

THE POWER OF SPIRITUAL MANIFESTATION. SIMMEL'S THEORY OF CONFLICT APPLIED TO JUDAISM

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Abstract: *The study analyses the way in which the spiritual manifestation - the Judaism - forms in a very profound way the identity of a community. In this view we discover those key elements that become essential in the sociological understanding of a very troubled history, and we can reach this objective using the conflict theory of Georg Simmel. For this sociology of Judaism through what we can call creative conflict (with positive outcomes) we use the impressive studies of Max Weber and Antonin Causse concerning the ancient Judaism. The research of Judaism by the founding fathers of sociology permits us to read this unique people, contributing also to a right framing to understand present social realities, but also to the discovery of those decisive points that forms the immutable character of Jewish identity.*

Key words: *spiritual manifestation; conflict theory; Judaism; identity.*

Standing on the classics – theoretical framing

Social change

In this endeavor to research the effects of religious beliefs in a community or a society, we start from the premise that an idea or a ideal factor (values or that axiological dimension as defined by Sperantia) can have repercussions over a long period of time, contributing in a very special way to the formation and individualization of the identity of a community. And this we can say underlying that the religious dimension represents a total reality, one which has the power to explain everything and one that gives meaning to the existence itself. It is important to mention from the beginning that the social changes that are based on the religious ideas and beliefs are profound and can legitimate the existing social order, the image of the individual and of the community in relation to the other or to the different communities. This type of ideas and religious beliefs can determine one of the most powerful forces that can trigger important social changes.

Social change is an inherent phenomenon in society, and it can be sudden (the case of political revolutions) or continuous, developed on long period of time, taking the form of social process. That is why we can say that the "social history is given its shape by such cumulative social changes" (Calhoun, 2000: 2643). According to this author, sociologists have three ways of analyzing these cumulative social changes: through the philosophy of history about the major changes from feudalism to modernity, from

monarchy to democracy, from traditionalism to modernism. Here Calhoun mentions three perspectives established by P. Sztompka concerning the changes that marked the history of sociology: cycle changes (A. Toynbee, O. Spengler, T. Pareto), changes based on evolution and historical materialism, those two having in the background the idea of progress, of a change that can improve social realities (A. Comte, H. Spencer, E. Durkheim, K. Marx); either favoring a multicausal explanation of change, through the research of cultural dimension that have the power to explain those transformations, Max Weber being the representative of this approach.

Modern sociology, according to Raymond Boudon, does not accept anymore the idea that "there is a dominant cause of social change (...), recognizing the plurality of changes" (Boudon, 1989: 326). The french sociologist is questioning the phrase *theory of social change*, because he does not believe in the capacity of sociology to sustain a theory with such a high level of generality.

The forms took by the social change in different social context, the ways in which these changes occur are so diverse, complex and can have different consequences, which is why their research must not ignore the social, cultural context, the special conditions of every community or society analyzed by the changes that marked its destiny and identity. This is the way chosen in this study, starting from the power of Judaic ideas and religious beliefs in modeling the social realities and identities of Jewish communities, beginning with the phenomenon of conflict (as a trigger for social change) in key moments in the history of the Jews.

The conflict for unity

Conflict as well is inherent in the life of the individual or the social life, in its multiple forms, from interior or exterior causes. If in the functionalist perspective, which underlines the stability and the equilibrium of social systems the conflict is considered as an negative element for social life, in the '50, '60 the theory of conflict is updated, starting a sociology of conflict. We see now the positive effects of conflict in society, demonstrated by Lewis A. Coser, Ralph Dahrendorf, Randall Collins, but starting from Georg Simmel. These authors develop the theories of the founding fathers of sociology that analyzed the conflict in the social logic, like M. Weber, K. Marx, G. Simmel (Abercomie, 2006). K. Marx saw the class conflict the source of social change, M. Weber analyzed the conflict in a multidimensional approach (Collins, 2000).

Georg Simmel and his sociology has a particular place in the intellectual medium in which he created his works. He does not approve the influence of the nature sciences or the spirit sciences over sociology, being a critic of the organicist theories and also of the idealist German school theories on society (Coser, 1971). Simmel contested the power of knowledge of these two main approaches, considering that the object of study for sociology must be the interactions and human relations, *sociation*, social types used by people in there interaction (Coser, 1971). This is the

formal sociology of Simmel, through which we can reach a real “geometry of social world” (Aron, 1965: 5). It will be important the typical social relations (cooperation or conflict, subordination or domination), categories through which the man mediates knowledge in social world, and these theories we see applied in his essays based on different categories: money, fashion, the stranger etc. Through the research of these typical schemes we have a sociological knowledge based on the social relations, Simmel disregarding the relevance of researching institutions or suprastructure, these being considered “monstrous realities created blindly by men as a result of the collective life itself” (*ibid.*, 8). That is the reason for which Simmel is interested by microsociology, where the relations and reciprocal interactions between people counts, there power to model the social reality (Coser, 1971). The German sociologist is seen in opposition to Emil Durkheim, the sociologist that investigates the institutional structures, the values that form and constrain the individual – a macrosociological vision of society.

Therefore important are the interactions and reciprocal relations, association, the conflict, because the individual is not under the full constrain of society, but not absolutely free in relation to society. The man is influenced by society and he influences the society. That is why the sociation “involves harmony and conflict, attraction and repulsion, love and hatred. He (Simmel – n.r.) saw human relations as characterized by ambivalence” (Coser, 1971: 184). With these principles Simmel analyzed dyadic and triad relations, relation of subordination and domination, conflictual or harmonious relations, starting from this ambivalence in his research, through the positive and negative elements inherent of every social realities.

Simmel starts from the point in which every interaction between people is a form of socialization, and conflict, since it’s resulting in a series of consequences, can have an important weight for sociology, having in mind that “it is one of the most intense reactions, and is logically impossible if restricted to a single element” (Simmel, *The sociology of conflict I*, 1903, p. 490). As we mentioned above, the German sociologist researched the interpersonal relations from a double perspective or through the ambivalence specific to the social realities, by the positive and also the negative consequences. “Conflict itself is the resolution of the tension between the contraries” (*id.*), and that is a way to regain the unity challenged or threatened as a result of the tension.

Simmel identified a few characteristics and effects of the phenomenon of conflict on the relations and human interaction (these will be identified in the internal and external conflict that Judaism faced):

- ❖ The dualist role of conflict – at a micro level conflict can have negative effects, but overall relations it can be positive. The example given here by Simmel is that of the Indian caste system, where there is not only a very clear separation, but also a “reciprocal repulsion” (*ibid.*, p. 492) that assures and guarantees to the social castes there specific position in relation to the others. These attitudes maintain very clear the frontiers between groups and consolidates there

identity, the personality of that group. The opposition of two groups in an association is not essentially something negative, because in many ways this is the way that makes their coexistence possible, besides the clarification of their identity;

- ❖ The reaction against tyranny, injustice, betrayal, tend to intensify if these are supported without protest, in quiet. The opposition brings tranquility, relief the “gives us the feeling that we are not completely crushed in the relationship” (*ibid.*, 494). In the case in which the conflictual relation is superficial and the sentiments of opposition not fully developed, the conflict takes the form of aversion, repulsion, according to Simmel;
- ❖ The conflict intensifies if the two parties have the same objective (here the example given is the one of science that searches the truth) – here any betrayal of the truth means a betrayal of reality, and that is why we have here powerful conflicts;
- ❖ Those communities that share similar, common values are more likely to develop powerful conflicts; here Simmel gives the example of church relations, where the little misunderstandings about dogma can trigger irreconcilable fights. Explanation is that having so many in common, the little divergences become important, as in the family quarrels, one of the most powerful types of conflict. When we have a certain depth of relation, the conflict can be extremely powerful;
- ❖ The lack of unity may lead to conflict – the hate of the apostates, the attitudes toward heretics – the severity is bigger when there was a connection – both sides defending its new identity and the differences in the context of reciprocal threat;
- ❖ A corollary of this hypothesis is that the respect for the enemy does not exist where there was a community between the parties now in opposition, because it might be the peril of losing those differences, brought in foreground by the conflict and activated in conflict;
- ❖ There is hostility based on association and unity – “the peculiar phenomenon of social hatred, that is, of hatred toward a member of a group, not from personal motives, but because he threatens the existence of the group” (*ibid.*, 519). The motive are intelligible from a sociologically point of view, because the enemy is a threat for the unity of the group. And when the other side has the same reasons the conflict becomes is intensifying. When the enemy distances himself from the group, he no longer is a peril to the group; he loses his quality of member. If he can not be removed, the results are hatred and conflict;
- ❖ Groups confronted with persecution or groups which consolidated themselves in conflict “frequently rebuff approaches and tolerance from the other side, because otherwise the solidity of their opposition would disappear, and without this they could not further struggle” (Simmel, *The Sociology of Conflict*: II, 1903: 681). That is why, according to Simmel, the unity of the group desintegrates without the

enemies. Here the German sociologist gives the example of Protestantism, which in the lack of opposition, started to orient and search the conflict within itself, and this can explain the numerous protestant sects. Even the history of Catholicism fighting the heresy is a proof of power of unity in the face of an enemy, the fall of the Roman Empire been explain by the fact that all the enemies were defeated. That is why the complete victory of a group over its enemies is not always fortunate in the sociological sense, for the consequence may be a decline of the energy thaat guarantees the coherence of the group, and, on the other hand, proportional activity of the disintegrating forces that are always at work (*ibid.*, 681).

- ❖ Another important characteristic is the fact that the fight does not assure only the cohesion of the group, but it succeeds to bring together people or group that otherwise would not have been in a coalition. Here Simmel explain the religious relation, of the Christian God that unifies so different people.
- ❖ The conflict can be over in a serie of relations: victory, defeat (Simmel, *The Sociology of Conflict*: III, 1903). The compromise is reached through negotiation, “one of the most important inventions for the uses of civilization” (*ibid.*, 804).

These are the fundamental points of a sociology of conflict, rediscovered and reestablished in the '50, '60, with strong classic links, bringing a new understanding of the conflict in society, as we will see in the studies of Lewis Coser, Ralph Dahrendorf, Randall Collins etc.

Thus, starting from this important factor of social change – the conflict – we can understand the force and power of the specific characteristics of Jewish communities, formed in the interactions with other communities and religious beliefs, in the center of many fights (internal and external) in which the identity of this people is built and thanks to which we have its survival in exceptional historical conditions.

Lewis A. Coser is the sociologist that will research the characteristics, functions, types and consequences of conflict, reestablishing the sociology of conflict, based on the essays of Simmel, which he considered one of the most important of all. Coser starts from Simmel's premise according to which the conflict is a form of socialization, and this social phenomenon is seen “in terms of interactive processes” (Coser, 1956: 30).

Social conflict and the process of social change are closely related, aside the functions that conflictual situations have for the social systems. Regarding social change, it must be highlighted that “the distinction between changes *of* systems and changes *within* systems is, of course, a relative one” (Coser, 1957: 201), being much harder to establish if the changes produce a new system or a restructure of the existing one.

The modality in which the conflict determines either changes of social system, either their destruction or the formation of new system depends on “the rigidity and resistance to change, or inversely on the elasticity of the control mechanisms of the system” (*ibid.*, 202). That is the reason for which

the rigid systems suppress the conflictual manifestation, actually amplifying and causing through this inflexibility violent manifestation. As far as it goes the flexible systems, conflicts are tolerated, and that means a little possibility to produce deep cleavages in social structure. Conflict has a series of functions: it consolidates and revitalizes the social system; it might produce new norms and institutions; it is against ritualism and ossification of social relations; it contributes to the transformation of social systems, it generates cohesion in front of an external enemy; it determines a consensus between enemies regarding the conflict; helps relief social realities, keeping the health of the group; the intensity of conflict is stronger if there were repressed hostile feelings (the violence against the heretics); if the relations are closed, the conflict will be violent; the frequency of relation entails a high possibility of conflicts; the stability of the existence of the group is also assured by small conflicts, having in mind that the structure is profoundly threatened in the case of a big conflict that separates the group in two opposite sides (Coser, 1956).

If Simmel sees in conflict the possibility of consolidating the social systems, Coser wonders what it could weakened the social structure and could break the social relation. The answer is the necessity of analyzing two types of conflicts: the ones that regard the essential elements of the group and the ones that targets those not so important elements. Another key components that Simmel did not payed attention, according to Coser: the size of the group, the intensity of the involvement of the members, that should be correlated with the type of conflict: continuous or occasionally. Thus, the groups involved in external conflict tend to be more intolerant in the interior (sect like), and the group involved occasionally in conflict (church like) have a flexible structure and tolerates in a certain way the interior conflict, without demanding a full involvement (sect like) of the members (Coser, 1956).

Conflict can have either positive or negative functions. What it is important or decisive for the functional or dysfunctional character of conflict is the type of conflict, along with the social structure involved, according to Coser. The dysfunctional character it is evident when we see a lack of tolerance and of the institutionalization of conflict, in the context of the rigidity of social structure, this being the dysfunctional element because it does not allows the relief of system, but dangerous accumulations (Coser, 1956).

Ralph Dahrendorf is another important theoretician of the sociology of conflict. Analyzing the functionalist view of society, in which important are the stability, the equilibrium, the integrative force of social structure, Dahrendorf completes this model with an opposite one, in which the social change and social conflict are present in every society, and decisive is the coercive power, as we will see when we will underline the postive effects of respecting the Torah. These two models are considered both valid in social reality, having an explicative ability to complete each other (Dahrendorf, 1958). In his opinion, "the last goal of a social theory is the explanation of social change" (*ibid.*, 175), which means that it is necessary to: explain the

empiric reality without contradicting the theory of conflict, correlated with the integrative forces on the social level to explain the multiple types of conflict and different intensities of these. Dahrendorf is concentrating on the research of power, violent change of social structure by means of violence, analyzing the totalitarian states, combining the functional view of society with the conflict theories.

Toward a sociology of Judaism through out the creative conflict

Starting from the premise that a conflict is essentially an interaction on societal level with different stages of intensity and with a particular impact on the identity of the community researched, meaning the sociology of conflict as elaborated by Simmel, we try to filter the decisive moments of Judaism that brought both internal and external social changes, fundamentally contributing to the identity of Jewish people.

Before seeing the work of conflict in the history of Judaism that formed a people and his identity, we must highlight a few elements concerning the importance of religion from a sociological point of view. Religion is essentially a human and social behavior relevant for the social relations and interactions. A decisive phenomenon both on a individual, as well as on macro level, causing a specific behavior in the contact with different communities, being a major element of the identity of people. We begin from the Weberian premise according to which important for sociologist is not the *essence* of religion (Weber, 1963), but the actual manifestation of this social action, relevant at an individual and social level, concentrating on those that caused major changes on the conflictual way, bringing crucial social changes for the Jewish people.

The Jewish people are a people created by religion. This specific dimension (par excellence human) of human and essential and total element of collective Jewish identity is the one that formed, shaped and made a people to survive thousands of years, a people witness of the fall of empires, of the emergence of Christianity, of the challenges in the medieval and modern time, without losing its identity force based on religion. Beginning with the overwhelming weight of religion for the identity of Jewish people, we see the conflicts analyzed in the category of the identity conflict (Thual, 1995). This type of conflict has an extraordinary force, a virulent capacity that threatens the historical, cultural, religious existence of this people. The hardening along the history through these conflicts made possible the survival of the Jewish people.

A) Who are we? The ambivalent conflict

Ancient Judaism, we find out from Max Weber, the origins of the Jewish people, can be best understand through the Indian caste system. The Jews are a *caste-people*, separated from a ritually and social point of

view from the surroundings, and this condition is crucial for the sociological research of these community. What separates the Jews as a *caste-people* are the following elements, according to Weber: they have been a caste people in a social environment without caste; the maintaining of this system was made for a future salvation, the ritualic separation being vital, and “the whole attitude toward life of ancient Jewry was determined by this conception of a future God-guided political and social revolution” (*ibid.*, 4).

Weber identifies the point of departure for this specific behavior - of *caste-people* – in the prophetic phenomenon and in the time of elaborating the Torah. Thus, the circumcision was not a strictly Jewish institution, the Sabbath was probably a celebration existing in another areas, but in time these institutions acquire a ritually strictness. With the Exile and the evolution of understanding the prophetic phenomenon we reach a powerful ritually segregation, a decisive one for the survival of this “internationally settled guest people” (*ibid.*, 338), Ezra and Neemia consolidating the boundary of the community among the different peoples.

Although in the time of Babylonian Exile there were tolerance for the Jewish communities, Weber underlines the impact of the apocalyptic prophecies in the face of Persian enemy and a virulent attitude toward the Babylon. The ritualistic boundaries were high, along an open and strong opposition towards the Babylonian power, and these made Weber to conclude that the community attained a very important cohesion, key elements decisive in the Jewish history, all being the merit of the priests, of the scholars. Now the mixt marriages are prohibited, the Sabbath was a important celebration, Babylon becoming the area from which the Jewish religious identity will resurrect consolidated by the ritualic segregation, this meaning that the Jewish people become “a caste-people with a cult center in Jerusalem and with international affiliated congregations” (*ibid.*, 363).

Beside this ritually separation, Weber identifies the existence of a profoundly rational religious ethics, with no elements of irrationality, that contributes to the accomplishment of a social and political revolution. In the study of ancient Judaism this it is considered the starting point of the disenchantment of the world, completed in the period of Protestantism (Schluchter, 2004).

Another research comparable with the Weberian sociology of the ancient Judaism comes from the French ideatic medium through Antonin Causse, a sociologist also preoccupied by sociology of Judaism. Causse researches this domain in the context of the existing preoccupations about myths, sacrifice, primitive mentality (themes consecrated in French sociology). The relevancy of biblical studies, for sociology and for history, assume “knowing how was made this transition from the primitive mentality, prelogical, when religion detached itself from magic until the most evolved ethical, rational and individualist concepts” (Causse, 1937: 9). This is a response from the French sociology to the weberian study of religion that concentrated on the connection to the economic ethics. A reproach of Causse to the weberian Ancient Judaism is that the German sociologist,

using the status of *caste-people* for the Jews, neglected the primitive mentality of social organization in that time, “putting in the late antiquity the development conditions of a more recent Judaism” (id.).

Causse in French sociology and Weber in German sociology represent the fundamental landmarks that cannot be ignored and from which we must begin every scientific research for sociology of Judaism. Although they analyze the social structure of ancient Jews from different perspective, these approaches complete each other, does not exclude one another, by the contrary, they contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of biblical social realities. Causse is considered the sociologist that realized in a comprehensive synthesis the “social evolution of Israel” (Kimbrough, 1972: 202), the study *Du groupe ethnique a la communaute religieuse. Le probleme sociologique de la religios d’Israel* being considered a monumental work. Here it is demonstrated the passage from a solidarity based on ethnicity criteria to a solidarity based on Torah, with rational and individualistic fundamentals.

Without neglecting the social context of that time, the specific of primitive mentality as Causse demonstrates, we can relate to Jewish people as a *caste-people*, with a very strong identity, based on the belief in Yahweh, with clear boundaries in front of the *Other*, in front of the pagans, with a political and social plan for this world and trough which it can be obtain the salvation in a future world, only with the condition of a strictly ritual behavior. This can be a concise answer to the question *Who are we*, but one that also has the germs of potential conflicts, with positive and negative effects, as we will see in the next section.

B) Against decay – the prophetic movement

As Simmel demonstrates that the reaction, the opposition, the fight with injustice or betrayal assures the relief of group and the revitalization of the community, we can understand the prophetic phenomenon from a sociological point of view as a wide conflictual reaction in front of the problems that were a threat to the identity and existence of Jewish people. This reaction contributed to the salvation of community from the lost of faith, maybe even from extinction.

The passing from nomadism to sedentarism will modify and change the relation and social structure of Jews, having influences on the structure of family, tribe or clan. In spite of this reality it was maintaining “the moral unity with Yahweh in the center of this unity” (Causse, 1937: 27), this cult becoming “one of the most powerful social connection that grounded the entire solidarity of the group” (id.). Faced with external problems the clans unified under the royalty, that had primordial war functions. Another factor that had a weight in the start of the internal conflict in Jewish communities is the contact with the Cananean civilization, when powerful cleavages appear between rich and poor, the temptation of commerce, social mobility that is intensifying and the family structure is affected, in a few words – “the

uprooting of Israel begins" (*ibid.*, 49), even the power of the Covenant is affected, underlines Causse, the time has come.

That is why the inevitability of a religious crisis is imminent, because "religion is very important for the social group that this social crisis does not produce a religious spasm" (*ibid.*, 53). It is the moment of prophets, "in the middle of decadence of the old solidarity, proclaiming the Law of a new society, announcing a new Covenant – *berith*" (*ibid.*, 57). They bring in foreground the golden epoch of the Patriarchs, the old ancestral and tribal solidarities in response to the corruption of cities, of royalty, of the kingdom's military power, which no matter how strong it would be, it could not save the people, because only Yahweh can save the people of Israel, underlines Causse. But, paradoxically, although they praised the recovering of old solidarities, they intensified even more the crisis, in Causse's opinion, because they fought a series of sacrificial manifestation, the cult of death (Yahweh is the god of the living), "favoring without realizing the kingdom's civilizing actions, that were centralizing and destroyer for the old communities" (*ibid.*, 99). The connection between Yahweh and his people is no longer natural, but is one conditioned by the following of moral precepts, otherwise the Covenant is broken. Here, according to the French sociologist, is the moment were it was a powerful social change, thanks to the ethics, to the rationality of social and individual behavior "the prophets opened the way to a individualist religion and social organization" (*ibid.*, 106). Through the prophets of VIII-VII century it is obtained the rationalizations of Jewish religion, in spite of the primitive mentality, this being the moment of the passing from the primitive collectivism to the individualist ethic, underlines Causse. He starts from these premises in demonstrating the passage from an existence based on ethnic bases to the formation of a religious community.

The work of the prophets becomes decisive, not from religious motives, but from a sociologically point of view because it shaped the community, assuring its identity and resistance over the time. This is relevant from a religious, sociological, even geopolitical point of view, because in the tumult of the conquests triggered by the empires of that time, this social reality developed, and "the religion of Israel transformed itself in a structure capable of resistance in the face of every destructive influence from outside, surviving until present times" (Weber, 1952: 263). Without that geopolitical context, considers Weber, the prophetic phenomenon had not appeared, which means that they were the supporters of the political groups (Jeremiah favors Babylon, Ishaia favored a treaty with Asirian empire), but without talking about "the best state and they did not helped to translate into reality a social ethic through advices given to the leaders" (*ibid.*, 275). An explanation is that "the political aspiration of Israel would be realized through a miracle of God, like the passing of the Red Sea, and not with a military power, especially not through alliances" (*ibid.*, 281). Political alliances can be harmful from a religious point of view, Weber explains, because it means a contact with different Gods, temptations, an openness that can penetrate

those boundaries built around the Jewish communities, thus been affected the manifest power of identity.

So, only the Covenant with Yahweh counts, any other help from the powers of this world risking to be transformed in the opposite of the help, without forgetting that “the Israelite internal development from a political association in a religious one would be unthinkable without the impressive constructions of Yahweh and without the trust in his promises” (*ibid.*, 334).

The of the disappearance of this community in the time of the great empires were so big that only “the thirst for revenge and the hope were the natural results of the believers, only the prophecy was the one that gave hope to all seeing this results during their lives, giving religious cohesion to the political communities destroyed” (*id.*).

As we saw before, although in Babylon they were tolerated and benefit from a series of liberties, paradoxically, right there we have a strong resurrection of religious beliefs, a rising and consolidation of boundaries that separated them from the rest of the peoples, the stabilization of a specific structure of *caste-people*. Elements that contributed to what Simmel established when analyzing the positive effects of conflicts, in the middle of which the strong identities are born, solidarities that could not have been arise except in the face of an enemy or dangers. And Simmel, himself a Jewish sociologist faced with the tumult of his time, will understand and theorize better this social reality.

In the context of a sociological analyze of the prophetic phenomenon we cannot ignore the wight of the conflict between the prophets and priests, the ones that will elaborate the Law, another conflict with heavy consequences for the history of Judaism. The prophets, we find out from Weber, were in tension with the priests, because the former valued a relation with God that had the possibility to bring salvation, without using the actions of the priests, like the sacrifices, but only the following the commandments. It was opposed therefore the new revelation and tradition, a clash that dependened on the each other to impose. For the codification the priest chooses and consolidates the prophetic teachings through their rational systematization, which brought “a decline or fossilization of prophecy, an inevitable outcome” (*ibid.*, 78). The spirit of prophecy disappeared after it accomplished its duty for the salvation of the people and of the Jewish communities, now it will start the rational codification of the teachings.

After the innovations and the shocks of the prophets it was necessary an extensive process of understanding and explanation of what was happening, of the tests of Yahweh for his people. It is the time of the Torah, when “they give explanations, when they give the rational motives”, this is the way to a religion of Torah (Causse, 1937:126). Now Israel has an organization, receives a holy legislation, the works of priests transformed the community in a cultural one, where “it is manifesting the powerful rational spirit of God and his centralizing national tendency” (*ibid.*,152). Now, underlines Causse, they put the bases of a community that it is no longer

founded on a psycho-mithical unity, but on a voluntary solidarity, a fraternity, one that resist until now, in spite of all difficulties.

C) *Christianity*

Another key point in the sociological understanding of Judaism through conflict, considered as having not only positive consequences, as Simmel demonstrates, but even creative powers, is the time of the Christianity. In this axial moment we can verify a serie of premises of the sociology of conflict, as we have them in the Simmelian essays. We try now a lecture of the emergence of Christianity using the sociology of conflict. Thus, we see a severity of conflict when it arises from a set of common values; the two communities defend their truth, their specific values that means an affirmation and consolidation of identity in front of the one considered different, a protection of the boundaries that assures each other their identity. A corollary of these elements can be the existence of social hatred, as defined by Simmel, explained sociologically by the fact that an enemy of the group represents a peril for the existence of the group, and from here we can have numerous fights for identity affirmation and maintaining it in front of the *Other*.

As we saw below, after the passing of great empires and once the assimilation of prophetic phenomenon and the Law codification were completed, for the survival and the maintaining of the community based on religious foundations that created a people, the Jewish communities consolidated even more their boundaries, their status of *caste-people*.

Judaism is oriented toward this world, his promises are for this dimension of the existence, without interest for ascetic or contemplative views, according to Weber, and the propensity of Christianity for ascetic views does not come from the Jewish religiosity. The attitudes about the wealth, with a special attention for teaching, favoring the intellectual dimension of religious beliefs, the piety manifested in obeying the Law - were the result of Jewish "methodology of life and its rationalism" (Weber, 1963: 255), with a piety in patient waiting of the messianic event, based on the promises of God for his people.

But the challenge for the Jewish community, for its survival, was the emergence of Christianity, the activity of Paul, who will try to destroy the boundaries of the status of *caste-people*, attacking the taboos, and all the fundamentals of Jewish identity (Weber, 1963). These actions intensified with the activity of Jesus Christ and which will determine very strong reactions, once it endangered the foundations of Jewish identity.

From this rationalism of Judaic religious belief the Christianity appears, a reaction truly revolutionary that emerged "during the period of the most intensive messianic expectations" (*ibid.*, 270), founded on charisma. If from the beginning the Christianity, founded in the middle of Jewish people, kept "continuity with the older Jewish prophecies" (*ibid.*,274), after the conversion of Paul two new attitudes become fundamental in the missionary

evolution of this new religion, underlines Weber: the Second Coming of Jesus and the importance of the gifts of Holy Spirit.

D) Conclusions or the odyssey continues...

Religion, as we saw above, represents an understanding and relating system of the life, which could be seen from a sociological point of view, an total ideal typical institution. The commandments, the forms, manifestations and specific structure applied by each religion to the existence as it is lived and conceived, all these have an important weight and a comprehensive significance for the sociology preoccupied by this social phenomenon that is religion. Being a comprehensive reality, the sociological study of religion asks not only an impressive involvement from the part of researchers, but also an encyclopedic spirit. These criteria are fulfilled by the two classics of the sociology of Judaism, and their studies are proof of these imperatives. These extensive researches about the change in social structures following the evolution of the religious ideas, their impact and effects over the destiny of the Jewish people through out the time can help explain in an exceptional way the social realities of our time.

In spite of the many forms and changes brought by history, we cannot ignore those fundamental structure of the Jewish people, the base on which its identity formed and lived. But these changes and challenges right from the beginning of the Judaic religion did not brought a total change of the system or its extinction, on the contrary, an evolution to a even more profound identity. The social changes demonstrated with the studies of Weber and Causse can be considered changes *within the system*, and changes brought by the Christianity represent the birth of a *new social system*, from within but different from the Judaic one.

Through the research of ancient Judaism with the help of two classics and the Simmelian theory of conflict, we have access to a specific understanding of the powerful identity of the Jewish people, and to the special condition of the appearance of Christianity in the tumult of those times. The creative power of these conflicts, of Jewish people in face of the social, political and military challenges, and of Christians in the face of the religious challenges lived and assumed, was validated and proven for thousands of years. Founders of powerful and strong identities challenged more or less by the worldly powers, these two spiritual dimensions survives and continues to be interesting for different researchers, not only from the perspective of the sociology of religion. And this can be see as an incentive for interdisciplinary (a step closer to the encyclopedic spirit of the classics) so necessary for such a complex field of study like religion.

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