

THE POINTS OF CONVERGENCE AND OF SEPARATION BETWEEN OBJECTIVE PSYCHOLOGY AND RELIGION IN THE INTERPRETATION OF HUMAN PSYCHIC

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Rezumat. Studiul decurge din considerația că psihicul, în general, și psihicul uman, în particular, este cel mai complex și delicat fenomen din Univers și în interpretarea naturii sale, opoziția dintre abordarea științifică și cea religioasă are caracterul cel mai deschis și mai acut. pe traiectoria acestei opoziții se pot identifica atât punctele de convergență, cât și cele de separație. Primele sunt:

1. recunoașterea naturii ideale, non-substanțiale a psihicului;
2. recunoașterea superiorității psihicului uman asupra celui animal;
3. recunoașterea dimensiunii morale ca element esențial al conștiinței umane.

Celelalte sunt:

1. interpretarea genezei psihicului;
2. interpretarea relației psihic-corp;
3. interpretarea existenței după moarte.

Abstract. The paper issues from the consideration that the psychic, in general, and the human psychic, in particular, is the most complex and delicate phenomenon in Universe and in the interpretation of its nature the opposition between the scientific and religious approach had the most opened and acute character. On the trajectory of this opposition can be found out both the points of convergence and of separation. The first ones are:

1. the recognition of ideal, non-substantial nature of the psychic;
2. the recognition of the superiority of the human psychic over the animal psychic;
3. the recognition of moral dimension as an essential element of human consciousness.

The second ones are:

1. The interpretation of psychic genesis;
2. The interpretation of the psychic-body relation;
3. The interpretation of the existence after the death.

Keywords: human psychic, psychic-body relation

The psychic, in general, the human psychic, in particular, represents the most complex and delicate phenomenon in the known us Universe, and in the same time, by its nature, it is the most enigmatical and mysterious one. Therefore, is understandable the fact that in this area had been developed the strongest controversies and oppositions between the materialist and idealist orientations, between science and religion. Historically, the approach of psychic has passed several stages, corresponding to the evolutive trajectory of the man, of his capacity of cognition and action. The first stage can be considered the *animism*, characteristic for primitive man, who at his level of knowledge and understanding,

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considered that all the nature is animated and that in the back of each thing and being, of each phenomenon there are some occult forces named *spirits*.

It was supposed that the human psychic takes more concrete forms like:

- a) *The psychic-life*, which during the sleep break off the body and travels to other places where it meets other souls and which after the death of the owner searches an other body to whom it can cause different illusions;
- b) *The psychic-shadow*, which accompanies the body in the wakeful state, during the day;
- c) *The psychic-body's reflex*, which appears when we look at silent rivers or lakes;
- d) *The psychic-nucleus* proper both to man and animals, which gives some common traits and even some common destiny.

Such a modality of understanding and explanation of the psychic can be named *naive-pre-scientific* and its stays at the basis of so-called popular psychology, which continues to exist, even in our days. From the scientific point of view, the animism has however the merit that the psychic was considered not as the emanation of a divine transcendental entity situated outside and over the nature, but as an intrinsic attribute of that.

The second important stage of the evolution in approaching and explanation of human psychic is marked by the apparition of religion, which combines the conception and the faith in the existence of some entities of divine and supernatural essence denominated deities, each of them having different responsibilities in the act of creation and government of the world.

The human psychic appears as a result of joint contribution of these deities, each of them determining certain traits, qualities and defects. The human destiny was considered an implacable programme given by the deities, for their conciliation and gratification being imagined a large repertory of shamanic practices and rituals. The polytheist religions didn't find their expression in the coherent and argued theoretical systems, about the origin of the man and his psychic, they remaining at the level of simple establishments and norms. An important change in the conceptualization and theoretical systematization of divine origin of the man and his psychic was the appearance in the late antiquity of monotheist religion, the first its variant being the Judaism, systematized in Talmud.

From the theoretical point of view, the most elaborated, having as its central axis the theology, is the Christian religion. This one categorically sustains the idea according to which not only the man, but also all other things, beings and phenomena on the earth are creations of the God – a divine entity omnipotent and omnipresent.

The third essential period in approaching and explaining the human psychic is represented by the formation, also in the late antiquity, of great philosophical systems, laical in their content, but structured on two opposite coordinates – materialist and idealist – which in different variants has had confronted up to our days. Until the constitution of sciences, by their gradual separation from philosophy, the strongest opposition in the explanation of the nature and essence of human psychic was between the materialist philosophy and religion. The idealist philosophy, despite the fact that doesn't claim the presence of the Divinity for the explanation of man's origin, postulating the primacy of spirit or of absolute idea, it stays at the same part of barricade with the religion.

Finally, the fourth major period in approaching and explaining the human psychic is the scientific one. The first scientific data and ideas about the psychic phenomena were offered by the biological sciences – the anatomy and physiology of nervous system, the anatomy and physiology of sensory systems, the neurology. These sciences have demonstrated two important things, namely: a) the dependence of psychic reactions and states upon the action of external stimuli and b) the realization of psychic processes as functions or activities of the brain. Thus were created the objective premises for the separation of psychology from philosophy and for its development as a distinct science.

This moment was marked by the foundation in Leipzig, in 1879, by W. Wundt, of first psychological laboratory. In this laboratory begun the application of experimental method in the study of psychic processes (sensations and perceptions). The psychology became the main science, which has as object the study of the psychic in all its complexity and at all levels of evolution. Unavoidably, on this matter it came in dispute with the religion. Such dispute is a particularization to the psychic reality of the principal opposition between the science and religion in the explanation of the Universe in general. While the science explains the phenomena on the basis of the objective and intrinsic causes and laws, the religion explains the referring to the act of divine creation, according to the precept “*Nihil sine Deo!*”

Concerning the personal position towards God, some scientist reject *de plano* His existence, considering Him a simple illusion or a creation of the man himself, the others agree that He exists, but consider that He is not implied in the explanation of the fact with which has dealt the scientific knowledge.

The scientific psychology operates with the principles of objectivity and verification (testability), according to which the psychic is not a divine supernatural phenomenon, but one which is organically integrated in the series of other natural phenomena of the Universe, and it may be studied with specific objective methods sufficiently rigorous and accurate. That fact is main point of separation between psychology and religion.

The data offered by the comparative and developmental psychology show that the human adult psychic is not a *datum*, but the result of the complex and long process of evolution, in which the internal hereditary and external environmental factors interact in a dialectic way.

Concerning this aspect it is important to mention two things: 1) both the internal conditions which depend on each individual and the external factors which belong to the environment in which live the concrete individuals having a big degree of variability and heterogeneousness will determine not one psychic structure but so much different structures as individuals exist; so if the human psychic should had been the product of the divine creation, the religion can not to explain us this extraordinary diversity of levels and profiles under which it appears in individual plan; 2) if should be true the religious idea that human psychic is the expression of divine spirit, then it must exist by itself and to develop from inside; in fact, the genetic psychology argues that the psycho-behavioural development of the child goes from the outside to inside under the influence of the external stimulations and of the mechanism of learning. What at the adult subject are internal mental processes and operations at the little child are external actions with the concrete objects from around or with their models. The second point which separates the psychology and religion is the mind-body relation.

The objective psychology maintains the principle of somato-psychic monism, which postulates that the man is a structural functional unity, the psychic realizing as a natural function of the brain; the religion adopts the principle of psycho-physical dualism postulating the opposition between body as a finite and passing entity and soul as entity of divine essence, which after the death of the individual continues to exist in the other world. The scientific psychology cannot admit the existence of psychic out of the individual bodies. But the fact, that the religion sustains the idea of undying, eternal character of soul and of resurrection (after death) has a practical stimulating value for man, giving him the hope in the possibility, even illusory, to perpetuate his existence, taking this way an ascension over the death. Between the objective psychology and religion there are also some points of convergence. In this paper we will present three such points.

The first: both the psychology and the religion maintain the ideal non-substantial character of human psychic, its irreducibility to the biophysical, biochemical or secretory phenomena of visceral or neural kind. But there is a difference in explanation of this ideality: the psychology explains it by the information dimension of the Universe, while the religion – by the supernatural dimension of Divinity. For psychology the psychic represents the highest modality of realization and expression of the information at the level of the nervous system reaching upper point in the human brain.

The framing of psychic in the category of information phenomena is based on the following arguments:

1. as the information, the psychic has not properties directly perceptible – colour, sonority, taste, weight, form;
2. as in the case of information about the presence of psychic we cannot decide directly, but only indirectly by the effects it produces in the behavioural field, in the mode in which the individuals respond and action in the situations in which they are placed;
3. as the information the psychic is a factor of organization and regulation, accomplishing a main adaptive role in the relation of the individuum with his environment and with himself, it can be established a significant correlation between the level of psychic development of a person and her adaptive efficiency, respectively the performances she accomplishes in activity;
4. as the information, the psychic is an antientropic or negentropic factor, acting to reduce the initial entropy and to rise the degree of organization and equilibrium in the system of personality;
5. finally, because „the information is information, it is neither substance no energy „having a relative autonomy towards these, the psychic as information entity is not a substance or energy, it poses some autonomy in relation with neural structures and with the biophysical and biochemical processes which mediate its realization.

As we know, in principle, the information doesn't pass away during communication only if is destroyed its substantial or energetical support. The same we can say about the psychic: by its information nature, it can be perpetuating *ad infinitum*, with the condition to conserve or renovate its neural mechanism. Unfortunately, for the present, that is not still possible, the brain's transplant remaining an unrealizable dream. The main way which the psychic structures and contents were perpetuated during the time, after the death of individuals, is the *objectivation*. That means the exteriorization and incorporation of ideas, thoughts, emotions, and aspirations etc. in different products of creation: first of all, tools and after that scientific and art works, systems of symbols and signs. The most sophisticated form the objectivation acquired in our days is the computerized simulation, the computer's software which reproduces (imitates) the human psychic functions from perception to problem solving, decision making and creation of poetry and music. The second point of convergence between the scientific psychology and religion consists in the supporting of superiority of human psychic towards the animal one, rejecting both the reductionist biologist trend, which superposes the human psychic over the animal's psychic and the anthropomorphic trend, which superposes the animal psychic over human psychic attributing to it the traits and qualities which it doesn't possess.

Both the religion and scientific psychology in opposition with the irrational – instinctual orientations consider that the defintory dimensions of the human soul are the reason and consciousness. And just these raise for the scientific research the most difficult questions and just at this level we confront with the most enigma and mysteries, which make possible the invocation of some supernatural force.

Finally, the third point of convergence between the scientific psychology and religion consists in the recognition of moral dimension of human psychic and of human consciousness. The religion defines such dimension as way in which the man respects the Ten Commandments given by God; the psychology considers that moral consciousness reflects the degree of internalization and respect by the individuals of social norms and rules of behaviour. Like religion, the scientific psychology sustains that the moral principles, conceptions and feelings represent the essential elements of human spiritual ascension and improvement. And in supporting such spiritual development the invocation and appeal to a divine justice is proved to be a necessary and efficient procedure. Under practical aspect the religion and the scientific psychology has in common the care to optimize the human condition (nature), to enable the individual personalities. But each makes this with its specific methods: the religion by ceremonies, rituals and confession, the scientific psychology by educational programmes, advising and psychotherapy.

We can conclude that the irreducible differences between the scientific psychology and religion in explanation of some aspects of the human psychic don't exclude the resemblance and convergence in the explanation of other aspects, the dialog between them being necessary and advantageous.

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