

FROM CONFLICT AND MISUNDERSTANDING TO RESPECT

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SUMMARY

Sociologists of the 19th and the 20th centuries were tackling the relation between science and religion. A few models of these relations were offered, by which the monopoly over the truth by any one of those is crashed. Therefore, there are a few models but each is with lots of limitations. None is sufficient to explain the relation between the science and religion, but each contributes to certain extent to better understanding of those relations. Almost every one of the interpretations was under the influence of the social (particularly ideological and political) conditions in which they were emerging.

One of those could be named as „Riding on an old horse: there is no reconciliation between faith and reason“. Is the enlightenment theory the source of a conflict between “faith” and “reason”? What is it that leads to the conflict of the science and religion? From rejection to acceptance – a view on Darwin’s theory then and now. Do creationist theories lead to exacerbation of relations between the science and religion? Postmodernism on the relation of science and religion.

Stand views of religious communities – science and religion are not in conflict. Examples that confirm such opinion. Many priests and Islamic teachers have given their contributions to the development of science (technology, medicine, geography, architecture, urbanism, music etc.). Isn’t it that the calendars, past (Egyptian, Chinese, Aztec etc.) and present (Hindu, Jewish, Islamic, Gregorian etc.) have come from the umbrella of religions.

Are conflicts between science and religion the matter of the past? Disputes over use of drugs in rituals exist even today. Religion and science are autonomous fields – but where is the border between them?

Technology and religions. How religions refer to technology. Examples of applications of technical achievements in religious activities. An ecological theory that is being developed within sociology of religion focuses on the relation of religions and religious communities toward nature.

Contemporary dilemmas (ethic discussions within the field of biomedicine– euthanasia, abortion, organ donation, aesthetic surgery etc.).

Key words: religion – science – sociology – enlightenment – postmodernism – creationism – drugs – technology – ecology

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Let us look first at how some of the religious teachings are related to knowledge and science. Hinduism, for example, never separates the knowledge and science from religion. The name “Vedas”, etymologically, means “knowledge”. According to the Bhagavad-gita, all human suffering and limitations come from ignorance. Was it not Hinduism that separated holders of knowledge into a distinct social class (caste) – the Brahmins? In the religions of West Africa, the highest position in the religious hierarchy is held by the one who holds the most knowledge. In the Qur’an (96:1-5) it states: “Recite in the name of your Lord... Recite: and your Lord is Most Generous, who taught by the pen, taught man what he did not know.”

Throughout history, dialogue and / or conflict often accompanied the relations between science, religion and religious communities.

There was ‘sacred’ and ‘common’ knowledge. The ‘sacred’ knowledge was available to theologians. A sociologist had no place there. The ‘common’ knowledge, which would include science, belonged to non-theologians, and sociologists had a say in this field. Many of the prominent sociologists of the XIX and XX century dealt with the relationship between religion (which belongs to the ‘sacred’ knowledge) and science.

A number of models of these relationships have been offered. Thus, the monopoly over truth of either of them is removed. A number of models for the religion-

science relationship have been offered, but each of them has many limitations. None of them is sufficient to explain the relationship between science and religion, but each of them contributes a small part to a better understanding of these relationships. Almost every interpretation of the relationship between science and religion was under the influence of social (particularly ideological and political) conditions in which they were created.

We could say that, among sociologists, there were five dominant models for the religion-science relationship:

- The model according to which religious systems encourage knowledge: “All alike - Gods, Buddhas, sages, yogis – are among those who know,” wrote M. Eliade (1998). And not only religious systems, but also members of the clergy can encourage the knowledge and engagement in science. Giddens also points out that the ideas of the Enlightenment and the Western culture in general emerge “from a religious context” (Giddens 1990). Even Durkheim – despite his stressing the limited role of the religious knowledge in the society – recognized that science developed from religion. Max Scheler also believed that the Church, in spite of the mistakes, contributed to the development of science. In Talcott Parsons’ sociological theory of society, religion also plays an important role.

- The model according to which religion would be replaced with knowledge. Schopenhauer held that “faith and knowledge are related as the two scales of a balance; when one goes up, the other goes down.” There is also Comte’s theory that religion is the lowest level of human understanding of the world, that the metaphysical is higher, and science is the highest form of knowledge of the world. For Comte, sociology was the pinnacle of science and a scientific foundation for the new religion of humanity.
- The model that tries to convert science into religion. Thus, a French economist and sociologist Saint-Simon distinguished three types of society: theological, militaristic and industrial. He “saw religious basis of the industrial society in the ‘new Christianity’ inspired by socially engaged gospel.” (Opći religijski leksikon 2002: 832)
- The model by which religion and science are different. This view was held by Vilfredo Pareto and many contemporary sociologists.
- One of the models of sociological attitude towards religion might be called “Riding on an old horse: there is no reconciliation between faith and reason.” “It’s hard to imagine that some are still trying to ‘reconcile’ faith and reason,” wrote Kristeva (2010: 138).

Is the Enlightenment theory the origin of the conflict of “faith” and “reason”? Enlightenment theory is often interpreted as a conflict between faith and reason, but this is wrong. Even some of the advocates of this theory (for example F. Bacon, I. Newton) believed that their scientific work was consistent with their Christian identity. Enlightenment advocates were critics of clericalism, but they also advocated religious tolerance (Voltaire; Lock’s “A Letter Concerning Toleration”). We forget that there are humanistic directions that fully combine religious and scientific worldviews (such as Christian humanism, from Erasmus of Rotterdam, through Immanuel Kant, to modern theologians like Hans Küng and Paul Tillich).

What leads to a conflict between science and religion? We could say it’s the claiming of a monopoly on absolute truth. And for science there is no absolute truth. Religion is a collective social phenomenon – science is individual. Both have autonomous spheres and should not “interfere” in each other’s spheres (we will not go to a priest if we need to fix the refrigerator, nor will we go to a mechanic for a confession). Tolstoy also wrote about the conflict between science and religion. “Science not only does not co-operate to strengthen (Church) teaching, but follows a development which is involuntarily hostile to her,” wrote Tolstoy (2012:134).

As one of the viewpoints of religious communities we have singled out the one by which science and religion are not in conflict. Proponents of this position certainly have plenty of examples to prove this. For example, many priests and Islamic scholars have

contributed to the development of science (technology, medicine, geography, architecture, urbanism, music ...). To mention just a few: Ibn Sina or “Avicenna”, the philosopher who dealt with geometry, physics, law, medicine and theology; Ibn Rushd “Averroes”, the philosopher, lawyer, doctor of Cordoba; sociologist Ibn Khaldun; Giordano Bruno, a Dominican, philosopher of nature; Galileo Galilei, believer and scientist; Ruđer Bošković, a physicist, mathematician, astronomer, Jesuit; Dominican Andrija Jamometić, a theologian (born in Ravni Kotari - Croatia), philosopher, diplomat, lawyer... Of course, not everything was so perfect in their time. Some of them had problems with the religious hierarchy, and have paid their scientific discoveries with their life. Let us also remember the four people from Dubrovnik: Petar, Ambrose, Nikša and Božo Gučetić, Dominicans, philosophers and physicians. Let us also not forget Franjo Rački, a prominent historian and theologian.

Some from the church orders wholeheartedly encouraged scientific and cultural work, such as Bishop of Đakovo Josip Juraj Strossmayer. We remember him for his speech at the First Vatican Council, the establishment of the Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts, Gallery, etc. Or Vasa Živković (Pančevo / Serbia) who gave scholarships to Pupin and advised him to travel the world for better opportunities for his scientific research.

Let us also mention the time when the Arab authors were translated into Latin in Toledo (Spain), so Europe could meet the achievements of their and Greek thought. Of the many discoveries that come to us from the then Arab thinkers, let us mention only a few: Arabic numerals, laboratory instruments, surgical instruments, rich libraries in Cordoba, Cairo, Baghdad, Basra, Granada ... Unfortunately, from the XV century onward, religious Islamic scholars began to neglect the natural sciences and it was reflected in the development of science and new discoveries among the Muslim world.

Let us also recall the contributions of ritual (unique for rituals), spiritual, sacred (although motivated by religion, not related to rituals), religious music (music in certain religions) to the development of music in general. Throughout history, religion has been a great inspiration to many artists in their creative work.

Isn’t it that the calendars, past (Egyptian, Chinese, Aztec etc.) and present (Hindu, Jewish, Islamic, Gregorian etc.) have come from the umbrella of religions. Moisi said we all depend on each other, but we live by different calendars (Moisi 2016:58).

From rejection to acceptance – view on the Darwinian theory in the past and today. The theory of evolution experienced rise in Europe in the XIX century. It gradually became universally accepted by biologists. In the history of religion, this theory is used in the interpretation of phases in the development of religion (fetishism, animism, totemism, polytheism,

monotheism). Darwin certainly cannot be accused that with the theory of evolution he wanted to destroy religion. Interpretations according to which Darwin's theory is in conflict with religion are obsolete. Isn't this evident, at least as far as the Roman Catholic Church is concerned, from the decisions of the Second Vatican Council, from the words of John Paul II and Pope Francis.

Are conflicts between science and religion a thing of the past? Even at the beginning of XXI century conflict between religion and science is possible. Was Paul Mojzes, religious historian, not too optimistic on this point when he wrote: "This century will probably mark the end of the conflict between science and religion." (Mojzes, 2014: 99). Today, the play about the conflict between science and religion is being created by the already mentioned debate over Darwin's theory of evolution, creationist theory and the theory of intelligent design. The central idea of modern science is to establish materialism as a worldview, wrote Ch. Taylor (Taylor 2011:564). Still, Taylor believes that what makes belief problematic, often troublesome and full of doubts, is not simply "science". Science and religion will have to exist side by side. While science is based on the real, empirical, religion is based on belief. Religion is important to people and we have to respect it, according to Taylor. Already in 1605 Francis Bacon (1561-1611), advisor to the King James I of England, argued that science and religion cannot be in conflict, as pointed out by Karen Armstrong in her book "*The Case for God*" (2009).

Another question is whether the creationist theories are leading towards exacerbation of relations between science and religion? Creationists oppose the biological theory of evolution. Their literal interpretation of the Book of Genesis about the creation of the world is not even accepted by churches anymore. Thus, the Anglican Church sided with the Darwinists in the conflict with creationists. Many Christian churches in the United States in 2006 marked the anniversary of Darwin's birth. The aim was to highlight the idea that Darwin's theory of evolution is compatible with faith in God, and that Christians do not need to choose between faith and science, but to accept both.

In postmodernism, new debates between science and religion are being introduced. There is also an alliance between religion and concern for ecology. Some resent postmodernism for disclaiming the knowledge of the past, which does underestimate the importance of religion and marginalizes its influence in society. What is important is that postmodernism teaches us that there are a number of religions whose followers must be recognized and respected. What is rejected is that there is one absolute truth, and the forcing of one worldview on the others. The emphasis is no longer on similarities, but on the diversity of religious life (the mosaic of religions). Postmodernism is asking us to live in and with religious diversity.

In Europe today it is more about dialogue and interaction between science and religion (the area of ecology, biotechnology, medicine, genetic studies). Let's say that science has not had much influence on the suppression of religion, as it did on the overcoming of some of the theological postulates (that the Earth was round, not flat; that the earth revolved around the sun and not vice versa; that the world is much older than it could be concluded from the Book of Genesis, etc.).

As an example of the present controversy between science and religion we would mention those regarding drug use in ceremonies. In fact, there are religious cultures where *drug use is allowed*. We can recall that the Aztecs dressed children and young people in beautiful clothes, drugged them, and then slowly took them up the stairs of the pyramids to the sacrificial altar (Doren, 2005). Also, the Incas would burry hundreds of girls with the dead ruler, previously drugged.

Rigveda (Hindu scripture) reminds us of the taking of psychoactive plants (soma) which had strong hallucinogenic properties. Taking soma made the body look dead for several days, followed by an enthusiastic state that lasted several days. In 1094, the Shia sect Hashshashin was established (Syria and Persia), whose members enjoyed hashish and under its effects performed suicide attacks when the opposing army approached. Later they were called assassins. Amish in the United States allow their children, among other things, to use drugs after they turn 17 (before they decide whether they want to live by the strict moral principles of the Amish community which, otherwise, do not allow the use of drugs). In some of the new religious movements drugs are also used. Drugs, as a rule, are used by the members of the Jesus movement (former hippies). According to some authors, such as Chris Bennett, Jesus smoked marijuana and advocated the use of this herb for medicinal properties. Allegedly, he and his followers consumed marijuana during healing. The oil they were using for anointing contained the "kaneh-bosem", which was identified as cannabis extract ("*Isus pušio marihuana*", "Blic", Belgrade, 10 January 2006:6). K. Smith (1995) claimed that John, the author of one of the Gospels, also took cannabis. Group "The Farm" (founder Stephen Gaskin, 1966) used the "sacred drugs" (marijuana, peyote and hallucinogenic mushrooms). After the opposition of society and prison sentences, they rejected the use of not only drugs but also alcohol and caffeine. Drugs were also used by the followers of the *Church of Jesus Christ* at Armageddon. The Talmud has the passage that says that "the one who was going to be executed received a small piece of incense in a glass of wine to lose consciousness." Roman soldiers allowed intoxicating drinks, and according to some, they gave such a beverage to Jesus on the cross (Mt 27, 48; Mk 15, 36; Lk 23, 36; Jn 19, 29).

Therefore, there are religious cultures that allow *drug use in ceremonies*. In the area of Morocco, hashish was used in ceremonies even by members of some

mystic Islamic brotherhoods. Marijuana is consumed by the inhabitants of Mali (West African country with an absolute Muslim majority). *The followers of the god Shiva*, on the feast that marks his birth, use marijuana in the ritual, which may bring them into conflict with the law in many countries. Rastafarians as well. *Rastafarians* smoke ganja (a type of marijuana in Jamaica) in the ceremony, using a “chalice” (in fact a long pipe) or a long marijuana cigarette. They believe that cannabis is the herb that is mentioned in the Old Testament (Exodus 30:23; Isaiah 43:24; Jeremiah 6:20). They believe that it is good for both physical and spiritual healing. Also, they believe that this is a “source of inspiration”. Their faith prohibits them from the use of any other drug. The Supreme Court of Cassation in Italy ruled (2008) that Rastafarians can use marijuana as a “meditative herb”. The use of marijuana for medical purposes is legal in Belgium, Austria, the Netherlands, Canada, Spain, UK, Australia and some US states. The ritual material and herbs used by the followers of Umbanda religion (Brazil) can also be purchased in retail outlets. Shamans in Colombia use synthetic drugs, especially ayahuasca. Members of the *Native American Church* use a hallucinogenic drug (mescaline) as part of their sacred rites. The harvest ritual is accompanied by singing and consuming. The harvesters, before going on a pilgrimage of collecting mescaline, prepare for the act through confession and communion (the so-called peyote ritual). In 1972, two members of the *Love Israel's Church of Jesus Christ at Armageddon* died after inhaling chemicals of toluene, which was an integral part of a ritual. The US Supreme Court ruled (in 2006) that members of a church in New Mexico should be exempted from the law prohibiting the taking of hallucinogenic drugs (O Centro Espirita Beneficiente Uniao do Vegetal - UDV). Its members believe that they can understand God only if they drink tea made from the hoasca plant, which contains an illegal hallucinogenic drug dimethyltryptamine (Dawkins, 2006). The sect was founded in Brazil, and in the United States it has about 130 followers. Iboganu, “the ritual drugs from Ghana”, is used by the members of the Church “Sacrament of Transition” (Slovenia) as a means of initiation.

Religious cultures in which drugs are absolutely prohibited are very widespread. Buddhists reject drugs and alcohol because they can “cloud” the consciousness and lead to loss of control. The five precepts for the followers of Buddhism are: 1. prohibition of killing, 2. theft, 3. sensual misconduct, 4. false speech, 5. taking narcotics. Hindu ascetic life requires them to refrain from murder, theft, sexual impurity, lying and use of intoxicants. (However, some ascetic communities in Hinduism use the sacred herb – kusa). Sharia lawmakers prohibited hashish (due to the harmfulness of its enjoyment both for the individual and for society), while some Sufis allowed taking hashish in order to facilitate achieving ecstasy (Laoust 2004: 391). Mor-

mons have a strict code of ethics that prohibits them from taking drugs (or any means for exciting nerves). The Seventh-day Adventists reject “any irresponsible use of medications and drugs.” It is similar with Sikhs. Many new religious movements, such as ISKCON, Sathya Sai Baba Brahma Kumaris, prohibited drugs. Komaja community members are prohibited from using any drugs. In many African independent churches drugs are prohibited. We could say that the majority of sects reject drugs.

The number of drug users has increased in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well, to the extent that even some religious communities have engaged in their *treatment*. The Roman Catholic Church has a center for rehabilitation of young drug addicts (the Franciscan therapeutic community “Merciful Father” in Medjugorje) as well as the Islamic Community (in Smoluća near Tuzla and in Ilijaš).

Let us return to the relationship between religion and science. These are autonomous fields, many would say – but where is the line between them? Some will say: religion and theology begin where science stops. Science operates independently of the religious opinion. It is not opposed to religion. The vast majority of scientists would perhaps even today, in the XXI century, say that they are religious. Science has its own language (facts) and religion has its own (meanings, values). This does not mean that science and religion are mutually conflicting or moving away from each other. Neither religion can “escape” from science, nor can science escape religion. Is not this evident from the examples of outstanding scientists whose names we mentioned in this article, but who, at the same time, were theologians?

What is the attitude of religious teachings towards technology? I also wrote about this in the book “*Religija u zrcalu teorija*” (Sarajevo, 2016). In Hinduism, Kshatriyas are a warrior caste, so they could very much be interested in worldly technologies, although the prevailing attitude is that Hinduism is neutral to technology, or at the very least indifferent. Some are inclined to argue that in the religious traditions of Asia in general there is nothing that would be positive in relation to technology. This both is and is not true. For example, Buddhists in Tibet for centuries now use a prayer wheel in ceremonies (a hollow cylinder containing the prayer mantras), and that, at the time of the introduction of these practices, was quite a technical achievement. Let us remember that since ancient times wheels were attached to the windmills or watermills.

The story of Noah's ark points to the importance of technology (three hundred cubits long, three internal decks, etc.). The myth of the building of the tower of Babel, that reached to the sky, also talks about the connection of “Semitic” religions with technology. We should also have in mind the Christian iconography whose development necessitated certain technology. Already at the beginning of the Islamic era, we have the

development of architecture (the mosques with magnificent minarets). And also remember how quickly the monks accepted the benefits of glasses.

Does technology today have an influence on religion? Even the so-called “third wave of civilization” – the time of computers and electronic media – has a great impact on religion. Modern science has enabled technology which is largely used by representatives of religion (electronic recorders, TV, radio, Internet ...). Computer technology is used in ceremonies and other activities of religious communities.

Here are some examples of the application of technical achievements in religious activities. In a smartphone's memory you can store the entire Quran (the smartphone can notify users with time of daily prayers, or show which direction Mecca is), Bible, Breviary, Prayer book. Thus imams and priests do not have to carry these books with them when they travel: they simply turn on their phone and read the text from the Quran or the Breviary. The number of TV stations that are managed and programmed by religious communities is growing. Today, the disabled, the old, the sick, sit on Sundays in their warm homes and watch the mass on TV. TV is a great vessel for the messages of religious communities. And we should not forget the Internet. The younger generations are growing up in the world of the Internet. Its influence must not be neglected when it comes to religions and religious communities. Speaking in economic terms, it allows them to act as marketers. Some have already dubbed the Internet as the “bulletin board” of religious communities. Internet has a huge informative role (information about the upcoming holidays, the masses, new books, messages on the activities of the parish, congregation...). That's a real “market” of information about religions. It is up to the user to choose which to adopt. Religious communities have their own websites. Without a doubt, Internet does not contribute so much to the development of the ritual dimension of religion, as much as it contributes to the development of religious comprehension (presentations about religions and religious communities). This allows the believer to become familiar not only with their own, but also with other (different) religious experiences and perspectives. It virtually brings members of different religions closer and allows them to communicate. Let us not forget how much computers help priests and imams in their activities. In them they store data on births, deaths and marriages. They store information about the religious life in their community.

There are also complaints and calls to caution, warning that thanks to new technologies the religious community could become an electronic service for the faithful; that technology could lead to the creation of virtual parishes and congregations. Where are the limits of the use of modern communication achievements in religious practices? I doubt that the Church will approve confession by e-mail. Can we imagine a robot serving a mass or leading the Friday prayers?

The ecological theory is also developing within the sociology of religion, which focuses on the relationship of religion and religious communities to nature. There are many elements that connect religion with nature. Nature is the home for many temples, necropolises, cemeteries, “holy places” – there are “sacred mountains” that are important places of pilgrimage. In many religions, water plays an important role, in others it's the Moon (Hinduism, Jainism) or the Sun (turning of Hindus towards the sun at the time of prayer). Flowering in some religions has sacred meaning, and flowers are an important part of the ritual practice (from births and marriages to funerals). Lotus is a symbol of spiritual enlightenment in Buddhism. In some religions, we find a significant role of various animals: a snake, an elephant, a bull, a lion, a fish, a turtle, a peacock ... Hence religions emphasize the obligation of man to nature and its preservation. They can help develop environmental awareness among the faithful and thus contribute to preserving the world and the balance in it. That is why the *Declaration of Assisi* (1986) was adopted on environmental problems, which was accepted by representatives of religions with the largest number of followers.

Modern dilemmas (ethical debates in the field of biomedicine – euthanasia, abortion, organ donation, cosmetic surgery ...). Since the beginning of the development of genetic engineering there is concern in religious circles. You could say that the radical ban on genetic engineering is being rejected (there are acceptable applications in the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of genetic diseases, etc.). Theologians were also skeptical towards DNA, towards investment in genetics, wondering where all this was going. We should also mention the disputes over artificial insemination, the ethical dilemmas about cloning organs of the human body and stem cells. Basically, most of the religious communities oppose human reproductive cloning. We could say that not only theologians, but also many other scientists, are concerned about security issues: whether scientific achievements and modern technologies will be used for the benefit of mankind, or will they be misused against it.

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