

Social sciences in general and the religion ones in particular, “move forward” in a “slow”, heterogeneous, complex way, obviously, never in a lineal one. We would say that they “do not move forward”, or they only do it with a special notion of moving forward: they do it by sophisticating some debates, even when there are positions that pretend to synthesize and overcome polarities and antinomies, as it often happens every thirty years, after the alternating phases of dominance of a position and its opposite one. Certain positions that for some are more than overcome, for others have a value that is not only residual but substantive to understand a phenomenon. There, for example, where it is claimed that a definitive new conceptualization of religion as a market, it will have a complete, corrosive, and for many undeniable, return to one of the primary enunciations of the social sciences and its questioning regarding the ahistorical character of conceptions in this case reduced to an economic sense. Thus we see a breakthrough in a position when it allows us to hold renewals and overcomes that are possible and required to extend, sharpen, intensify the arguments, some of the interpretative alternatives that are part of certain disputes that, let’s hope you forgive me, it’s not an exaggeration, are “eternal”. Thereby, our discussions move forward, more for the sophistication of the debate than for its abolition.

In this context, I would like to highlight and discuss some of the issues that “Religious Pluralism and Value Pluralism: ritual and regulation of intercultural diversity” illuminates, by allowing to develop a decidedly richer form of discussion. My thesis, highlighting a possible angle, is that from this text we can reconstruct the notion of religious pluralism both in their areas of application and content. We need to be clear at this point: if Robbins’ thesis takes away the issue of religious pluralism and perches on pluralism of values, it does not mean that his work has no impact on the question of religious pluralism. On the contrary. As we know “from afar, or from somewhere else we can have a better view” and it is the truth of that proverb which I think is at stake when we perceive one of the possible parables in the text. My intention is to return to the issue of value pluralism as it is treated by

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Robbins to apply it in its consequences to the religious pluralism. I don't think that Robbins' exploration has escaped the theme, but I understand that the text offers us the possibility of an enlightening rodeo. Based on this possibility, I distinguish three issues that operate in the text and must be conceived as chained moments of that elucidation.

A first issue that I find essential, to draw a conclusion about the text without compromising the author himself in this, is: if the displacement of the question of religious pluralism to pluralism of values is one of the maneuvers that the text makes, it should be noted that there is another one that also arises as a "limitation" of the author, but it is quite instructive. The fact that the field of research of the author is offered as one of the privileged poles of a taxonomy that is usually assumed to analyze religious phenomena, helps overcome that same taxonomy and the assumption that it poses. Let us be clear: if the empirical study corresponds to a "simple", small society in which the rules could be sensed as homogeneous and real, what it follows is a denial. Small can be beautiful, but in no way simple.

This brings us to an assumption that I would like to make even if the author does not authorize me: normative homogeneity, whether it is in a religion or in a society, is a myth of some analyses. And this does not imply the metaphysical claim of chaos and unintelligibility, nor ontological individualism but the fact that the function of any system of meanings supposes the start of game repetitions and differentiation in which the illusions of constant, identical and perennial reproduction sink. The intention is not to deny duration, "historical inertia", social determination of the individual, the structural gaze. But it is not possible to say that the determinant structures do not have, as part of its functioning regime, changing margins and changing margins of their own changing margins. The normative homogeneity is a hypothetical degree zero that has never been fulfilled since every initial narrative of a society, every regulatory complex of a social aggregate, as simple as it is, from the beginning it is subjected differences that are introduced, even within a limited field. In that sense, I think that the text supports this without fully assuming that the axiological plurality is constitutive of social life and the religious experience, for both individuals and institutions (a statement that often mixes an assumption of facts with a normative projection). Hence, from this point, two issues emerge that I would also like to provide to the discussion.

The second issue is that the idea of a constitutive axiological pluralism, as well as the one of a constitutive pluralism of religions, must be combined in a non-mechanical way with the meaning ascribed to the term pluralism. If by pluralism we understand its modern comprehension, its liberal

meaning, we are forced to summarize the constitutive plurality and its existence into a scheme that involves relative rules on "tolerance", acceptance and encouragement of diversity and even a sanction to the conceptions that seek to integrate in a subordinated way the mentioned diversity. That perspective can be normatively valid, insofar as I understand it is what engages me as a citizen, but it is epistemologically inconsistent. The aspect of the Dumontian vision outlined by Robbins denounces and resolves this inconsistency: the constitutive pluralism can be resolved in non-pluralist conceptions. The normative and religious plurality can be hierarchical, even without easy harmonies. An example of this tension for me is offered by some of the Argentine Catholics of the popular sectors that can admit that, in case of need of a "stronger" prayer, they can go to an evangelical pastor, but they prefer not to because that would mean to "denationalize" themselves. This way of classifying the alternatives turns out to be at the same time revealing and surprising. In one trajectory the options are present in the form of plural options of value and religion. But in this case something particular happens: from the point of view of one who chooses an evangelical pastor to save his health, there is the terrible consequence of losing their Argentine identity. In this case religious plurality is not denied in the facts nor in the rules or rights under "the custom", the real existing rules beyond the national constitution (even when these real existing rules are egalitarian). But if the religious plurality is not denied nor certain exercises that correspond to its recognition, it is prioritized in a way that its recognition and the right to the option are hugely expensive (in a situation like the one I have mentioned, everything is dramatic: lose the nationality that is understood for example, as the fraternity with neighbors, or as a blood mark or lose the health). A little bit more about this particular situation can be added: the pluralism that actually exists in it does not separate religion and politics in a "classical" way. For the long-term effects of the attempt to establish a Catholic Argentina, we find that the popular appropriation of that intention gives holy and fraternal value at the same time to the nationality, as an effect of a Pentecostal evangelization based on divine healing is that there is a differentiation and hierarchy of religions based on their differential abilities either to "cure" or "integrate". A differentiation and a hierarchy that also varies depending on the situation. This applies both to pluralism of values and to religions: it is necessary to address not only the pluralism that we take as natural, but the way that is qualified in a particular symbolic universe. The case I refer to, that of a hierarchical pluralism, on a local, "informal" level but widespread in popular experiences in Argentina shows, I hope, the need for this distinction.

The third issue is that the decision to move from religious pluralism to the question of value pluralism allows us to grasp in a more realistic way a number of contemporary problems of the analysis of religion in the social sciences. Even when this decision may appear in the text as a result of a limitation or a conditioning derived from the research trajectory itself, I think this is a productive decision that installs at the same time an alternative and necessary point of view. The analysis of religious experience seems to concede, many more times than necessary, to the prejudice that each religion represents an axiological articulation that has in its center a value. In this conception is admitted that that axiological articulation may have other values, but it is assumed that they are part of a neat joint, where tensions are overcome because besides distinctions, there are hierarchies that reset a verticality and an order in the chaos of horizontality. This arises from many visions, including those quoted by Robbins. I would like to stress the predominance of what we usually recognize as the "Dumontian ontology" in an area where it is less liable of a productive rescue than in the previous issue. And the reference is not accidental: first because this ontology, and some of its uses in particular, has a decisive influence in the Brazilian anthropology that is the host of this debate, in the effect to give a permanent and a specific form to the Durkheimian vision, including what it takes to overcome it (no disrespect to the founding fathers and still understanding the decisive productive role that the appropriation of the work of Dumont in Brazil has). The Durkheimian vision extends, not just in Brazil where it exerts its weight in a direct and noticeable way, the assumption that religions have a value in the center, this conceptual construction projects to the religious world to which it is applied, a particular religious experience, that is not controlled or reviewed or exposed: that "mere unconscious pattern" is Catholicism. From that assumption, expectations that were translated into unproven hypotheses are derived and, precisely for this, oblige us into the discussion. One of those challenged expectations is, as known, that religious diversity has not translated in Latin America into a normative plurality that did not exist since "before the religious diversity". It has not been Pentecostalism, assumed as a form of "protestantism" that reformed Latin America, as speculated¹. Neither in a type of socio-religious conflict in which men will fight with each other in a frontal definitive and excluding way, opposing armies faced to gods and different values. But if we consider a less drastic version of the idea of conflict we should say that neither has been the religious diversity the responsible for introducing in an autonomous way, separate from other social processes, values once subordinated and emerging, and deployed in the open as individualism. To return to the case of Pentecostalism, we

should say that sometimes, in confluence with other variables, it is a factor of that individualization (but it can not be associated exclusively and uniquely to individualization).

Nevertheless, this assumption that should be exceeded, still remains as the prerogative every time it is assumed that the normal state of a religion is the axiological consistency and kind of equivalent of “society”. In this context, Robbins’s work helps to consolidate an essential first denaturalization: the structural heterogeneity that can be captured if the observer sits on the plurality of values as a starting point of the description. Heterogeneity that crosses religious spaces as evidenced by the same work. And the flip side of this phenomenon is that these same values that make a religion more heterogeneous, may also be turning a society in a more heterogeneous one. In that sense, moving to the pluralism of values to understand the religious experiences (how people deal with, ..), not only has "more of a reality principle" but helps place something that should not have to have the character of novelty, or exception, but it is crucial in the analysis of the social dynamics of religious phenomena: religious transversality. A perception that has two dimensions. On one side a religion is appraisingly heterogeneous and is crossed by the heterogeneity of society. On the other hand no value corresponds exclusively to one religion. The inability to define the life of a religious group from the point of view of the claims of its potential leaders, especially if they carry a "monistic" conception is parallel to the one that, ignoring that fact, we social scientists, when imbued with the same prejudice, stay catholic centric (a religion = a value = a hierarchical and complex harmonized set of values). At this point the analysis of the diversity of rituals from within “a religion” that shows their internal plurality, and their crosses and their commonalities with other religions and other social processes in which the plurality of values is performed, is a key finding in the text to which I would allow myself to add some examples. Inner healing rituals that link through a mixture of psychoanalysis and exorcism an individualistic construction are common in Argentina both to Catholics and Pentecostal groups. Conversely the holistic readings of baptism, massively present in argentinian Catholicism are also present in rituals such as the presentation of children to the Lord in Pentecostalism: in either case it is ensured not only the incorporation but also health as a result of a "real" incorporation. The plurality of rituals that different religious groups have, can articulate plural axiological experiences in supposedly homogeneous religious spaces. The conception of a "natural" religious transversality combined with a constitutive pluralism should be a permanent point of view. A spotlight that although counterintuitive and always difficult to conquer, is the starting point to ensure the break with the "pre-notions" of great

concern to social scientists. If so, we should conclude that societies, in its value anatomy, as well as religions, have a different architecture that is assumed by the unrelativized gaze anchored in the universality of the Catholic experience: it is not built from the top apex of the pyramids in which all the diverse and dispersed in the base contributes to the same axial line without potential leak points that integrate other possible axes and planes. Discernment of heterogeneous normativity of religions and the corresponding transversality of the religious experience in value terms should therefore accompany the significance of Catholic centrism transcendence often present in the social sciences of religion.

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