Abstract

According to data from Oxford encyclopedias, 84% of the world population belongs to an organized religion, which, at the end of 2009 represented 5.7 billion people belong to about 10,000 distinct religions. What happens in these circumstances at the meeting of the two types of thinking (informational/logical and religious) and how this combination influences the human beings? A number of paradoxes occur within human feelings and activities, one of which being represented by the contradiction between cognition and emotion, namely irrational thinking.

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1. Introduction

The current time is extremely interesting in terms of combination of specific elements of an informational society that is gradually becoming “virtual” and the old roots specific to the old society in which religion occupy a central place, starting with the period in which homo sapiens emerges from apes line and begin to form their own view of nature. The concept of "homo religiosus" (religious man) was used in the world of cultural anthropology by Mircea Eliade. Yet specific ideas about human religiosity are found also in psychology, in various forms, in Jung, Fromm and others theories.

According to data from Oxford encyclopedias, 84% of the global population belongs to an organized religion, which, at the end of 2009 represent 5.7 billion people belonging to about 10,000 distinct religions, which, in turn, are divided on. For instance, Christians may be divided between 33.820 different confessions (Barrett et al., 2001). Among the names granted to our species (Homo sapiens, homo ludens, homo economicus), a special place may be taken, in this context, by “homo religious”.

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2. Homo religiosus

The concept of "homo religiosus" has its origins in ancient Cicero, in "Epistulae ad familiares". The ancient philosopher presents some characteristics of the human pattern: ritual and faithful scrupulosity, eloquent and clear, but not trying to indoctrinate others. Later, after the advent of Christianity, the word enters in a sacred area and Eliade take it from this point in his approach.

Human religious experience is inhomogeneous, ordinary life (profane) being intertwined with religious (sacred) in various proportions. In "Sacru și profanul" Mircea Eliade shows from the very beginning that "for the religious man, space is not homogeneous, but fractured and cracked, some parts of space are qualitatively different from the others. 'Do not come here, says Moses,' but take off your shoes from your feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground’ (Exodus, 3, 5). There is therefore a sacred space, 'strong' significant and other spaces, unconsecrated, therefore lacking of structure and coherence, amorphous. Moreover, for the religious man, the lack of spatial homogeneity is reflected in the experience of an opposition between sacred space, the only one that is real, and the rest of the space, that is the informal extent surrounding him." (Eliade, 1995).

This heterogeneity is reflected in the difference between emotion and reason/rational, or between affect and cognition. Although in ordinary life (profane and rational) religious stories don’t pass a rational acceptance test, paradoxically they are accepted at a level that exceeds reason and reach the affective area. For example, in the logical world of science are not known cases of man-made miracles, however, at an irrationally, but deeply emotional level, many people are convinced of the existence of miracles.

Eliade sees in the religious behavior a mechanism for identifying a fixed point, a center of balance for the human being: "One can thus see how the discovery, that the revelation of sacred space has existential value for religious man; nothing can begin, nothing can be done without prior orientation, and any orientation involves acquiring a fixed point. This is why religious man struggled to settle in the 'Centre of the World'. In order to live in the world, you should first found it, and no world can be born in the profane space 'chaos' that is relatively homogeneous. The discovery or projection of a fixed point - 'Center' – is equivalent to the creation of the world" (Eliade, 1995).

3. Religion in the modern world

Here, for example, Americans are among the most religious members of the human species, although they live in a tech society. In a 2007 Pew Forum study on a sample of more than 35,000 Americans, have been identified the following positive responses to the question "In what do you think?/What is your belief?" (Table 1):

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>God or universal spirit</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heaven</td>
<td>74%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hell</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Holy Bible is the God’s word</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily prayers</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miracles</td>
<td>79%</td>
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So strong is the belief that there must be a divine force that even 21% of those who considered themselves atheists and 55% of those who considered themselves agnostics expressed belief in God or a universal spirit. In the modern world it should be discuss also the relation between the religious mind and the consciousness. In this
regard Brazdau built the Consciousness Quotient Inventory which could catch some interesting dynamics (Brazdau & Mihai, 2011).

4. Neurosciences and religion

Religions are universal cultural beliefs. Explaining this ubiquity only by cultural evolution involves accepting that religion appearance descends to the beginning of human history, all human societies perpetuating a religious system separately, which seem highly unlikely. Moreover, now we know that other evolutionary phenomena such as symbolic language and morality have solid foundations in biology and systemic information processing and management (Eaves et al., 1989; Martin et al., 1986; Shermer, 1999; Waller et al., 1990)

Many approaches consider religion either as an evolutionary adaptation or a byproduct of certain adaptive changes, determined in each case by the emergence and development of social groups (becoming larger – including here the more complex social interactions). These theories found a relation between the emergence of religion in prehistoric human and the cognitive development. We include here approaches such as theory of mind, the ability to interpret others' intentions and emotions, social cognition and neural processes involved in such social phenomena as moral and group identity; intuitive theories (pre-scientific) about natural phenomena, causal reasoning, symbolic language etc.

These cognitive processes have different evolutionary origins and likely resulted from the expansion of specific brain regions. Brain imaging studies performed in the presence of religious stimuli (invoking religious beliefs) indicates the emergence of religion as a combination of cognitive functions, the main advantage of these evolutionary cognitive adaptations not having, paradoxically, too many connections with religion. Two researchers from the National Institutes of Health, Dimitrios Kapogiannis and Jordan Grafman (2009) analyzed responses imaging (fMRI) of subjects from religious stimuli (questions on religious themes). Thus common areas activated in subjects at stimulus action have been identified, and it was observed a pattern of activation representing the religious neuro-beliefs map (Fig. 1).

![Fig. 1: Religious brain](image-url)
Other studies reflect the fact that, regardless of membership in the group of believers or nonbelievers, the problem of the afterlife existence activates highly evolved areas in the frontal cortex, involved in non-religious life, such as decision making and abstract thinking.

One major issue within the human – religion – modern society relation refers to the adaptation of the nervous system at the aggressive stimuli from the media (knowing there is a strong contradiction between aggressiveness/violence and religion). Physiological responses at these stimuli suggest that cognitive changes could occur as a result (Anitei & Chraif, 2011).

5. Conclusions

At this point the scientific opinions on “Homo religious” are divided, or they constitute a complex understanding of this phenomenon. On one side lies researchers that argue the religious feeling is a cultural phenomenon that has evolved with the development of human society; on the other hand we find neuro-imaging studies indicating that in the human brain there are very well defined areas activating under the influence of religious stimuli. The last category of views, in which we stand, suggests that religious feeling is a complex phenomenon, with clear biological basis, and socio-cultural extensions.

Whatever view we accept, we are witnessing now the presence of simultaneous rational and irrational in a world increasingly technicist and accurate. In terms of mental health, the concomitant presence of rational and irrational in many people creates discomfort and imbalances of different amplitudes.

References


http://religions.pewforum.org/pdf/report2religious-landscape-study-key-findings.pdf


