"Affirmative Genealogy" of Religion from a Sociological Perspective

«Genealogía afirmativa» del hecho religioso en perspectiva sociológica

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Key words

Religiosity
- Rites
- Secularization
- Symbolism
- Classification system
- Sociological Theory

Abstract

Religion is often believed to be based on the use of binary concepts (sacred/profane, transcendent/immanent, religious/secular and religious/postsecular), which are assumed to have the same meaning. This, however, is not the case. This work presents an "affirmative genealogy" of the distinct meanings and the social genesis of these concepts. The "sacred/profane" pairing represents epistemological and cognitive categories which are common to all religious experiences in terms of time and space, separating different domains of the world. The "transcendent/immanent" pairing represents historical categories created around the 5th century BC, with the emergence of the Axial Age. The "religious/secular" pairing also represents historical categories, but this time they come from Western European Christianity. The "religious/postsecular" pairing represents sociological categories originating during the "postsecular" world (but not a post-religious one).

Palabras clave

Religiosidad
- Ritos
- Secularización
- Simbolismo
- Sistema clasificatorio
- Teoría sociológica

Resumen

Pensamos que el hecho religioso se basa en el uso de conceptos binarios (sagrado/profano, trascendente/inmanente, religioso/secular y religioso/postsecular) que significan lo mismo. Esto es un error. Este trabajo realiza una «genealogía afirmativa» del significado diferenciado y de la génesis social de tales conceptos. El par sagrado/profano representa categorías epistemológico-cognitivas, comunes a toda experiencia religiosa, tanto en el tiempo como en el espacio, que separan diferentes dominios del mundo. El par «trascendente/inmanente» representa categorías históricas forjadas en torno al siglo V a. C., dentro del surgimiento de la Edad Axial. El par religioso/secular representa asimismo categorías históricas, pero esta vez nacidas dentro del cristianismo europeo occidental. El par religioso/postsecular representa categorías sociológicas nacidas dentro de un mundo ya «postsecular», aunque no postreligioso.

Citation

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"The ancient gods remain alive and other modern ones have been born to accompany them and to compete with them in an endless struggle"

INTRODUCTION

Allow me to begin with an introductory example based on a well-known story. The first verse of *Genesis* affirms that: "In the beginning ...the earth was formless and empty... and God said "let there be light"…and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day" and the darkness he called "night" (*Genesis* 1, 1-5). The universe is an infinite field of possibilities. From the chaos,[1] God thereby extracts a certain order based on a binary logic of distinctions. There is a beginning that is revealed by "making a distinction" (Luhmann, 1996: 3-33), conditioned by the divine "action", while it is true that this is an action that was agreed upon through dialogue, and that in our case, appearing as *human observation* of the meta-observer (God), who observes his action-creation and his creatures, the world and ultimately, man. Our overall social order is a product of distinctions[2], of ways of separating the relatives from the non-relative, the moral from the immoral, the serious from the recreational, what is ours from what is not, the masculine from the feminine, the north from the south, etc. To classify things is to situate them within distinct groups, separated by defined lines (Durkheim, Mauss, 1996b: 26). Within the foundation of our conceptualization of classification, there is the idea of a circumscription of established and defined boundaries. In order to discern one "thing", we must distinguish that which is the subject of our attention from that which we deliberately ignore. Classifying consists of acts of inclusion and exclusion. To classify is to provide a world of *structure*: to manipulate probabilities, to make certain occurrences more plausible than others (Z. Bauman, 1996: 74). We proceed with a certain tendency to avoid the "*horror vacui*" (P. Handke, 1987) of a world without distinctions, such as that described by Peter Handke when discussing the temporary loss of the ability to speak or the loss of memory, devices that create distinctions. Classification is a process of *"sculpting"*, *"drawing"* islands of significance beyond merely identifying these islands as if they were something natural that already existed. Society is only possible if the individuals and that which makes them up are divided into distinct groups. That is, some are classified in relationship with others; therefore, social life assumes a certain conscious organization, nothing other than a classification[3]. The word "*define*" originates from the Latin *finis,* limit. Thus, *to define something is to establish its limits* (Burke, 1969: 24). These limits play a fundamental role in the creation of social reality.

THE SOCIAL GENESIS OF THE FIRST CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM: "SACRED/ PROFANE"

In his last great work, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1912), Émile Durkheim described religion as the detailed interpretation of the *social genesis of the proto-distinction guidelines that differentiate between the epistemological-analytic categories of "sacred" and "profane",* based upon ritualistic practices performed by a social group. For

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[1] This is not exclusive to Judeochristianity but is present in almost all cosmogonies and theogonies of the great civilizations. For more on the logic of the distinctions, see the interesting work of Rodrigo Jokisch, 2002: 179 and ss.

[2] For more on the idea of the world being the product of the construction of distinctions, limits and their transgression, see the important work of Eviatar Zerubavel, 1991.

[3] É. Durkheim, 1912 (Hereinafter, it shall be abbreviated as FE, for the fourth French edition of PUF, 1960, 633 and the Spanish edition of Ramón Ramos of Akal,1982: 411).

Durkheim, unlike Weber who considered religions to be belief systems, this proto-classification is not based on beliefs, since if this were the case, it would not be empirically based on rituals. In fact, these practices are carried out in order to maintain the limits between the sacred and the profane, not so much a belief in supernatural beings or mysterious gods, as the conventional conceptualizations of religion seem to suggest. The sacred does not exist as a prior idea or belief, but through a ritual that comes to be. The existence of the sacred precedes the essence-belief in the sacred. *Only through the occurrence of the ritual do the sacred emerge as something different from the profane.* Thus Durkheim preferred to speak of "*religious acts and not of religion*"[4]. According to Durkheim, "*action* dominates religious life since society makes up its original source" (E. Durkheim, FE, 598/390). According to another great expert on Durkheim, Robert N. Bellah: "religion is something that is *done*… Religion is made up of *action*, faith is based on confidence"[5]. Durkheim concentrates on the analysis of these "more elementary forms of religious acts", which he considers to be totemism, to avoid the methodological confusion between the sacred and the transcendent, a term that he associated with the new dualism (the other world/this world) which shall create the universal religions that develop during the Axial Age and that have distinctive characteristics, as we shall see.

Durkheim also criticized that which he considered to be the notion of divinity as a core of religion. If this were the case, it would be necessary to exclude the three major universal religions of Buddhism, Jainism and Confucianism[6] from the religious spectrum, since many of their rituals are completely independent of gods or spiritual beings. *Religious phenomenon may be recognized based on their form and not their content*, with the object upon which they are applied being of little importance, regardless of whether it is a thing, an idea or a supernatural aspiration. Thus, the importance of modern sacredness may be verified in terms of the reason, the nation and the individual[7]. Every society generates its own sacred content. Every society creates its specific sacred realities, and therefore, modern societies produce *multiple sacred forms* that activate complementary and conflictive fields of influence (Lynch, 2012: 135). The sacred content may change over time. It may be established and may lose its aura of sacredness. That which was sacred in the past may be less sacred today, and may be completely desacralized in the future[8]. Durkheim believed that religion is a social act with nothing mysterious or supernatural about it. Religion is found in all civilizations and across all ages: pre-Axial, Axial and post-Axial. It appears in societies that for all apparent purposes are non-religious or non-believing. It is not born of individual feelings, but rather, of collective states, *acquiring as many forms as the community that created them and with its nature based on only two indicators: practices and beliefs*.

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[4] É. Durkheim, Vol. 2, 1899: 1-28, (cited hereinafter, based on its Spanish translation, included in Durkheim: 1996a: 107).

[5] Hans Joas, 2012a, Vol. 14, no. 2, 75. Interview in which Robert Bellah, in response to thoughtful questions by Hans Joas, summarizes the driving force behind his last great work: *Religion in the Human Evolution. From the Paleolithic to the Axial Age*, 2011.

[6] É. Durkheim, FE, 42 and ss/27 and ss. If we take on this position, we should exclude the sociological reality of civil American religion since it lacks the notion of a saving divinity. (Regarding this, see the significant work of Robert Bellah, originally published in 1964: "Civil Religion in America" 2007: 114-139).

[7] Regarding the notion of "sacredness of the person", see the excellent work of Hans Joas: *Die Sakralität der Person. Eine Neue Genealogie der Menschenrechte*, 2011, in which the author analyzes the idea of sacralization of the person, based on Durkheim, supported empirically by the development of human rights.

[8] W. S. F. Pickering discusses this idea (London, 1984: 132).

The first question to be initially addressed is: How is the collective group communion[9] state attained? Durkheim positions this type of ritualistic practice that produces a distinct type of reality as a "collective effervescence"[10], "collective ecstasy", "emotional energy", a condition of possibility based upon which individuals experience a different and more profound reality. He describes the Australian aboriginal rituals held at nightfall, in which all types of processions, dances and songs are performed at torchlight and where the overall effervescence rises and "reaches a state of such exaltation that men lose their own consciousness. They are dominated by, dragged by a type of external force that causes them to think and act differently than they normally would, thereby giving the impression of having left their own self. They appear to have been converted into distinct beings: their way of dressing, the masks used to cover their faces, are all material reproductions of this transformation,…And since, at the same time, all of their comrades are also similarly transformed, and express the same feelings through their shouts, gestures and attitudes, the ritual develops as if they really were actually being transported to a special world, completely different from the one in which they usually exist, a space that is fully inhabited by intense exceptional forces that invade and metamorphose in them"[11]. This fragment reflects this transcendence "from within", the "immanent transcendence", that produces a separate world (the sacred) out of the regular life of the profane. Rarely is this link between the ritual and the proto-distinction differentiating the sacred from the profane so evident. The ritual, through the action and the emotional energy, produces not only a transcendence from the given world, from the normal, profane world, *creating the sphere of the sacred*[12], but also one that unifies individuals, thereby creating a *collective* group. However, this "*transcendental reality*", also relevant to Durkheim, with its social genesis, wearing the seal of the society, is the product of a transcendence that is carried out "from within" the society, not of otherworldly origins, but being entirely from this earth, an *immanent transcendence*, born in the core of the cultural practices, *incarnated in a community of worship before being represented in a community of interpretation and belief*. We may even dare to say, in the context of modern societies, that a solidarity based on *shared practices* is more relevant than one based on shared beliefs (Rawls, 2004: 3).

Based on the reasoning of Robertson-Smith and Durkheim, we may agree that

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9 Regarding the concept of communion from a sociological perspective, see the interesting work of Herman Schmalenbach (1922, 1977: 64-126)

10 É. Durkheim, FE, 308, 312-313/198, 205. For an interesting discussion on the importance of the concept of "collective effervescence" in Durkheim's sociology and coextensively, in sociological speech itself, see the work of Pablo Nocera: "The uses of the concept of effervescence and the dynamics of the collective representations in Durkheim's sociology", 2009: 93-119.

11 É. Durkheim, FE, 312-13/205. See also the works of R. N. Bellah, 2011: 17-18, Hans Joas, 1997: 93-94, Randall Collins, 2009: 58-59, Jeffrey C. Alexander: 2006a: 29-91. We should not limit this exclusively to the ritualistic practices of the tribal Australian societies as analyzed by Durkheim. We should also consider the ritualistic practice and symbolism of the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth in the Mount of Olives. We should also consider the collective effervescence during the French Revolution of 1789. We should also consider the collective mobilizations for the symbol-totem of Auschwitz and the horrific Holocaust. We must also consider the piacular rites in Ground Zero of New York after the events of September 11th of 2001.

12 Steven Lukes explains this idea as that which he considers to the central hypothesis of Durkheim in *Las Formas…*,. See his well known and influential work: 1973: 463. For an analysis of the profane world as a world of ordinary life, of the usual routines, see the significant work of Alfred Schütz and Thomas Luckmann: 1973. Regarding social genesis of the transcendence of the limits of the ordinary world (and of the very *self*) and the creation of extraordinary areas in which it is possible to reach both non-religious and religious transcendence, see the work of Alfred Schütz and Thomas Luckmann (1984, Vol. II: 139-215). The ability to transcend the given is, probably, the strongest evolutionary tools of the human condition (See the excellent work of Ingolf U. Dalferth (2012: 146-191).

thanks to this dichotomous distinction between the sacred and the profane, a specialized mechanism is also obtained, a *transformation of external contingencies* (physical-environmental) *into internal ones* (social-symbolic)*. The problem of the contingency[13] is thereby reformulated *internally* in the core of the mentioned distinction guideline, through the "immanent transcendence" existing in the ritual[14], and it is perceived as suffering. Evolutionarily speaking, what was won with the emergence of the first classification system, as brilliantly noted by Durkheim, shall not to be lost in the subsequent schemes, since this ritual occurring in the mimetic culture and the myth that is also present in the symbolic culture shall remain very present in the multitude of myth-rituals that are recovered and reinvented by the axial religions and their extension in the universal religions.

THE GENESIS OF A NEW CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM IN THE AXIAL AGE: "THE OTHER WORLD/THIS WORLD"

In that which Karl Jaspers has identified as *Achsenzeit (the Axial Age)*[15] , from approximately 800 B.C. to 200 B.C., certain significant individuals appeared –the Jewish prophets and priests, the Chinese *literati*, the Hindu Brahmans, the Buddhist *sanga*, the Greek philosophers and sophists-, whose visions immensely expanded and developed human consciousness, creating a movement which went from the pre-Axial religions, which we examined in the previous section, to the religions of salvation or redemption.

Religious value no longer lies in the general identification with the group, in Durkheim's terms, but rather begins to acquire the form of a *personal opening towards transcendence* (Schwartz, 1975, Vol. 2: 3-4). Considering that the new religious messages of the Axial Age were aimed at individuals, as opposed to being directed at the groups of a social organism, these messages were universal in their scope. As Robert N. Bellah affirms: "From the perspective of the Axial religion (or the historic religions), man is no longer defined in terms of the tribe or clan from which he comes or in terms of a specific God that he serves, but rather, as a *being that is capable of salvation*. So, for the first time, it is possible to conceive of the human being in terms of being human" (1970: 33). This means that the period of tribal and national religions is weakened and the period of universal religions begins. The "axial" advances, in some way, prepared the land and the conditions for the institutionalization of the universal "historic" religions. Gradually, the worshiping communities, strongly rooted in the pre-Axial religions, were converted into communities of salvation. But according to Bellah and Elkana, what really acts as an epistemological condition of possibility (Bellah, 2005: 78; Elkana, 1986: 40-64)[16] for

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[13] Expressing that which is given (experienced, anticipated, thought, imagined) in light of a possible distinct state; it designates situations in a horizon of potential changes. It assumes a given world, that is, it does not designate that which is possible within one, but that which, based upon reality, *could exist in another way*. Regarding this, see the works of Niklas Luhmann (1998, 115ss; 1977: 187).

[14] For more on the meaning and functions of rituals, see the interesting work of Ramón Ramos (2012, Vol. 49, 2: 223-240)

[15] In this approach there is Karl Jaspers and his concept of "Axial Age" (1949, 15-106), and the set of reflections originating in comparative sociology of the religions of Weber, whose main representatives are S. N. Eisenstadt, Johan Paul Arnason and Björn Wittrock (S. N. Eisentadt, 2003, J. P. Arnason, S. N. Eisenstadt, Bjorn Wittrock (Editors), 2005) and finally R. N. Bellah (2011) and R. N. Bellah and Hans Joas ((Editors), 2012).

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[16] There is no single or exclusive condition of possibility within civilizations emerging in the Axial Age, to change the images of the pre-Axial world, but rather, a *cluster* of causes, since, next to the emerging *reflexive* conscience theory at a cosmological level, there is also an increasing *historical* conscience of human existence and a positive assessment of the potential of the human *person* and of the human *action* (See the work of Björn Wittrock: 2012, 108-109).

the emergence of the idea of transcendence was the *second order logic, theoretical culture, the theory of Logos,* in regards to cosmology, which for the societies emerging after the pre-Axial Age, led to the creation of a new way of thinking about the religious-political premises of society itself, completely redefining and completing the metaphorical structure of the myth.

What exactly is "transcendence"[17] in these new religious worlds? This term implies that a distinct quasi-spatial separation between the worldly and the divine emerges in these religions and philosophies, and that new ideas were developed based on the existence of the other-worldly environment, transcendent, absolute, not based on an "immanent transcendence" as found in the totemism studied by Durkheim. Previously, in Pre-Axial religion, the divine existed in the world; it was a part of this world. Thus, there was no separation between the divine and the mundane and, therefore, the spirits and the gods could be directly influenced and manipulated since they were a part of the world. With the emergence of the new religions of redemption and the philosophies of the Axial Age, a *hiatus* was created between spheres. The guiding idea was based on the divine being derived from the current, the true and irrefutable other while the mundane, on the other hand, was inferior. This tension between the mundane and the transcendent shall have major consequences (Wittrock, 2012: 118).

The new movements arising in the Axial Age highlighted the *soteriological[18]* structure existing, in marked contrast to the relatively simple acceptance of the pre-Axial world of religion. This acceptance of the world is often explained as the sole response to the reality that invades the *self* whereby the symbolization of the *self* and the world are difficult to separate. However, in the axial religions, the *self* begins to be differentiated from the environment and is conscious of its own possibilities. The basic ethical problem (Habermas, 1987, Vol. 1: 267) existing in the Axial religions arises from the need to search for a religious explanation for the *suffering* that is perceived as unjust. But *in order for the unfortunate to be perceived as unjust, there must be a change in assessment of the suffering derived from the contingency situation*, since in tribal societies, suffering was considered to be a symptom of hidden guilt. "Those who were long time sufferers due to mourning, illness or any other misfortune were considered, according to the specific type of misfortune, to be either possessed by a demon or punished by the anger of an offended God" (Weber, 1983, Vol. 1: 196). In Axial religions, the individual is capable of salvation, deserving of the religious hope of freedom from all evil, from the physical, mental and social sufferings of their earthly existence, from the absurd unease and the end of life as such, from their inevitable personal imperfections, from the "stain", "sin" or from a more spiritual way of life such as banishment into the dark confusion of earthly ignorance (Weber, 1978: 419).

THE GENESIS OF A NEW CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM IN EUROPEAN CHRISTIANITY: THE RELIGIOUS/THE SECULAR

A) Around 1500

Etymologically speaking, the term secular is derived from the Medieval Latin word *saeculum*, having a double space-time connotation with the secular *world* and the secular *era*, which are not simultaneous. The secular world exists before the secular age. This semantic connotation suggests that the social

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[17] See Hans Joas (2005, Introduction, 8-9).

[18] Etymologically, it is derived from the Greek word *soter*, savior and "salvation" coming from the Latin word *salus*, with both having meanings that are historically connected to the especially Christian notion of being saved by the restorative death of the Christ, related to the righteous judgment of God regarding sinners.

reality in medieval Christianity was structured based on a classification system that divided "this world" into two heterogeneous areas or spheres, "the religious" and "the secular". This is a specific and historical variant of this set of universal dualist classification systems of the social reality that is under examination, the sacred and the profane, as postulated by Èmile Durkheim, and above all, regarding the otherworldly and worldly environments emerging during the Axial Age, as described by Max Weber and S. N. Eisenstadt.

In fact, according to José Casanova (2001: 13786-13787 and 2009: 76, 4: 1049-1066), Western European Christianity was structured based on a double dualist classification system. There was, on the one hand, *axial dualism* that separated "this world" (the city of man) from "the other world" (the city of God) while, on the other hand, there was also a new *intra-worldly dualism*, this time within "this world" and that divided the "religious" and the "secular" spheres. Both dualisms were mediated by the sacramental nature of the church, located in the middle, simultaneously belonging to both worlds and therefore, being capable of mediating sacramentally between both; "as *ecclesia invisibilis*, (according to Casanova) 'the communion of the saints', the Christian church is a 'spiritual' reality, part of the city of God, eternal and transcendent, however, since the *ecclesia visibilis* exists in the secular world, it is a 'temporary' reality and thus forms a part of the immanent city of man" (Casanova, 2010a: 275)[19]. The more closed the Christian movement became in its ranks and the more it became a unified and organized body, the stronger the trend to view the rest of life as the "world", the *saeculum*. We should not forget that the gospel of Jesus was one of free personal piety, with a strong drive towards profound intimacy, the spiritual company and communion, but with no trend towards the organization of worship, or the creation of a religious community. Only when faith in Jesus becomes the central point of adoration for a new religious community, shall there be the need for the organization carried out by Pablo and Pedro in the congregation of layman believers, also known as "the church" (Troeltsch 1931, Vol. 2: 993, and Weber, 1978: 895, 932). The strengthening of the idea of a sacramental and priestly church such as *civitas Dei*, in which the angels play and the Christ-God is crowned, means an intensification of the idea that opposes the "world", such as Satan's kingdom, in which there is nothing other than perdition and impotence. The community of practice and belief that Durkheim called the church was separated from within, and the magician was replaced by the priest (Weber, 1978: 895), separated from the "world", with pretensions of universal domain. In other words, it went beyond the link to the home, the clan, the tribe, with ethnic-national borders disappearing and the creation of an integral, new religious level. The church has a monopoly on the objects of salvation, meaning that only the institutes of grace have grace (*extra ecclesia nulla salus*), serving as "the administrators of a type of trust of the eternal goods of salvation that are offered to all" (Weber, 1978: 895).

In order to understand that which has come to be referred to as the Secular Age[20], it is necessary to consider the social genesis of two areas, the religious-spiritual and the secular-temporal. We should observe the historically contingent links produced between these areas. There have been repeated attempts made by Christian reform of the *saeculum*, to Christianize the imminent city of

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[19] See also, the relevant comments on the genesis of the secular and the religious made by Talal Asad (2003: 191-192).

[20] Charles Taylor made a detailed analysis of the set of crucial milestones that allow us to speak of "a secular age" in his work from 2007.

man, beginning with the papal "revolution" and with the emergence of the spiritual orders, directed at a life of Christian perfection in the worldly *saeculum* (Casanova, 2010a: 276).

a) The papal "revolution" emerges at a critical moment of a *unified Christian civilization* (Troeltsch, 1931, Vol. 1: 379-82) where external-internal worldly aspects combine with internal spiritual aspects within the Caesaropapism connection existing between the universal church and the Roman Empire, and later in the new Unitarianism (Germanic and Roman) of the territorial church and the patrimonial authority. The political secular authority was considered to be a resource for the Christianization of the world. This led to the specific variety of the Caesaropapism regimen of the European Latin Christianity.

b) The secular ascetic monk appears– at least in those orders having rationalized asceticism, most clearly in the Jesuits- as the *first professional* (*Berufsmensch*) to live in a "methodical" manner with "distributed time" and constant self-control, rejecting all carefree enjoyment and work that was not performed in service of their profession (Weber, 1978: 903; 1983, Vol. 1: 99-100). Along with this clear civilizational achievement, the Protestant ascetic added another element of enormous practical consequences: "the need to verify faith in the worldly life" (Weber, 1983, Vol. 1: 102), as a cultural sublimation of the tensions existing between this world and the other world. As Charles Taylor (2007: 774) warns, this process produces an undesired consequence in the Unitarian design of pre-reformist medieval Christianity, since it creates disenchantment with the world, de-ritualizing, causing the de-ecclesiasticalization of institutionalized religion and a major religious individualization, visible in the rise of numerous sects and in the "reli-gious wars" of Europe, while at the same time, strengthening the discipline and reordering life and society. The great revolutions of the 18th century are other very relevant milestones that were reached upon "bringing the Kingdom of God to this world", this time, in the political arena.

B) Around 1800

The self-awareness of living in a secular age may only emerge based on the empirical evidence that "the belief in God is no longer axiomatic, (but that) there are alternatives" (Taylor, 2007: 3). Thus, we have moved from a society where it was virtually impossible not to believe in God, or at least not to have the axiom of believing in God as a cardinal principle of common sense (because it was socially prescribed to believe and non-belief was banned, in a context of overwhelming believers), to a society where faith, even for the most radical of believers, is a human possibility (Taylor, 2007: 3). Charles Taylor, following the path of Hugo Grotio, affirms that this crucial sociological event produced a new pattern of meaning according to which we act within an "immanently secular framework" under the premise: *etsi Deus non daretur* (Taylor, 1998: 34 and 36) ("as if God did not exist")**,** even if God did not exist, the principles that emanate from this "immanent secular world" are binding. At the core of the *saeculum,* there is a new directive distinction, one that differentiates between an "us" (the post-religious subjects that are governed by rational claims of validity) and a "them" (religious believers guided by their faith). But, in the face of implicit theology of European secularism that applies a final conversion of the religious "them" into the post-religious "us", neither of these circles act as irreconcilable opposing or separate elements, but rather, they act as two circles of sociality that must be understood as related possibilities that are in tension and that interpenetrate within each society, leading to distinct worlds.

This irrefutable sociological fact shall produce a great body of writings on secularization that began with the "modernizing" proto-sociologists– Saint Simon, Comte and Spencer- who led the *grand récit* (as Lyotard referred to it) consisting of the modern societies that supported an ongoing and constituent narrative of progress[21] of civilization until reaching a «positive» state where the "immanent secular framework" has an undeniable significance.

Based on the sociological phenomenon derived from a specific historical context, that of the dynamics of the Western European Christianity transformation from the Middle Ages until present day, a general theory of secularization has developed, supported by "sociological conjecture" that acts as a "knowledge regime" with connotations that are not only descriptive but also prescriptive and that we may formulate, according to José Casanova, as follows: "the more modern, more secular a society, the less religious" (Casanova, 2006a: 17), a conjecture that at the end of the day, was found to be false, empirically speaking. This general theory of secularization in Europe has functioned as a self-fulfilling prophecy (Casanova, 2002: 24) as far as a majority of the European population has accepted the premises of this theory as a normal event (when in fact, *Europe is an islet of secularist exceptionality in the face of an ocean of persistence of religion found across the rest of the world*) and has projected them as an original from which global copies may be made, highlighting that modernization and secularization, empirically speaking, are not synonymous. When we refer to religion, we must remember that "there is no global rule" (Casanova, 2006b, Vol. 8, No. 1 and 2: 17).

One rejection of this "conjecture" that automatically associates modernization and secularization[22] with the progressive disappearance of religion can be seen in the United States, according to Tocqueville, (1990: 309), in the advancement of rationalism (that is, education and scientific knowledge) and of the value of individualism (that is, liberal democracy and individual freedoms) which do not necessarily lead a to a decline in religion. In other words, the US is both secular and religious at the same time. The First Amendment of the Constitution did not prohibit the thirteen original states from practicing their *own established religions*. What Congress did veto was the establishment of an official religious policy in the country. In colonial North America, there was neither feudalism nor a national church that extended across the thirteen original colonies, to be separated by the new federal state. Thus, the separation between church and state was amicable and not based on a hostile separation related to a pre-existing church, but rather, it was created to *protect the free exercising of religion*, or to construct the basis for religious pluralism (denominationalism), based on the assumption that religious diversity is a "positive" for society or the country.

The Western European pattern of tensions and conflicts between the "secular" and the "religious" cannot be applied mechanically in other parts of the world as if this were an example to be followed, an original from which copies are to be made, when in fact it is most likely the exception (Davie, 1999: 65-83) to the rule, since many non-Western post-colonial societies have not followed the Western European pattern. It cannot be applied to Confucianism or Taoism either, since it is not characterized by a tension between "this world" and "the other world" or by an ecclesiastical organization of mediation. These religions have always been

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[21] Regarding the concept of progress, see the excellent work of Reinhart Koselleck: 1975, Vol.2: 350-423.

[22] An excellent critique of the natural association between modernization and secularization is found in Hans Joas (2012b: 23-43).

"intra-worldly" and "secular", thus there is no process of secularization in Western terms.

Perhaps the biggest error of the general theory of secularization based on the Western European Christianity, has been to entrust its plausibility to an evolutionary concept of the states of teleological character, according to which there is a sort of universal law of evolution (sic Herbert Spencer) from religious to secular with a clear finalist orientation, when in fact, as Talal Asad suggested, we should consider that although the "secular" makes up a part of the theological discourse, it shall later be the very category of "the religious" that which is created out of the political-secular and scientific-secular discourses, as revealed in the processes of modern post-Axial re-sacralization of reason, the nation, the revolution or the individual. Therefore, "religion" arises as a historical category and a globalized concept, the result of the creation of Western secular modernization[23] and if this is the case, the secular "should not be considered as a space in which the *real* human life is gradually released from the controlling power of "religion" thereby substituting it" (Asad, 2003: 191). According to Asad, "the concept of "the secular" is currently part of a doctrine known as secularism. This doctrine does not simply insist that religious practice and beliefs should be confined to a space where they do not threaten political freedom or the stability of the freethinkers who build upon a specific conception of the world ("natural" and "social") and on the problems created by this world" (Asad, 2003: 191-192). Although "the function of secularism as a historical philosophy, and as an ideology, (has been) to convert the specific Christian-Western historical process of secularization into *a* universal teleological process of human development that goes from belief to disbelief, from

irrational or metaphysical primitive religion to modern, post-metaphysical secular rational conscience" (Casanova, 2012c: 213-214), with the purpose of maintaining a separation between "the religious" and "the political", we must recognize that historically and geographically speaking, this secularism is quite varied and this variation has allowed us to empirically refute some of the assumptions that linked secularism and democracy, since living in a secular world, in which secularization processes existed –empirical processes- historical ones of transformation and differentiation between "the religious spheres" (ecclesiastic institutions and churches) and "secular spheres" (state, economy, science, art, entertainment, health and wellbeing) arising in contemporary social organizations – *does not necessarily mean being secularist*– practicing a state ideology in the face of religion-, nor is it the case when an individual is identified as being French, German, Spanish, North American does this mean that *he/she is more democratic* then when identifying themselves as Catholic, Jewish, Protestant or Muslim. Thus, we assume these critiques, it is possible to live in a secular world without being secularist. If modernization and secularism, as described above, do not necessarily go hand in hand, then secularism and democracy are not necessarily synonyms *per se*.

THE GENESIS OF A NEW GLOBAL CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM: "THE RELIGIOUS" AND "THE POSTSECULAR"

It is evident that in the "secular"/ "religious" binomial, arising from the core of Western European Christianity, there are two major issues. First, there is *a questioning of the evolutionist viewpoint based on stages* arising within the general theory of secularization. This creation of a post-dualist horizon in order to overcome the "secular"/ "religious" dualism located within the immanent secular

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[23] Talal Asad mentioned this idea in 2003: 192. See, from the same author, 1993.

world that, ultimately, clashes with the contextual realities in which the interaction between religious and secular spheres continue to be fully active. Thus, it is more or less apparent that the conscience of living in a Secular Age is not linked to the certainty of an advanced social and cultural modernization that occurs only at the cost of public influence and the personal relevance of religion.

Second, the other challenge results from the *de-Europeanization* of the "secular"/ "religious" binomial, originally European, which arises as a consequence of the meeting between distinct civilizations, distinct universal religions, diverse modernization projects, modern alternative ways of being and multiple *aggiornamentos* in the cases of Catholicism and Islam. All of the world's religions, old and new, pre-Axial, Axial and post-Axial, are found to be available for individual ownership at all times and in all places, multiplying this guise by the options of conversion, the overlapping pressures and the individual search for transcendence. Globalization and global migrations have made it possible for all universal religions to be reconstituted for the first time as globally imagined communities and deterritorialized, *global ummas*, separated from the civilizational settlements to which they have been traditionally anchored. Their Diasporas have become dynamic centers of global transformation that affect the cradles of civilizations (Casanova, 2010b: 1-16). There is an ongoing dynamic relationship where multiple traditions help to make up multiple modernities which radically alter traditions. There are "many versions of modernity apart from the Western European version, and all of them are compatible with religion in one way or another" (Martin, 2011: 7).

Since 1500 until today, the binary classification system that distinguishes between "the religious" and "the secular" has undergone a series of transformations, as we have seen. The changes in social structure bring with them changes in the classification system. But how do we determine the emergence of a new classification system? Robert N. Bellah, in his important reflections (2011, Preface and 265-282), which cannot be adequately addressed in the space of this article, reconstructs, from a sociological perspective, the religious and cultural evolution of humanity, based on an earlier reconstruction of evolutionary psychology carried out by Merlin Donald (1991). In his reflections, Bellah maintains that not every new evolutionary advance implies a *tabula rasa* of the former, nor does it suggest that this evolution is teleologically directed to a specific point, as was believed by the early modernizing sociologists. *Rather, the new stage means reconfiguring old and new possibilities, instead of overcoming and eliminating the prior stages*. Bellah's approach is particularly relevant due to its anti-teleological, anti-finalist approach, not its evolutionary outlook, since this perspective highlights the "breakthroughs"-- a problematic term that does not signify abandoning the former. The theoretical culture inaugurated in the Axial Age is added to the mimetic and mythical cultures. The theoretical-rational substantiation does not invalidate but rather, complements the mimetic and mythical visions of reality.

Bellah's contributions introduce an important critical element that allows us not only to observe but to sociologically justifying the movement that originates with the development of the universal religions and their "transcendent"/ "immanent" binomial in the Axial Age, that redefine the structure of the pre-Axial religions and that are continuous with another binomial, "the religious"/ "the secular" located within the Medieval Christianity of Western Europe that is today redefined in a somewhat heterogeneous manner, by the profiles of a new classification system based on the "religious"/ "postsecular" binomial. The profane/immanent/secular/postsecular cannot exist, but *transcending itself* and creating different historic forms of sacredness, at

times being dominant and hierarchical while at other times, creating a plural situation of mutual conflict and challenge, as occurs when the sacredness of the nation (and on behalf of the nation) takes on the sacredness of the individual.

Correcting one part of Durkheim's diagnosis of modernity, regarding his affirmation that "the ancient gods grow old and die and new ones have not yet be born (to replace them)" (Durkheim, FE, 1982: 398), we can attest that through the analysis of the different metamorphoses of religion, the ancient "gods" (see sacred forms) indeed continue to live on and other modern ones have been born to accompany and compete with them in an eternal struggle. Traditionally, the sacred sphere shaped the sacred forms within the *saeculum*, but today, in the public sphere of the immanent secular and postsecular world, new sacralized forms arise such as the nation and the individual.

While the general theory of secularization in Europe prematurely postulated the advent of a post-dualist world, based exclusively on the flourishing of the immanent secular world, we must recognize that the very immanent framework creates *new experiences of transcendence*, in opposition to the secularist ideology (active or passive) of the state. Transcendence continues to be possible based on the functional plural differentiation of the social spheres where religion remains. The current "*postsecular*" world is not characterized by the disappearance of "the religious", despite the fact that in some societies such as the European one, religious beliefs and practices have seen a major decline, but rather, by a continuous offering of new options, be they religious, spiritual or antireligious, since when discussing religion there are no global and uniform rules. If we are to assume the importance of religion in a context of multiple differentiation, of plural secularizations, of multiple modernities and of course, of transnational religions, then the world is no longer secular but rather, "*postse-*

cular" and the recognition of this leads to the undermining of the secularist confidence in the *imminent disappearance* of religion.

The "*postsecular*" age emerges from two complementary sociological trends: on the one hand, the empirical questioning of the finalist outcome which takes place amidst Western European Christian secularization, under the pretense of raising a secular post-religious and post-dualist, modern and rational conscience and, on the other hand, from the *de-Europeanization* of Christianity, both in its Catholic as well as its Pentecostal versions. Clearly, two historically significant institutional developments contributed to this.

First, there is the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States of America that establishes a specific separation between church and state. While the European system only knows national confessional "churches" that are protected by a confessional state or "sects", that is, religious minorities that may be more or less tolerated and where secularization manifests as a de-confessionalization[24] of the state, nation or individuals, without increasing the religious pluralism. In the U.S., however, the different churches and multiple sects come and go as such, becoming religious "denominations"[25] that are simply the names and identities by which the different religious groups are recognized by one another in civil society, where there is no official state recognition. Religious affiliation for most Americans, when it developed in the early 19th century, is not an act forced by above, imposed by the state or the church-state, as occurred in Europe as a result of the absolutist state heritage, but rather, it was a voluntary act of religious mobilization parallel to the political democratic mobilization, as Tocqueville accurately des-

[24] José Casanova suggests this idea in 2012b, Introduction.

[25] H. Richard Niebuhr initially described this phenomenon in (1929, 1957: 3-6, 17-21: 25).

cribed. Thus, in the U.S., religion is associated with individual freedom; it is modern and not associated with an *ancient regime*.

Secondig, if the great teachings of the United States is revealed by the First Amendment, "the lesson" of Western Europe, established not so much a separation between church and state but also a constant political creation and reconstruction of "twin tolerations" (Stepan, 2001: 222), despite the fact that in the not so far past, there were "mutual intolerances". If this is the case, the religious authorities should "tolerate" the autonomy of the democratically elected governments without assuming constitutionally privileged prerogatives to govern or veto public policy. Democratic political institutions should, therefore, "tolerate" the autonomy of the religious individuals and groups, not only in full freedom to exercise their worship privately, but also by promoting their values in civil society and sponsoring movements and organizations in the political society, always when they do not violate any rules of democracy and comply with the law[26].

I shall also mention three traits, as examples that describe the renewed plural presence of the three previously described classification systems of the postsecular world: a). The vigor of *axial monotheisms* do not appear in a national perspective, as the surveys tend to reflect in a disaggregated way, but rather, in an aggregated supranational, transnational, planetary perspective. Europe is the only geographic and cultural area (perhaps along with Canada), in which the typical ideal scheme of secularization, such as desacralization may be applied. The *de-Europeanization* of Christianity occurred, while flourishing in large areas of Africa, the Philippines, South America, South Korea and the U.S. Catholicism, Islam and Pentecostalism are the reli-

gious movements that have grown the most. b). The emergence of new forms of *individual religiousness* means a transformation of institutional religiousness, both of the church as well as sects, into a purely personal and internal experience, as Ernst Troeltsch suggested in the beginnings of the past century and as confirmed by Thomas Luckmann, Grace Davie and Danièle Hervieu-Léger more recently, differentiating between religious beliefs and practices and forming a polytheist horizon under the form of the "selected God" through the phenomenon of conversion. c). From the 18th century until the present, there have been a series of *post-Axial re-sacralizations* occurring primarily in the secular area such as the nation and the individual. Durkheim discussed this in the first classification system, suggesting that religion is not static and purely traditional but rather, it is dynamic and capable of taking on different forms over time, such as those adopted by the nation in the collective effervescent movements of the French Revolution. Bellah confirmed this with the civil American religion. And, last but not least, Hans Joas described the concept of "sacralization of the person" based on the work of Emile Durkheim, suggesting that people can become recognizable sacred objects based on the Declaration of Human Rights of 1948.

We must not overlook the fact that sacredness in modern day societies is not a uniform constellation of symbols and rituals that produce a unanimous consensus between all citizens. Modern societies, in Durkheim's terms, have a collective plural conscience, *containing multiple sacred forms that, at times, are in opposition between each other*. When discussing the sacred in modern societies, we must not forget the set of historical contingencies (Tweed, 2006: 54-79) that create specific forms of transcendence, some of which participate in the axial narratives in their own structures, as occurs with the different versions of universal religions, while other religious forms have distinct cha-

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[26] We are inspired by an example of "mutual tolerances" by Stepan for José Casanova in a recent work, 2008: 113.

racteristics. An example of this is the current dispute between the post-Axial sacralization of the nation and its corresponding myth-rituals (Elgenius, 2011: 12-27) since 1789 and the post-Axial sacralization of the human being (Joas, 2011: 37-69) visible since the horrific Holocaust and the Declaration of Human Rights in 1948.

IN CONCLUSION

In this paper, we have observed four large forms of religion as well as four processes of social creativity, beginning with the genesis of religion that emerges based on the differentiation between the sacred and the profane, reflected in the distinction guideline established by Durkheim; we have analyzed the classification system that emerged following the Axial Age and that distinguished between the transcendent world and the immanent one, first introducing the possibility of personal salvation and the possibility of "bringing the kingdom of God to this world" through action in the political arena and later, in the social one, which embodied the great revolutions; in the *saeculum*, in Western European Christianity, another major distinction has arisen between "the religious" and "the secular", areas that, at times, have a conflictive and hostile relationship, although at other times, it is friendly and collaborative, leading to a theological as well as a scientific-secular discourse of mutual influence. Although the immanent secular world, assisted by secularist discourse promoted by the modern state, has created linking rules of play that extend beyond religious belief and practice, it has not created a post-dualist and post-religious reality but rather, new socio-religious realities such as the questioning of the teleological drift of European secularism and the *de-Europeanization* of the religious/secular binomial created by the emergence of a new dualism, one which does not distinguish so much between religion and secularity but rather, between "the religious" and

"the postsecular". The metamorphoses of religion are associated with the historical-social genesis of these pairs of categories that interact in dynamic tension and create new situations which, as in the physics metaphor, energy is not lost. Thus, social creativity, the capacity for transcendence, produces a new synthesis of old and new realities, without the need for tabula rasa, without removing, but rather, by adding on in a new creative manner. Herein lays the dynamics of religion, not so much in its past but in its future past.

This work, more than carrying out a negative genealogy of religion, a genealogy that addresses the Egyptianization of religion as a result of the consequences of a new and accelerated process of enlightenment, of disenchantment of the world, as suggested by Marx, Nietzsche and Weber, in fact proposes an «*affirmative genealogy*» based on the constituent presence, considered not as a relic or atavism of the past, but rather, as a historical achievement of the *transcendence* that has emerged from society itself. The different metamorphoses of religion that we have analyzed are not the product of historical need but rather, of contingency, of a set of contingent circumstances that led to the creation of religious actions linked to *nature,* religious acts that express a *divinity,* and acts that express a sacredness of the *person* such as belief in universal human rights and human dignity as a result of a specific process of sacralization, a process in which all humans, increasingly and with motivation and awareness, are considered to be sacred, and established by the law. Therefore, new content has been attributed to sacredness. We do not understand sacredness in its diverse social achievements, as a unique and self-sustaining object of religion, but rather, as something that arises within a bipartite division, from a constitutive separation, that divides the world into two spheres, the profane/sacred (and its diverse metamorphoses), something that is not understood by general

theory of secularization associated with European Christianity. The sacred is constantly changing forms, according to the social forces that create rituals and symbols inherent to the historical processes, even transcending the historic objectification of said forces.

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