noastră cultură sunt și ei expuși unui examen clinic. Este chestionată respingerea democrației, respectiv „mlaștina (M. Mihăieș)”, „mitul (L. Boia)”, „incompetența (T. Ungureanu)”, „amorfismul (H.R. Patapievici)”, „imbecilismul (Al. Paleologul)” acesteia. Dihotomia stânga/dreapta, și ea reflex maniheist, trebuie spartă, supusă discuției, analizată. Imperfecțiunea unei culturi democratice se datorează și unui dialog inexistent între stânga și dreapta intelectualității românești, la baza acestei lipse stând, desigur, trauma comunistă. Într-o democrație funcțională sunt absolut necesare ambele variante, însă acele variante așezate, moderate, lipsite de ieșiri extremiste. Soluția optimă ar fi: „dialogul desfășurat atât cu Dreapta conservatoare cât și cu Stânga democratică, de a căuta un compromis optim între individualism și comunitarism, între non-intervenție și intervenție publică, între forme diverse de Bine individual și forme (temporare) de Bine general (p. 339)”.

Dificultatea analizei întreprinsă de Adrian-Paul Iliescu se lovește de tragismul propriei noastre istorii – iată cum altcineva este „de vină”, în acest caz, istoria, pentru a

respecta logica „țapului ispășitor”. Adică, am avut noi oare o tradiție democratică a gândirii de stângă? Iată de ce soluția, atât de bine surprinsă de Adrian Paul Iliescu, poate fi aplicată numai atunci când starea aparentă de criză se va încheia, atunci când timpul „vehemenței” va fi încheiat și va veni timpul „stării așezate”.

Anatomia Răului Politic pune în ordine, sau aduce la suprafață, un tip de gândire care lipsește cu desăvârșire culturii românești, dar care uneori se anunță mult prea intempestiv. Totuși, exorcizarea răului în cauză ar trebui să aibă efecte benefice. Însă slabele reacții la această carte, lipsa dialogului, a dezbaterii publice nu fac decât să confirme câte-va din tezele lui Adrian-Paul Iliescu și, în același timp, faptul că această carte caută răspunsuri la o posibilă criză.

SANDU FRUNZĂ

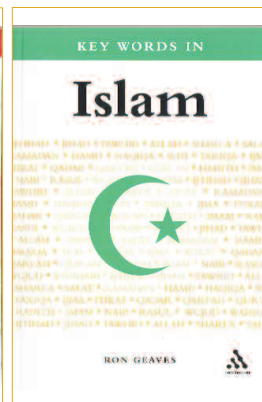
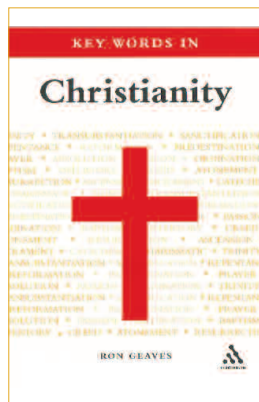
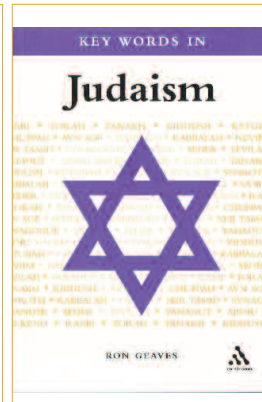
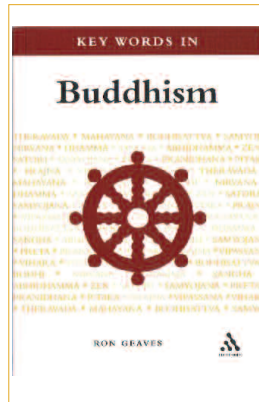
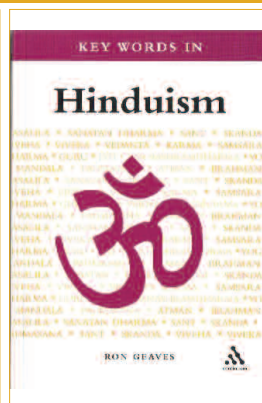
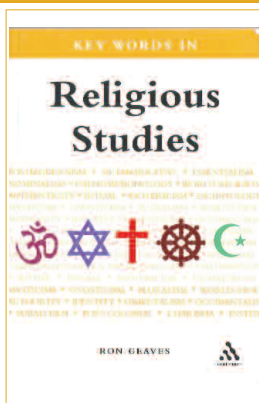
Ron Geaves
Religious Studies,
Buddhism, Hinduism,
Judaism, Christianity,
Islam

The Continuum
International Publishing
Group, New York, 2006.

Şase instrumente de lucru în
studiul religiilor

Ron Geaves, profesor de studii religioase la Departamentul de studii religioase și teologie al University of Chester, ne propune un set de instrumente de lucru care să ne ușureze studiul religiilor. Sub forma unor volume independente, cele șase volume propuse de The Continuum International Publishing Group se constituie ca șase încercări de inițiere. Sub forma de glosar, Ron Geaves ne introduce într-o manieră foarte calificată și cu explicații nuanțate, în instrumentarul general al unei discipline răspândită în occident, dar încă neprezentă ca atare în structurile academice din România, este vorba de „studii religioase”, dar și în lumea cîtorva tradiții religioase majore: Hinduism, Budism, Iudaism, Creștinism, Islam.

Seria de publicații propuse de The Continuum își îndeplinește în mod major intenția de a oferi un glosar general al disciplinei și cite un glosar specializat pentru fiecare din cele cinci mari tradiții religioase pe care le regăsim ca obiect de studiu în mod obișnuit în curricula universităților occidentale. Seria are în primul rînd o finalitate didactică și are meritul de a explica, într-o viziune unitară, marea diversitate terminologică pe care cei



Sandu Frunză

Associate professor, Ph.D., Department
of Systematic Philosophy, Babeș-Bolyai
University, Cluj, Romania.

E-mail: sfrunza@yahoo.com

Key words:

Glossary, religious terminology, Religious
Studies, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism,
Christianity, Islam, Ron Geaves

care studiază religiile o întâlnesc în textele de specialitate, în care cel mai adesea terminologia nu este detaliat clarificată. Pe bună dreptate, Ron Geaves constată că dezvoltarea multidisciplinară a cercetărilor religioase duce la utilizarea termenilor - în discipline precum sociologia, antropologia, psihologia, filosofia sau teologia - într-o manieră care presupune că aceștia sînt îndeobște cunoscuți. Practica didactică dovedește că lucrurile nu stau întodeauna tocmai așa. Volumele de față își propun să elimine tocmai această distanță dintre termeni și conținutul lor pentru cititor. Ele se constituie ca un fel de mediator prietenos între text și semnificația originară a cuvintelor din limbajul tradițiilor religioase.

Pornind de la situația că studiul religiilor presupune familiarizarea cu o mare varietate a semnificațiilor de limbaj, dar și cu un vocabular pe care fiecare tradiție religioasă îl utilizează în limba sa proprie, autorul încearcă să faciliteze accesul la înțelegere al omului modern, preocupat de studiul tradițiilor religioase.

În volumul *Religious Studies* autorul se oprește asupra cuvintelor cheie ale disciplinei spre a ne oferi suportul necesar pentru înțelegerea limbajului specializat legat de teoria și metodologia studiilor religioase. În acest caz, Ron Geaves preferă o perspectivă foarte generală, situată dincolo de confruntările de idei privind raportul dintre studiile religioase și teologie. Caracterul interdisciplinar al studiilor religioase îl determină pe autor să cuprindă o mare varietate de termeni precum: *apotropaic, bricolage, confessional approach, eco-religion, fundamentalism, hylozoism, narrative theology, qaumic, truth-claims, womanist* și mulți alții.

Două volume *Buddhism* și *Hinduism* își propun să facă comprehensibilă terminologia la nivelul de așteptare și de utilizare al studenților, concentrînd variante de explicații terminologice prezente într-o mare varietate de manifestări ale celor două tradiții spirituale în curente și contexte culturale diverse. Glosarul budismului deschide accesul la o terminologie complicată, derivînd din chineză, japoneză, pali, sanscrită, tibetană. Autorul propune o transliterare a termenilor care să faciliteze accesul unui public larg la această terminologie și are grijă să dea variante de utilizare în funcție de limba de origine. Termeni ca: *abhidhamma, bodhipathapradipa, dvija, ekasringa, gurukulu, karma marga, om, pranayama, satchitananda, tat tvam asi, varnashramdharma, yoni* pot sugera complexitatea terminologică și în același timp maxima utilitate a unui glosar de termeni în descifrarea textelor despre budism și hinduism.

Volumul *Judaism* își propune, într-o variantă concentrată, să rețină cîteva din dimensiunile specificului limbajului tradiției diverse și îndelungate a iudaismului. Autorul este interesat de resursele de semnificație pe care le putem desprinde din perspectiva interfeței pe care termenii o au cu o modalitate de percepere a sensului vieții și a lumii. Termeni ca *amoraim, berakhah, ger, kabbalah, ketuvim, lulav, maskilim, neviim, tanakh, yihus* devin ușor de înțeles prin intermediul acestui glosar.

Volumul *Christianity* e conceput să facă față caracterului global al creștinismului și în același timp particularităților pe care le are în lume în general, dar și în lumea occidentală în particular. Termeni în aparență foarte familiari au uneori nevoie de nuanțele pe care știința utilizării corecte a termenilor le poate aduce. *Alleluia, benedicamus, coenobite, denominations, election, glossolalia, ichthus, kyrie eleison, nihilianism, opus dei, repentance, theotokos, zion* sînt termeni care în ciuda convingerii că nu există probleme în occident în înțelegerea limbajului creștinismului, pot uneori să lase să scape unele profunzimi ale semnificațiilor lor de adîncime.

Volumul *Islam* reflectă complexitatea dezvoltării islamului în cei 1400 de ani de evoluție. Ron Geaves preferă limbajul ce derivă din limba arabă, limba originară a Coranului, dar se simte obligat să utilizeze și termeni din urdu acolo unde crede ca inter-

vin nuanțe semnificative. *Ahwal, burqa, din al-fitrah, falasifa, haqiqa, jamaat-i islami, kalam, nur, shahadah, tanzil, umma* ne introduc într-o lume care e cel mai adesea filtrată prin mijlocirea stereotipiilor occidentale sau a petelor negre impregnate de radicalism.

Ron Geaves pune la dispoziția studenților și a publicului larg instruit și interesat de studiul religiilor un instrument de lucru pe care fiecare ar trebui să îl aibă alături ca pe un sfetnic și un prieten însoțitor pe drumul descifrării discursului religios.

IULIA GRAD

Sebastian Şebu, Monica
Opriş, Dorin Opriş
Metodica predării religiei
Methodology of Teaching
Religion
Reîntregirea Publishing House,
Alba Iulia, 2000.

Religia ca obiect de studiu în şcoli este un subiect foarte dezbătut, care stârneşte opinii din cele mai diferite. Lucrarea *Metodica predării religiei* realizată de preot prof. univ dr. Sebastian Şebu, prof. Monica Opriş şi prof. Dorin Opriş se situează clar pe poziţia care afirmă importanţa prezenţei religiei în rândul disciplinelor şcolare. Autorii depăşesc planul teoretic al argumentaţiei şi intră în sfera activităţii propriu-zise de predare-învăţare, o parte importantă a cărţii fiind reprezentată de analize ale aspectelor concrete implicate de procesul educaţional efectiv.

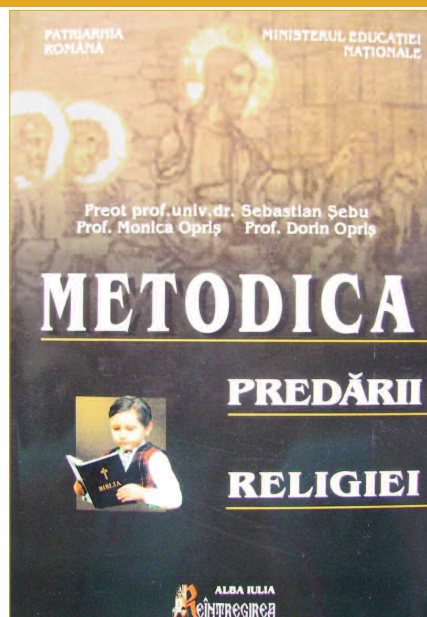
Premisa de la care pornesc autorii este aceea că religia reprezintă un factor esenţial în dezvoltarea individului, formându-l pentru sine şi pentru societate. În plus, ca disciplină de învăţământ, religia joacă rolul de liant care leagă obiectele studiate şi oferă elevilor posibilitatea de a înţelege mai bine locul şi rostul omului în lume.

Cartea este alcătuită din şapte capitole principale care tratează elementele care au rolurile esenţiale în procesul de predare-învăţare a religiei.

Pentru început, lucrarea prezintă locul şi rolul religiei ca obiect de studiu, subliniind diferitele niveluri la care aceasta acţionează. Mai întâi, educaţia religioasă îl conduce pe om spre scopul existenţei umane, care este, după cum spun autorii, comuniunea cu Dumnezeu. De asemenea, studierea religiei este importantă pentru dezvoltarea morală a individului - preceptele morale creştine fiind concepute ca revelate şi nu ca produs al unui demers raţional -, dar şi din punct de vedere social şi cultural.

În ceea ce priveşte conţinutul educaţiei religioase, autorii consideră că este esenţial să se încerce menţinerea unui echilibru între cele două laturi ale religiei: cea obiectivă şi cea subiectivă, între conţinutul propriu-zis al educaţiei religioase şi trăirea religioasă. Actorii principali ai procesului educaţional (elevul şi profesorul) fac, de asemenea, obiectul analizelor care alcătuiesc primul capitol al lucrării.

O atenţie deosebită este acordată şi altor elemente esenţiale în cadrul procesului



Iulia Grad

Teaching assitent, Department of
Systematic Philosophy, Babes-
Bolyai University, Cluj, Romania.
E-mail: iuliagrad@gmail.com

Key words:

religion, religious education, teach-
ing and learning methods, peda-
gogical means, educational goals
and objectives.

educațional, cum ar fi scopurile și obiectivele predării religiei sau principiile educației religioase.

Partea cea mai consistentă a cărții este reprezentată de capitolul care examinează metodele de predare-învățare folosite în studiul religiei. O clasificare inițială a metodelor care pot fi utilizate este făcută în funcție de două criterii principale: demersul logic specific care duce la învățare și izvorul principal al învățării. Toate metodele, de la cele "tradiționale", până la cele bazate pe acțiune sunt expuse într-o manieră amănunțită, iar exemplele care urmează fiecare analiză sunt foarte utile pentru ilustrarea modului în care se pot aplica la cele mai diferite teme.

Mijloacele de învățământ utilizate în activitatea pedagogică reprezintă un alt aspect esențial al procesului de predare-învățare. Icoana, textul biblic, tabelul cronologic, dar și filmul, calculatorul și emisiunile televizate sunt instrumente care trebuie utilizate în procesul educațional și care îi conferă acestuia un plus de calitate și interactivitate. Din nou, sunt oferite diferite exemple de lecții și de metode prin care se poate depăși structura tradițională a unei lecții, exemple care sunt foarte interesante și, fără îndoială, foarte utile pentru cei care predau religia.

O etapă esențială a procesului de predare învățare este evaluarea. Metodele și strategiile de evaluare, precum și tehnicile de elaborare a instrumentelor de evaluare în cazul particular al religiei sunt prezentate pe larg și sunt însoțite de exemple concrete.

Ultima parte a lucrării cuprinde mai multe exemple de documente școlare care trebuie întocmite de către profesor: planificări calendaristice anuale și semestriale, proiecte de lecție, schițe de lecție.

Metodica predării religiei este o lucrare complexă, gândită în așa fel încât construiește o imagine de ansamblu a educației religioase creștin-ortodoxe, prezentând, în același timp, laturile și elementele particulare ale procesului de predare-învățare.

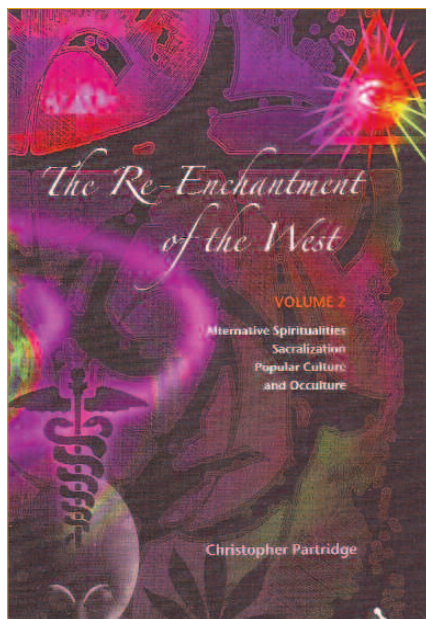
Prin demersul lor, autorii realizează o analiză pertinentă a procesului de predare a religiei, reușind să păstreze echilibrul între deferitele aspecte implicate de acesta - pe de o parte, procesul pedagogic, rigid și strict și, pe de altă parte, religia cu ceea ce, după cum spun autorii, ea implică: credință, trăire religioasă, ceremonial, simboluri. Demersul este fidel caracterului confesional al învățământului religios din România, care impune ca religia să fie predată în școlile publice prin încadrarea în granițele confesionale presupuse de învățătura bisericii căreia îi aparțin profesorul de religie și elevii săi. Dincolo de orice limitări, lucrarea de față, minuțios elaborată și clar structurată este, cu siguranță, de un real folos profesorilor care predau religia, dar nu numai acestora.

Christopher Partridge
The Re-Enchantment of
the West. Volume II.
Alternative Spiritualities,
Sacralization, Popular
Culture, and Occulture
T&T Clark, New York, 2005

În 2004 apărea primul volum al lucrării *Re-vrăjirea Occidentului*. Autorul ei, Christopher Partridge, profesor de Religie Contemporană la Universitatea din Chester, respectiv co-director al Centrului de Cercetare pentru Religie, Film și Cultură populară, investiga aici modalitățile schimbătoare ale spiritualității și religiei occidentale. Preocupările sale în domeniul religiozității contemporane l-au consacrat ca editor la *The Encyclopedia of New Religions*, respectiv co-editor la revista *Fieldwork in Religion*.

Volumul II al lucrării *Revrăjirea Occidentului* continuă analizele inspirate din prima parte, reprezentând o încercare de trasare a granițelor fluide și atot-cuprinzătoare pe care le cunoaște în prezent religiozitatea contemporană: „*Revrăjirea Occidentului* tratează despre mediul spiritual alternativ în lumea occidentală contemporană; tratează varietatea de moduri în care tot mai mulți occidentali descoperă și articulează semnificațiile spirituale în viețile lor; tratează noile moduri de a crede și transmiterea acestor credințe în societățile în care modurile vechi sînt inhibate și în declin” (p. 1).

După cum se poate lesne constata, autorul nu agreează ideea unui Occident secularizat și raționalizat, din care religiosul (în varianta religiilor tradiționale, cu precădere creștine) s-ar lăsa evacuat la modul discret. Sau, mai bine spus, această descriere i se pare a oglinzi doar parțial realitatea. Celălalt aspect al acestei realități, documentat sociologic și antropologic, îl reprezintă ascensiunea constantă a unei spiritualități de sorginte orientală, grupînd laolaltă un mixaj de credințe și o sumedenie de practici, a căror influență se resimte tot mai puternic. Noua spiritualitate nu este de esență creștină, deși influențe creștine mai sînt resimțite și în acest melanj conceptual; însă această spiritualitate își întinde rădăcinile în special spre orient – de la Yoga popularizată, *tai chi* și *rei ki*, *feng shui*, practicile Ayurveda, acupunctura, și pînă la aromoterapie. Autorul folosește, pentru a o caracteriza, termenul de „ocultură” (ocult + cultură). O caracteristică importantă a ansamblului compozit format de ocultură îl reprezintă „cotitura subiectivă”: și anume,



Mihaela Frunză

Lecturer, Ph.D, Department of
Systematic Philosophy, Babes-
Bolyai University, Cluj, Romania.
E-mail: mihafrunza@yahoo.com

Key words:

contemporary religion, occulture,
sacralization, the West, alternative
spiritualities, popular culture

faptul că persoana umană în integralitatea sa (minte-trup-spirit) se află în centrul unei vieți alese și asumate. Această turnură spre subiect nu este acompaniată însă de o reducere la subiect: egotismul nu este simultan un egoism, și asta deoarece sinele se deschide în permanență nu doar spre semenii, ci și spre univers, prin noile tendințe ecologice. De asemenea, un principiu pragmatic fundamental se află la baza succesului fulminant al paradigmei oculatorale. Acesta este: „dacă funcționează, folosește-l” și este destinat să simplifice aparatul teoretic al practicilor respective (de multe ori ajunse la un nivel de sofisticare conceptuală ce ar intimida și ar îndepărta necunoscătorii), contribuind astfel la propagarea masivă.

Cele șapte capitole ale prezentului volum pot fi citite atât ca studii de sine stătătoare, cât și ca părți ale unui întreg pe care îl redau, în felul în care, de exemplu, se poate spune că monadele lui Leibniz reflectă, fiecare în parte, întregul univers. Rînd pe rînd, aspecte din cele mai variate ale „oculturii populare” sînt prezentate ca reflectînd în grade diverse noua tendință „orientalizantă-spiritualizantă” a societății occidentale. De la medicina contemporană, din ce în ce mai deschisă spre formele alternative de vindecare, trecînd prin ecologie, consumul de droguri psihedelice, ciberspiritualitate, ufologie, demonologie și eschatologie, toate prezintă influențe semnificative ale fenomenului studiat. Pentru a nu răpi plăcerea cititorilor de a descoperi, pe cont propriu, bogăția de informații din volum și interpretările autorului, ne vom opri în cele ce urmează la exemplificarea tezelor autorului, cu precădere asupra domeniului medical, examinat în primul capitol.

Medicina contemporană poate fi cu adevărat considerată o prezență insolită în repertoriul practicilor analizate în acest volum. Dacă ufologia sau demonologia par să intre în mod natural în orizontul spiritualității orientale, faptul pare să fie cu atât mai surprinzător cînd este vorba de un domeniu atât de tehnicizat și profesionalizat cum este medicina.

și totuși, tendința de a trata în mod holistic persoana („pacientul” nereducîndu-se la „boala” sa și reclamînd, în consecință, o abordare mai complexă), ca și idealul „bunăstării” personale (*wellbeing*), par să fi molipsit și acea parte a medicinei cunoscute sub numele de *nursing*. Faptul este evident și documentat ca atare de asociațiile profesionale de medicină și de nenumăratele lucrări importante pentru practicieni. Ceea ce se petrece este o continuă ștergere sau slăbire a granițelor dintre „vindecare” (termen ce desemnează în general practicile asociate medicinei alternative) și „tratamentele” medicinei convenționale. Diferența este semnificativă: „Boala este *tratată*, în timp ce persoana este *vindecată*” (p. 23). Astfel, pe de o parte, numărul persoanelor implicate în sau recurgînd la terapiile complementare este în continuă creștere (în Marea Britanie numărul acestora triplîndu-se pe parcursul unui deceniu), iar pe de altă parte, medicina tradițională ia tot mai mult în considerare practicile ne-convenționale, de inspirație orientală.

Fenomenul capătă cu atât mai mare amploare cu cît se transmite, din medicină și ramura acesteia, igiena, prin producători și tehnici de marketing, la consumatorul de rînd, care este sedus prin apelul la „înțelepciunea” orientală și prin apelul la subiect și centralitatea existenței acestuia. Luînd exemplul binecunoscut al „aromoterapiei”, ajunsă acum, prin intermediul reclamelor, pînă la nivelul cosmeticelor și al detergenților universali, noua spiritualitate a reușit să fie atât de prezentă în universul cotidian, încît a intrat în clișeele publicitarilor. Faptul este remarcabil pentru propagarea ideilor spiritualității oculatorale, și pentru modalitatea în care aceasta impregnează cultura populară care ne înconjoară și ne formează.

Într-o manieră similară sînt explorate și celelalte domenii, în capitolele subiacente.

La final, nu putem fi decât de acord cu Gordon Lynch, Lector în Religie și Cultură la Universitatea din Birmingham: „Combinînd studii de caz originale cu analiza pătrunzătoare, Partridge oferă o interpretare originală a peisajului religios schimbător din Occident. Bine argumentată și excelent scrisă, *Re-vrăjirea Occidentului* reprezintă o contribuție majoră la dezbaterile despre natura religiei și spiritualității contemporane”. O lucrare ce invită cititorul deopotrivă la reflecție și auto-reflecție, o lucrare ce impresionează prin diversitatea surselor citate și, respectiv, o lucrare ce provoacă la o regîndire a problemei religiozității și secularizării în lumea occidentală.