

## **Globalization, beliefs, healing and miracles**

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### **Abstract**

Globalization and new consumption patterns influence daily life, the postmodern human being lives an existential angst, the awareness of living here and now, in a violent and hostile world, the struggle for survival after the basic needs. Given this, options or alternatives present themselves as a way of life. Sociological changes of globalization include religions, we can mention the phenomenon of transnational and transcontinental networks.

In Argentina, particularly Buenos Aires as the case observed, is considered a religious metropoli where different offers coexist: the Catholic healing circuit including San Cayetano, San Pantaleon and the Virgin "Desatanudos"; St. Expedite, charismatic healers, electronic ministers, rabbis, Islamic, Hindus, Buddhists, schools of spirituality, new age, indigenous healers, "manosantas" (healing hands), holistic therapies, tarot, parapsychology, etc.

The mapping of religious groups in the city of Buenos Aires highlights some areas such as Almagro, in the geographic center of the city, and Liniers on the western edge with the Church of San Cayetano and the burgeoning Bolivian community.

This paper addresses the case study of the neighborhoods mentioned and the opinions of experts on the subject of sociology.

**Key Words** globalization beliefs healing miracles

### **The market for goods of salvation**

Cardenas (2004) describes the effects of globalization: the phenomenon of globalization and new forms of consumption affect everyday life. Consumption seen as constant change, the marketing and the media cross the way of life of millions of individuals and enterprise becomes the current social model. T.V. programs offer "salvation" through random to lucky individuals who are rescued from the current crisis. Tensions in the individual produced by the pressures of time on work, temporary contracts, changes in work place, family moving in some cases with intra consequences.

Job insecurity and instability, create uncertainty, haunt the minds of individuals. The psychological consequences include: depression and reduced self-esteem, family conflict, separation, evictions, hunger. In sum, the human disaster.

The man, considered from an anthropological view of philosophy, has traveled many roads in search of truth, there have always been atheists, agnostics and believers.

In the history of mankind the belief in a better, perfect world has emerged, paradise, reincarnation, or searching for that paradise or the promised land on this planet, even founding new societies that gave rise to nations, as in the case of the United States of America.

The postmodern human being lives an existential angst, the awareness of living here and now, in a violent and hostile world, the struggle for survival, after basic needs. Given this, options or alternatives present themselves as a way of life, some aim to fulfill a religious dogma, others flee or take refuge in drugs, sex, genitalia, multiple relationships, express themselves through violence, suggestion, consumerism forms of self-harm (piercings, tattoos), and others seeking healing, liberation, enlightenment. Health in extreme situations, makes appear or reinforces the theme of spirituality.

Pierre Bourdieu, in analogy to the economic production process, speaks of "salvation goods market."

Religious groups become producers, distributors and consumers of such goods, according to the interplay of supply and demand. In the 90's along with the idea of postmodernism, religion is resumed tied to the ideas of market and growth of religious pluralism.

Today, traditional religions face changes from postmodern progress. On one side, the effects of economic adjustment are observed: Catholic churches that rent as lofts (Blessed Sacrament Jesus) in Corrientes and Yatai, Almagro, or sell some of their buildings for the construction of shopping malls (Sacred Heart), Avenida La Plata and Hipólito Irigoyen, Almagro, or housing towers (Resurrection of the Lord) in Corrientes and Dorrego in Chacarita, religious orders that are extinguished by not having replacement, and on the other hand certain strategies are promoted, curricula of tertiary and religious careers amending according to market realities.

### **The religious megalopolis**

In any neighborhood of Buenos Aires we can prove the existence of this religious pluralism. Among the main neighborhoods Palermo and Almagro may be mentioned with the Orthodox Greeks,

Syrians and Armenians, Belgrano with the participation of upper middle class in synagogues, evangelical temples (minister Freyson), schools and shelters which adhere to Opus Dei, new age groups and philosophical schools.

There are also places where tarot readers, psychics and clairvoyants are focused, who display different transhumance, attracting an audience eager to know the future, listen to advice and practical guidance for everyday life. In Plaza Francia, Recoleta, we find the most diverse tarot readers in style, at Centennial Park the traditional Gypsies were established and in the neighborhood of Liniers we meet the yatiris (healers) and Peruvian and Bolivian diviners attending in private homes.

**Case observed:**

**Almagro**

Almagro, this popular neighborhood located in the heart of Buenos Aires, shows its own particularities regarding the religious phenomenon: a high concentration and diversity of religion. As to urban features, Almagro evidences a lack of character, a mixture of fuzzy boundaries and areas of poverty, tenements and taken houses (adjoining the Italian Hospital and Abasto).

The axis Rivadavia Av., running westward, with massive public circulation, facilitates the presence of religious groups.

Regarding the above phenomenon, the causes may be awarded to the following factors:

1 - a privileged location, near the geographical center of the city, with circulation of means of transport to different directions.

Anderson (1981) "by the clustering of like-minded occupants, we identify the area as a niche market: cults, psychics, healers, etc., specialization of goods usually develops at the competitive situation.

2 - Historical background settlement of Catholics, Protestants and spiritualists that would attract the wave of the '80s.

The first settlements date back to the last century:

St. Charles Parish (1878), Sr. Teresa of Jesus Discalced Carmelites Nuns Closure Convent (1896) and later, Spiritualists, central Basilio Scientific School (1917), Argentinian Spiritualist Federation (1947) and the Evangelical Methodist Church (1933).

Today we recorded: 14 Catholic churches, 12 Protestant churches, 2 postprotestantes, 5 Jewish Synagogues, 4 Spiritualists and 2 Esoteric.

Pai Luconi, Umbanda now mutated into parapsychologist, started in a temple, located in the passage Don Bosco, one block from Castro Barros and Rivadavia, the various means of transport to get to it were shown in ads.

Minister Anibal Gimenez started his career in the temple "Waves of Love and Peace", Rivadavia Av. 3771, with its growth a number of premises connected with the temple were set at the same block, until its subsequent decline when he left the place, a while ago he returned with a smaller audience.

3 - Networks of services and emotional communities guided by the demands of the masses. Attention around the demands of physical and spiritual healing is growing (Pentecostal, Charismatic Renewal, Spiritualists).

Welfare assistance through refectories and job boards, and in particular the emotional restraint that gives rise to the formation of communities, important to emphasize, as the anonymity of the big city, daily aggression, indifference, distrust and competition isolates individuals from each other.

#### **Liniers:**

The case of the neighborhood of Liniers is located on the western edge of the city, Rivadavia Avenue is the axis to the western suburb, the homonym Sarmiento railway station makes the place in an area with permanent high traffic transfer of public.

In these ecological conditions we can describe:

1 - Strategically located in the west of the city, the Sarmiento railway station, Rivadavia Avenue and General Paz ring Avenue that connects to Ezeiza Airport, with circulation of means of transport to various points, 25 de Mayo and West Access highways.

2 - The influence of the sanctuary of San Cayetano, meters from Liniers station, that attracts thousands of believers, especially on August 7<sup>th</sup>, when the saint's day is celebrated, the influx is anticipated weeks earlier with the presence of campers, near Velez Sarsfield Club and General Paz Avenue.

There we can find Catholic churches such as Nuestra Señora de las Nieves at Ventura Bosh 6600, San Enrique at Estero Bellaco 6943, Tránsito de San Jose at Emilio Castro 6300. Evangelical churches were located: close to the station an evangelical church and Iglesia Universal del Reino de Dios and Centro Evangélico para el Mundo at Murguiondo and Rivadavia. A Basilio Scientific School place at Cosquín 50, a Perfect Liberty place -Japanese Buddhist.

3. According to the concept of Nels Anderson (1981) the area can be identified as a niche market: cults, psychics, healers, etc.

In the present study we observed a strong religious move and magical-religious practices. As an irradiation of magic-religious in front of San Cayetano Church focus: Santeria places, tarot and clairvoyant consultations, etc.

High promotion on indigenous healers also run through the streets in Liniers, mainly offering solutions to love problems.

Advertising has the following deals: "Your partner is gone, you're alone (or) and anxious, you're unlucky in love." "Indian Power Indigenous force, can do everything." "Do not suffer more in love", "indigenous healer brings separated together by a tie of spiritual union". "The great Indian Yatiri knows the secrets and mysteries of the indigenous works and rituals". "Bring the loved being back", "guides over love destiny through letters, tarot, photo and hand lines". "I solve all kinds of trouble in love, big connoisseur of magic and secrets to end the suffering". "Healer of love makes moorings for lovers, sweethearts, unites separated couples, impossible love, happiness back to you". "I heal business, house, shops, offices".

This private circuit offering solutions to the problems of love, does nothing but reinforce the concepts previously developed, the loneliness of the immigrant, discrimination, poverty, marginalization, and the pursuit of love as assertiveness, through the possession of the wanted being's feelings.

### **Religious Diversity in Buenos Aires**

Communities, that settled with their work and cultural contribution, were participants in the growth of our country, including: Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, French, German, Polish, Croatian, Slovenian, Serbian, Ukrainian, Jewish, Lebanese, Syrian, Japanese, Korean, Bolivian, Paraguayan, Chilean, Uruguayan, etc.

These communities came for economic reasons, also for political reasons, in many cases to escape the suffering and horror of war, establishing three major waves of migration. Each community brought religious practice, they formed their churches or integrated to existing ones.

In the area of the city of Buenos Aires, in the 60-70 decades San Pantaleon Masses with exorcisms, drew a sizable audience from popular class.

In the 80s Father Peter in the Parish situated in Chacarita (nowadays not existing) celebrated Masses on the 26<sup>th</sup>, St. Cyprian and St. Justina days, performing exorcisms.

Today, Brother Miguel, is the ultimate form of popular religion in Argentina, he joined parapsychology to his knowledge, he invites adherents who attend the temple of Villa del Parque, where sessions are held with songs, sermons, brother clairvoyance and consultations on various issues.

Among the current folk healers we can mention Leo Dan and Sol Cuharaju.

Leo Dan, born in Santiago del Estero, Argentina, singer of the '60s new wave, known in Spain and Mexico, where he achieved a major success, based in Miami, visits Argentina where he performs across the country.

As a child, he used to heal small animals in his hometown, Atamisqui, Santiago del Estero, Argentina. During an artistic tour in Ecuador he met a French priest who started him into the path of healing.

In Mexico he met Pachita, a renowned Indigenous healer who saved him from cancer and incorporated him as an aide in her healing sessions.

Leo Dan's shows have become a healing space for young people, who are in crisis situations, such as addictions.

Leo Dan gives Christian messages and laying on of hands for those seeking his mediation. Sol Cuharaju, Paraguayan clairvoyant, says she has the gift of healing given by the Virgin Mary who appeared in front of her in the Paraguayan jungle when she was a child. In San Jose 353, Congreso, Sol, through the radio program *Comunicándonos*, as part of the Civil Association San Antonio and Jesus Micericordioso, calls for a significant number of followers, who attend her healing meetings where she sings, while the audience dance, and then gives imposition of hands. Goods are sold at the place, which are promoted as miraculous: key chains and other blessed objects. Father Eduardo, then celebrates mass with the audience.

Among Catholic healing priests we recognize Father Mario Pantaleo, deceased, Italian priest emigrated to Argentina, miraculous healer, attending at Mariano Acosta street, in Floresta, and in the Parish of Gonzalez Catan, where he had a work (which continues) dedicated to disabled children. His life was recreated in the film "Father Mario".

At present, Father Ignacio Peries calls crowds of believers across the country, who come to the parish located in Rucci neighborhood, on the outskirts of Rosario. The journalist and spiritual broadcaster Claudio Maria Dominguez lectures in auditoriums across the country. Conference topics include: existential questions, Who am I?, Why do I exist?, karma and dharma, reincarnation, the awakening of human consciousness, man's mission in life. In his messages he brings together spiritual teachers such as Jesus, Mother Teresa of Calcutta, Sai Baba, Osho, Krishnamurti, from a new age perspective he promotes alternative medicine and therapies, as a confluence between science and spirituality.

### **Transnational and transcontinental networks**

Among sociological changes as a result of globalization we can mention the phenomenon of transnational and transcontinental networks. Globalization is a new imperialist stage of capitalism. It is the integration of markets, based on technological development and information technology. The phenomenon of globalization would also cover religion. On the one hand we are witnessing an easing of the political doctrines, there is a correlation with religion. In addition, as a simile of industrial production, assembly in different countries, there is a conjunction of beliefs in different parts of the world. This would be a phenomenon of internationalization of religion.

García Canclini (1995) exemplifies the use of the new citizenship: a Ford car is bought, assembled in Spain, with Canadian-made glass, Italian carburetor, Austrian radiator, English cylinders and battery and French drive shaft. As my TV made in Japan, what I see is a world-film produced in Hollywood, directed by a Polish filmmaker with French assistants, actors and authors of ten nationalities and scenes filmed in the four countries that sought financing to do so. Large companies that provide us food and clothes, make us travel and get stuck in identical highways throughout the world, fragmenting the production process manufacturing each piece of goods where the cost is lower. Objects lose the relationship of fidelity to their original territories. Culture is a multinational assembly process, a flexible articulation of parts, a montage of features that any citizen of any country, religion or ideology can read and use. A religious assembly is being produced by some institutions and groups, "Metaphysics I am", an international group, the case of Latin Prayer invoking saints and virgins from the three Americas.

Father Pedro, Catholic non-Roman, friend of Brother Michael, used to lead a procession of Virgin Mary from his temple in Federico Lacroze and Roseti, Chacarita, to the temple Irma Maresco in Villa del Parque. Here we are witnessing the formation of networks by affinity of beliefs and religious practices.

Another issue is the globalization of the esoteric: Brother Michael went beyond the scope of local spiritualism opening a temple in Mexico, land of ancient beliefs, shamanism, energy centers and religious syncretism.

There are free zones, geographical and doctrinaire locations of encounter in the cultural-religious trade and exchange.

In the same way, groups establish and share transnational and transcontinental networks by affinities as a phenomenon of globalization. This revolves around Jung's concept of collective

unconscious. Jung (1955) highlights the collective unconscious: *"Just as dreams -and in a very high-grade- are made with collective material, in mythology as in folklore of diverse peoples, certain issues repeat in almost identical form. These issues I have called "archetypes", designation with which I mean forms or images of a collective nature, which are almost universal as constituents of myths and, at the same time, as native individual products of unconscious origin"*.

### **Beliefs**

For some critics, popular religiosity bounds attitudes of personal irresponsibility, not to take charge of their destiny, or immaturity with a child-like magical thinking. This situation is mass extended, decades ago in chains upon Mother Mary on bills, now through the Internet for a virgin or devotion, Hindu, etc.

The cult of the deceased, of the marginals, expressed on roadsides, crowds, processions, funerals.

Superstition in everyday life, the possibility of psychological or existential harm, witchcraft, influence suggestion, either by verbal communication or telepathy.

Sociologist Clarisa Voloschin (2010) provides analysis from her personal experience with beliefs and healing:

*"I had first experiences in different stages of my career.*

*I-In 1969, in Abrapampa, Jujuy, conducting research on perceptions of mental disorders in collas communities with little or poor relationship with exogenous cultures. There I saw the importance of shamans in indigenous communities, to the point that the Government of Jujuy by a health program integrated shamans as nurses of their own communities.*

*II-In hospital communities: from 1964 in Muñiz Hospital, and the continuity of time in Borda Neuropsychiatric Hospital (1968-1972) in Health Education meetings, there the presence of other medicines could be observed, which could be classified into two categories: A) local medicine, was related to indigenous peoples, mainly new medications related to weeds, relative ease of acquisition, birth attendants in the village or neighborhood prescribed them.*

*There, I could detect by surveys and interviews, everything related to the work of black magic, hospitalized people said they were there by alien forces, black magic. Doctors and nurses knew but did not speak, it was a taboo subject.*

*B) Unconventional medicine. Linked to all the religious imagery of the moment, with the rise of the shamans, like Ze Arigo and priests "healers" as Father Mario in Gonzalez Catan.*



*III- I made the check on indigenous medicines later, in France, during the period of my exile during the military government.*

*An esoteric fair circulated in Paris, especially in the neighborhood of Tigall, stands were mounted on the avenue, selling candles, scents, incense, tarot readers, psychics, healers, attended the public, there were the gypsies with their medicine popularized in Europe.*

*In Venezuela, I could make contact with local medicine, typical of indigenous groups, very different from "African" or black medicine, characteristic of medicine in the Caribbean, akin to Honduras, Mexico and Cuba.*

*I checked it at a pharmacy when a woman asked the pharmacist "tea to get my husband back again", the pharmacist gave her the tea with magical prescriptions for the request.*

*IV- Health Foundation (1986-present) when I met them they were with vibrational medicine by Richard Gerber. At the Foundation, it was explained that black magic issues are vibrational structures in the body of each person, they worked with stimulation techniques of positive vibrations. Philippine healers visited the Foundation, they stayed there for a long time, many people consulted them. The Foundation received the same clients as Father Mario, except that Father Mario just took contact once. Health Foundation mounted an attentional structure where, in addition to director Stella Maris Marus, there was a professional staff with specialists in massage, yoga, discussion groups, etc.*

*With the Foundation we traveled to Philippine, we were with Philippine specialists (from massages to osteopathy), from India, Russia, Sweden and Spain. I could watch Philippine healers laid hands on, from the energy theory they were convinced that through the laying on of hands they detoxify the patient. As far as a person is in disharmony, toxic symptoms begin to appear in the body, also the possibility of disease. Philippine healers laying on their hands soothe toxic elements, the output channels of toxicity.*

*For personal health reasons, I could not stay in regular contact with the Health Foundation, which is now in Luis Guillon, in the southern suburbs".*

## **Healing**

Floreal Forni (2010) considers healing as a common subject among religious gifts, from his vision as a specialist in sociology of religion, he provides a typology that includes: Christian teaching, Catholicism, Pentecostalism, healers priests, Spiritism, Umbanda and traditional healing.

*"Christian Teaching: Jesus, besides preaching as a rabbi in the north of Palestine, was a thaumaturgist who cured people, this can be found in the Gospels. From there several lines come.*

*Catholicism: Catholics are very careful considering healing, to the point of seeking medical approval to validate "miracles", both Marian apparitions and cases of healing.*

*Regarding Marian apparitions, the archetype was Lourdes in France and Fatima in Portugal. In Argentina, in recent decades there have been apparitions of the Virgin, in San Nicolás and recently in Salta, gathering multitudes who claim healing. Healers Priests: From St. Francis of Assisi priests who showed stigmas and had the power to heal the sick succeeded.*

*Recently, in southern Italy, Padre Pio performed healings, showing signs of a supernatural power such as levitation.*

*In our country, it was very notorious the case of Father Mario in Gonzalez Catan, and now Father Ignacio around Rosario.*

*Catholic Church controls these cases, seeking scientific validation.*

*Pentecostalism: Pentecostalism grew out of Protestantism as a revival of the Holy Spirit, and with it various charisms, including the one of healing. In Argentina, the first major event was the arrival of Priest Hicks from the USA in 1954, at the end of the Peronist government in the context of a growing crisis between Peronism and the Catholic Church (Lila Caymari).*

*Hicks called for crowds in the stadiums of Atlanta and Hurricane, Catholic Church attacked these acts of "quackery" with the support of medical colleges.*

*From this episode, Pentecostalism began to grow in small churches, with the presence of charismatic pastors who practice healing.*

*In the 80s priests Giménez, Cabrera and Anacondia stood out for their massive call, then priest Freyson.*

*Spiritism: Kardecian Spiritism arrived early to Argentina, and was incarnated in figures such as Pancho Sierra and Mother Mary, the latter gave birth to an eclectic church among spiritism and popular Catholicism.*

*From our point of view we emphasize the importance of Basilio Scientific School, spread throughout the country, one of the main features is health care by psychosomatic methods.*

*In Brazil, spiritism that has a whole lot of members, includes "mental surgery".*

*Inclusion in the School of Medicine is claimed."*

*Umbanda: From Brazil and Uruguay Umbanda cult was entering Argentina, in this cult health is a central element.*

*To these expressions we can add traditional spontaneous healing, thus demonstrating that there is a huge range of alternatives to conventional medicine ".*

In recent decades, tours to energy centers were increased in Argentina, to Capilla del Monte, Cerro Uritorco in Cordoba, Machu Pichu in Peru and Mexico, in a form of integration between man and cosmos and nature.

The ways of healing are numerous: pursuit of happiness, enlightenment, harmony through alternative medicine and various disciplines. Body care, feeding, breathing, physical and energetic activity.

Posmodern everyday life generates consumerism, hedonism, stress, work and family pressures, states of anxiety.

#### **Miracles:**

The daily Clarin on Monday August 2, 2010, stands out a survey in major cities in Argentina, as a result states:

*"Seven out of ten Argentines believe that miracles exist. More than half of them say they have witnessed one. Most links them to people who are cured of serious diseases. Corrientes is the most faithful place and Buenos Aires (Capital City) the most skeptical one.*

*The survey was conducted by Universidad Empresarial Siglo 21 (UES 21) among 1027 men and women from 18 to 70 years in Buenos Aires, Tucuman, Corrientes, Mendoza, Comodoro Rivadavia, Cordoba and Rosario. According to the investigators, the sample is representative of the population of large cities, and is a good approximation to the religious beliefs of the total population of Argentina."*

Ruben Dri (2009), theologian and university professor, compares scientific conception with Catholic Church position, to scientific concept that "miracle" is simply a fact or law whose cause is unknown, but surely one day we'll know. For Catholic Church, if the cure was preceded by a request to God, a saint or someone on its way to the altars, this is obviously a miracle, a fact that goes against the laws of nature."

Alejandro Parra (2007), psychologist and paranormal investigator, defines the concept of miracle, the expression 'miracle' comes from Latin and means "that which causes admiration.". Theology understands it as an event perceived by the senses that transcends the natural order of

events and what happens in a religious context. A more precise definition and which also serves as a criterion to distinguish a miracle of any other paranormal events, depending on the various assessments of the words "nature" and "religious." Cultural anthropologists of the nineteenth century tended to classify all reports of miraculous events under the rubric of "magic." Newer schools tend to classify any uncommon form of interaction with the cosmos as a religious event and therefore "miracle", whether or not it is considered valid by religious authorities."

Antonio Las Heras (2005), parapsychologist, recognizes the need for multidisciplinary scientific research, *any times and places events have occurred which, in absence of a better explanation, were called "miracles." From the very birth of parapsychology, science has realized that these paranormal events should be investigated in light of the knowledge provided by physics, chemistry, biology, and especially parapsychology itself.*"

In the interview conducted by Dr. Las Heras, researcher Edgar Mitchell expressed the relationship of quantum hologram with the universe, it reminds us of occultism laws, of kibalyon of Hermes Trismegistus, and the unity of man with the cosmos.

#### **Final Thoughts:**

Pierre Bourdieu defined the religious field theory as an area of dispute between health and spirituality specialists: this is a field of struggle for symbolic manipulation of conduct of private life and management of the world; all the actors -religious, political, cultural, media, academia- implement rival and conflicting definitions of health, healing, care of body and soul.

Modern man sets out to search for replacement religions.

Thus we find men and women in more than one religious group or movement (religion *a la carte* or oneself religion).

We understand this phenomenon of search, religious practices and experiences that converge in the image of the pilgrim in search of salvation.

If on one hand we recognize the oneself religion or religion *a la carte* in believers, on the other hand we find a oneself specialist, health professionals who entered the field of holistic, or vice versa, in recent decades institutes dedicated to holistic therapies multiplied, both patients treatments and therapists training.

Therefore, we consider Argentina, particularly Buenos Aires as an observed case, a megalopolis where different offers coexist: Catholic healing circuit including San Cayetano, San Pantaleon and the Virgin Desatanudos; St. Expedite, charismatic healers, electronic pastors, rabbis,

Islamic, Hindu, Buddhist, schools of spirituality, new age, indigenous healers, “manosantas” (healing hands), holistic therapies, tarot, parapsychology, etc.

There is a competition area around healing with Pentecostal, Charismatic Renewal, healers, “manosantas”, new age, occultism, tarot, parapsychology.

On regards on the arrival of 2012 and its possible consequences for our planet, we are currently witnessing natural disasters, earthquakes, tsunamis, tornados, etc. round the world. Different religions, through Bhagavad Gita, the Bible, the Mayan and Gnostics prophecies, etc., say there is a previous program. Most agree that we are going through a critical stage, according to the Bible, Revelation, a revelation, chaos and transformation time. Mother Mary in the 1930's, prophesied for Argentina a future as a nature reserve in South America, the promised land, the manna of God, as a message of peace and hope, heralding a new era, where thousands of people around the world will arrive to.

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