

Review



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Compêndio de Ciência da Religião

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The book shows a complete and exact review of the so-called human sciences of religion. Actually, it brings evidence of the progress achieved by the academic community, both lay and religious, particularly by Catholics, in the last two decades. The cultural background of the review is the Western world-wide civilization; Italian culture and scholars are also taken into consideration, in History, Sociology and Psychology of Religion and that attests a consolidated habit of cultural exchange. The editors are aware that, on one hand, their *Com-pêndio* (a “weighing together”, according to the metaphor that lies at the foundations of the etymology of the title) aims at offering the joint efforts of not less than 53 voices but, on the other, the different areas of competence and the different methodologies that their contribution convey, solely converge in their material object, the same “thing”: religion.

The complexity of the challenge is apparent since the very inception, since the first of the five parts the book is composed of, *Epistemologia da Ciência da religião*, edited by Eduardo R. Cruz. This first part outlines the formal object and the methodology of the different sciences affecting religion: History, Phenomenology, Philosophy, Natural Sciences, “Human sciences”, Aesthetics and at finally Theology. With regards to the latter, the essay of the theologian

Faustino Teixeira concerning *Ciência da religião e Teologia* highlights the intriguing issue of the “Public Theology”. If Theology is to be acknowledged as a scientific discipline within knowledge system and Academy, then it must be a Public Theology, open to debate, to free scientific research, to pluralism, to falsifiability. That scenario would imply “an institutional freedom toward Churches, in the domain of public space of science” (p. 181) for Theology. The matter is worth further investigation particularly as far as the existence of Theology (often with Psychology of Religion) in Universities – such as the ones variously called in the Anglo-Saxon world: “Religious Studies”, “Divinity” or “Religion and Sciences” – is concerned.

The second part, *Ciências sociais da religião*, edited by Maria José Rosado, presents a wide historical and epistemological overview of the theories and topics of Sociology, Anthropology, Geography of Religion. In the presentation of the History of Religion, particular attention is paid to Italian schools, namely to Pettazzoni, De Martino, Brelich. Special importance is attached to contemporary trends and issues of Sociology of Religion, a discipline epitomizing the ongoing renewal of criteria, models and imaginative denominations current Sociology teems with.

The third part, *Ciências psicológicas da religião*, is edited by Edênio Valle, a scholar well-known also in Italy, who observes that the relevance of Psychology of Religion is growing in the Brazilian academic community, thanks to the publication of original and translated texts and of conferences proceedings that prove the proactivity of supporters such as the team *Religião e Psicologia* of the AN-

PEP (Associação Nacional dos Programas de Pós-Graduação e Pesquisa em Psicologia), that has already run eight conferences with the international key players of the discipline. It is opened by the original and translated text by Jacob A. Belzen (*Taking a step back*) that used to inaugurate a historical-cultural retrospective of the process Psychology of Religion went through for acquiring the status of scientific discipline. Psychology of Religion is portrayed by metaphors: “Ancilla” (servant in Latin, as for the following metaphoric wording) hints at a Psychology of Religion at the service of religion, “Critica” points at a Psychology of Religion generally-speaking hostile or adverse to religion, “Scientia”, a neutral Psychology of Religion, solely devoted to psychological research, “Musicologist” describes an approach sympathetic to religion, which knows its “score” well, but which is into the peculiarities of the performers: in other words, knowing religion, knowing religious people, with a participant observation.

In the following pages, Cátia Cilene Lima Rodrigues and Antônio Máspoli de A. Gomes outline a framework of the “classical” theories of religion, namely the different approaches of Cognitive-Behavioural Psychology, Depth Psychology (with reference to Freud and Jung), Humanistic Psychology. An outstanding contribution is provided by Geraldo José de Paiva, world-wide renowned scholar of Psychology of Religion, who carefully presents current models and new trends in the contemporary world-wide Psychology of Religion, highlighting seven methodological approaches: narrative psychology, attribution theory, social representations theory, cultural psychology, attachment theory, evolutionary psychology and psychoanalytical theory of object relations. Subsequently, an introduction to key topics, often covered in specialized literature and in international conferences, is provided, together with objections and debates. José Luiz Cazarotto outlines a critical framework of the relationship between Religion and Biology and Neurosciences, underlining a reductionist path of the research: from the body to the mind, from neurons to synapses. Eliana Massih investigates the potential contribution of what, according to some, could be the new paradigm of the Evolutionary Psychology of Religion. Clarissa De Franco meets the challenge of the debate about the relations among religion, religiosity and spirituality, by

choosing the criteria of the respective approaches to psychotherapy, ethics, and death. Maria Eliane Azevedo da Silva begins her contribution to evolutionary Psychology of Religion with an intriguing question many specialized handbooks and essays raise: what do we mean by religious maturity? Then she analyzes the “stages of faith” suggested by Fowler and links them to the perspectives that can be inferred from Winnicott, perspectives that Ana-María Rizzuto highlighted. Her conclusion is the relevance of the experience of loving others and being loved for the development of faith. Everton de Oliveira Maraldi, Leonardo Breno Martins and Fátima Regina Machado present the outcomes of years of studies and participant observation of the altered states of mind with particular reference to Afro-Brazilian rituals, underlining the advantages of a composed methodology encompassing psycho-social analysis and individual case study, profiting from both neurophysiological tests of the organic correlates and psychological tools such as test, introspection, interviews, journals.

The fourth part, *Ciências das linguagens religiosas*, edited by Enio José da Costa Brito, revolves around the belief that language is not only an expression of the evolution of man, but its very cornerstone: languages articulate the specifically human dimension of being in relationship and make it happen. Specific contributions focus on origins, structure and processes of the religious languages, on their expression (the body, the arts, the media, the myths, the rituals). The essays concerning the hermeneutics of the sacred books, the relationship between oral transmission and written text, the stereotypes and pre-conceptions of a fundamentalistic view of religion, are inspiring.

The fifth part, *Ciências da religião aplicada*, edited by Afonso Maria Ligorio Soares, investigates aims, functions and consequences in social practices of the science of religion: as far as peace, interreligious or not, humanization, mediation of conflict are concerned; but also for pastoral, religious education, socio-political education and psychotherapy purposes.

The work as a whole, properly representing the state of the art and the main scholars in Brazil today, is particularly interesting to scholars and students because it is built upon two methodological pillars: historical perspective and epistemological perspective. Collecting such a great number of contributions

has the same strengths and weaknesses of any encyclopedical presentation, articulated in radically different “voices. On one hand, each contribution can be considered and read as an essay on its own: a summary of the present time and an encouragement for further and future investigation. On the other hand, every voice seems isolated; since built from the specific points of view and sensitivity of the different contributors, it may lead the reader to get a fragmentary juxtaposition of ideas. A sign of the issue can be found in the difference, not only of names but of visions, in the definition of the object. While the title and the overall plan of the book, the singular *Ciência da religião*, is meant to communicate the aim to a homogeneous “compendium”, many contributors prefer the plural form, stressing both the plurality of scientific approaches and religious pluralism: “Cien-

cias Religiosas”. The underlying issue, not clarified in the Introduction of the text, is not unimportant: in the “sciences of religion” what is specific is the material object (religion) or the insertion in a scientific discipline? For instance, is Psychology of Religion a religious discipline or a branch of Psychology? Belonging to the academic world of science implies that religion should be a well-defined object, investigated with the methodology and the tools of the different disciplines. The Psychology of Religion, the Sociology of Religion and the Hermeneutics of Religion are, first of all, Psychology, Sociology and Hermeneutics. Far from being a final and exhaustive answer to the issue, the “Compêndio” casts light on its urgency. And precisely that could be an advantage for the reader and the scholar.

Translated by *Cristina Scarpa*.

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