

HOMO CULTURALIS, HOMO RELIGIOSUS: THE CRISIS OF MODERN CULTURE AS THE CRISIS OF RELIGION

ANDRÉ LUIZ GESKE (*)



(*) Candidato ao PhD. na Theologische Universiteit Kampen, Mestre em Teologia pela Faculté Jean Calvin em Aix-en-Provence, França e Bacharel em Teologia pelo Seminário Teológico Presbiteriano Rev. José Manoel da Conceição.

Pastor da Igreja Presbiteriana do Brasil (IPB) e da União Nacional de Igrejas Reformadas Evangélicas da França (UNEPREF).

e-mail: geske@monergismo.com

Resumo

O objetivo deste artigo é demonstrar a relação interna que existe entre religião e desenvolvimento cultural e como a crise presente da cultura moderna tem suas raízes em uma crise da religião na sociedade ocidental. Para essa tarefa, nós buscamos entender o eu humano como a raiz da formação cultural como Freud propôs e como a religião está implicada na cultura. Em seguida, nós enfrentamos o problema do impasse no conceito moderno do eu. Esse problema nos leva a compreender como o eu humano é estruturado. Neste ponto, nós tentamos colocar em suspenso a consciência de si para descobrir a dimensão mais profunda do eu humano de modo a reconhecer a fonte do desenvolvimento cultural. Então, nós temos uma clara percepção de como o eu é estabelecido, além do mais, nós podemos entender a natureza que o eu tem com os elementos culturais. Para finalizar, nós poderemos entender o processo de abertura cultural responsável pelas conquistas e pela crise que enfrentamos hoje.

Palavras-chave: Consciência, Religião, Cultura, Motivos-Base, Diferenciação.

Abstract

The aim of this article is to demonstrate the inner relation that exists between religion and cultural development and how the present crisis of modern culture has its roots in a deeper crisis of religion in Western Society. To this task, we try to understand the human self as the root of cultural formation as Freud has proposed and how religion is implicated in culture. Afterwards, we face the problem of the impasse in modern conception of Ego. This problem calls our attention to realize how the human self is structured. At this point, we attempt to put in suspension the consciousness to figure out the deepest dimension of the human self in order to recognize the source cultural development. Then, we have a clear figure how the Ego is established, moreover, we can realize the nature of the relation that Ego has with the elements of culture. Finally, we will be able to understand the process of cultural unfolding responsible for the achievements and the crisis we face today.

Keywords: Consciousness, Religion, Culture, Ground-motives, Differentiation.

1 INTRODUCTION

An inevitable conclusion is that our culture suffers a deep crisis responsible for drafting new paradigms to our society. This crisis embraces every aspect of our lives bringing an unprecedented situation. New challenges have arisen and they demand new answers. Furthermore, it is a result of a long historical process showing his character as a shift in modern life through a new moral order. Some of the present issues we could delineate taking into account the relativization of positions, autonomy of human reason, strong political polarization and the high level of bureaucratization of human relations. Moreover, the deconstruction of the fundamentals of our Western culture through the denial of core values has taken an important role in order to legitimate a posture of pseudo tolerance to certain cultural elements responsible for eroding the whole cultural structure. These elements are nothing more than the attempt to emancipate man from any sort of authority out of himself creating a new religion rooted in man only. Kantian practical reason clearly demonstrates this attempt in order to make man master of himself. The absolutes that guided the cultural formation were mystified as an ideal unachievable; they were elevated to the position of something that does not belong to this world. Religion, then, was cast out to the private domain to allow the *laïcité* reign absolutely at the public sphere. This shift had even transformed the way man relates to the sacred, making religion as something very individualistic and, therewith, enforcing a social fragmentation.

Since the Enlightenment the rationalistic perspective has dominated the scene and moulded the way of conceiving reality and society. The advent of the French Revolution and the ideals of the Enlightenment brought many advances to the social order, however, this perspective classified religion as an obscurantist matter due to its incompatibility with the standards of rationality. Indeed, reason occupies a central role in modern thinking as the criterion of veracity and, therewith, man is put in a position to rule everything – he is the measure of all reality, however, this post has a price. We start seeing a kind of *dégât* of man, he starts becoming full of himself or as Charles Taylor identified: modern man has a buffered self. Boredom describes a new key feature of man's life as recited by Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal*.

The aim of this text is to think about some elements that have driven our modern culture to a crisis. First, we will consider the Freudian Illusion in order to identify the role of religion in human thinking. Afterwards, we will proceed to a consideration about the Cartesian Cogito and its impasse, and further, how we could deepen it through the suspension of consciousness in order to attain the relationship between the ego and the self. This route will help us to understand the roots of cultural formation and the problem we have to face when we redefine the meaning of religion as we can see in the present day. Finally, we will be able to recognize the elements that helped to originate this crisis we live today.

2 FREUDIAN ILLUSION

When we speak of *Homo Religiosus* in modern times, the first thinker that arises in our mind is Sigmund Freud with his proposal that man has a universal neurosis called religion. This neurosis needs to be overcome in order to achieve a state of consciousness. Indeed to Freud this is the attempt to resolve an affective problem posed by the murder and the consequent guilty in order to obtain the reconciliation with father offended as Ricœur resumes (1965, p. 255). This great event, as Freud noted, is the trigger that starts the creation of civilization since from this event human beings started to set up laws (taboos) to regulate their lives in community. Moreover, the economic function of religion, according to Freud appears when we pass from the concept of private religion as a personal neurosis to the concept of universal neurosis, that is, when the inner impulses materialize in cultural objects. This economic approach of religion in Freud's thought can be found in his book *The Future of an Illusion* (FREUD, 1976a) where he will set up the dynamics of the investments of the libido.

Freud (FREUD, 1976b, Vol. XXI, p. 13) affirms, then, that the economy of human impulses forms what we understand by culture. The fight between Thanatos (*Death*) and Eros (*Love*) inside the human experience represented in religion is responsible for creating the conditions for culture and civilization. According to Freud, culture represents in parts the super-ego of man, however, it is conceived in a more enlarged manner since it has the same role of preventing sexual desires or aggressiveness which is incompatible with social order. Culture demands an instinctive renouncement remembering the three greatest interdictions: the incest, the cannibalism

and the murder.

Although, culture has a task of correcting and preventing human behaviour incompatible with social order, it is also responsible for protecting man from the nature. According to Freud, man is “discontented” in his situation, because he can neither satisfy his desires narcissistically and nor fulfil his cultural task that his aggressiveness restrains. In consequence man loves consolation and, then, culture comes to protecting man from this situation through a benevolent manner, namely, Religion. When frustrations, distresses and the feeling of powerlessness attack man’s life, he searches for consolation. He has a fear of the toughness of reality; he is feeble as a child, he searches for his father’s protection. Then, man as a child before the nature makes gods just like the image of his father to protect him, to console him from the toughness of nature. This dynamic is the result of man as the creator of culture. Religion as an illusion helps man to carry on his cultural and civilizing task and, then, at this moment, he becomes *Homo Culturalis*, because the instincts are canalized in order to promote societal development.

Freud is right in identifying how deep religion is in human life and at the same time show the impossibility of thinking about culture and civilization without highlighting the importance of religion in cultural unfolding. Although, these conclusions are very helpful for the acknowledgement of religion in human culture, this approach to religion is too naïve, because if it is the accomplishment of secret desires present in the deepest dimension of man, it cannot be the support to morality, since religion is bound to desire, it cannot be bound to the prohibition of desire (RICŒUR, 1965, p.266). However, the opposite is always assumed, religion is the source of morality and a mechanism of repression. Obviously, Freud will explain this paradox, nevertheless, we are invited to search in philosophy a clear relation between religion and culture; religion and thinking.

For this reason, the Dutch philosopher Herman Dooyeweerd can enlighten our understanding of the relation between culture and religion in a more proper manner. When he speaks about the relation between philosophy and religion, we can have a glimpse how we can realize it.

Philosophy is theoretical, and in its constitution it remains bound to the relativity of all human thought. As such, philosophy itself needs an absolute starting point. It derives this exclusively from religion. Religion grants stability and anchorage even to theoretical thought. Those who think they find an absolute starting point in theoretical thought itself come to this belief through an essentially religious drive. (DOOYEWEERD, 2012a, p. 8)

As a human activity, philosophy is relative because it is bound to the temporal structure of thinking of man, then, it needs an absolute starting point since a complete scepticism could not afford any kind of theoretical thinking at all. This necessity points to the fundamental structure of man's thought, in consequence, man is structured to relate himself to the source of everything. In consequence of this structure the quest to know who we are, or from where we came or where we are going to, is central to man – Philosophy started by questions as such. The human Ego is responsible for giving a unified insight to the diversity of meaning of reality. The religious starting point assures the stability to all theoretical activity anchoring it in something beyond any logical standpoint. This stability that we have in a religious starting point is responsible for the development of everything in man's world. Then, it is inescapable to think without a religious starting point to anchor it. Thus, religion is universal and it cannot be put aside, because the relationship between human Ego and a starting point that anchors the thought is religious in its nature. Therefore, cultural formation is bound to religion since it depends on a religious starting point to anchor its development. Even the attempt to avoid the presence of religion in a society is a religious endeavour as Arendt (1961, p. 102) well stated “whatever fulfils the function of a religion is a religion”.

Religion is responsible for defining the values of a whole society and these values will be materialized in the monuments, literature, work of arts, etc. Then, religion sets up the guidelines for man's cultural activity. In Postmodern times human ego has established itself as the foundation of the new secular religion. The fundament whereby the civilizational development must be established. It implies a replacement of the ancient fundament to the new ones. This process well described in Charles Taylor's book *A Secular Age* (TAYLOR, 2007) points to an egocentric religion that takes part in society and brings a new perspective of thinking societal order. However, this modification takes us to an unprecedented crisis, because it lies on the human subjectivity that has been taken in an absolutist manner. We need to turn to this issue in

order to have an idea what is at stake. It seems that we have forgotten the old definition from Augustine of Hippo (2002, p.44; 58-60), instead of using our reason to search the truth, we enjoy it devoting all of our love to ourselves as our own redeemers, that is, those things which should be the tools to achieve the great treasure of our lives, they became the most important good to ourselves.

3 THE COGITO'S IMPASSE

According to the French philosopher Paul Ricœur (1969, p. 436, 437), the reflexion about the self should be considered the first truth to the philosopher, and, in consequence, it has an important role in philosophical activity. The tradition of Descartes, Kant, and Fichte puts the self as autonomous truth, that is, it can be neither verified, nor deduced (RICŒUR, 1969, p. 237). According to Ricœur, the “Ego” cannot be a starting point, because it is a point of arrival indeed. This comprehension breaks up with both the rationalist and idealist tradition and, at the same time, it makes the conscience of the self a task, that is, a concrete reflexion and not an abstract one (RICŒUR, 1969, p. 357; 439). Consciousness is considered not as something given or an intuition as in the Idealist system of thought.

Nevertheless, if the “Ego” worked as a starting point to analyse reality as in both Idealist and Rationalist philosophies, it should be, first of all, crystalline, transparent to itself in such way that it could analyse itself completely. Consequently, such “Ego” should presuppose that it never gets confused with itself and its several analyses. Ricœur asserts:

The place of ultimate foundation shall be the subjectivity, and the transcendence shall be doubtful and the immanent indubitable, - it becomes in its turn eminently doubtful, thereby, even the Cogito also can be submitted to the radical critique of Phenomenology which applies its methods to everything that is shown. (ROMBACH; RICŒUR, 1975, p. 43).

However, starting from this perspective, according to Husserl, we could verify that there is an inadequacy of consciousness due to an invincible point in all doubt, that is, “the live presence of the self” responsible for the indeterminacy of the perception since we cannot perceive an object immediately, except as an act of thinking that follows this perception.

An external perception (it is not apodictic) is an experience of the object itself, however, in this presence, the object has to the person who perceives it an open and infinite set of undetermined possibilities that they are not perceived. (HUSSERL, 1947, p. 49)

Here lies the reason to resort the phenomenological reduction, otherwise the analysis of reality would be truncated due to the impossibility of the object be taken apodictically. Consequently, the self can deceive itself by any ontical enunciation since it follows the apodicticity of the Cogito. The Cogito is considered apodictic in order to anchor any act of thinking, unless it would be completely relative and sceptical what would block all reasoning of itself. Then, to bypass such apodicticity of the Cogito we should proceed by a phenomenological reduction of the “Pure Ego” in order to not go astray in the diversity of senses and, then, we could find the root of all philosophical thought that founds the cultural development.

However, Husserl does not admit a reduction of the “Pure Ego”, because it is not a real moment of the mental processes [*Erlebnis*], it presents as a transcendency of a peculiar kind which is not constituted – “a transcendency within immanency”. (HUSSERL, 1983, p. 110).

The pure Ego would, however, seem to be something essentially *necessary*; and, as something absolutely identical throughout every actual or possible change in mental process, it *cannot in any sense be a really inherent part or moment* of the mental processes themselves. In every actional cogito the ego lives out its life in a special sense. (HUSSERL, 1983, p. 110).

This sentence contradicts a fundamental thesis from the husserlian phenomenology, that is, that all transcendency is doubtful, because it is not a real moment of the mental process. (HUSSERL, 1983, p. 73-78; RICŒUR, 1986, p.45).Consequently, due to the *Cogito*, the pure Ego belongs to all mental process in the background, becoming a unique stream of mental process which can be converted into actional *cogitationes*, as Husserl affirms. Exactly Kant’s proposition when he states that the *Cogito* must be able to accompany the representations. The self-consciousness that engenders the representation of own *Cogito* is not able to accompany any other, because it is unique and identical in every conscience. (KANT, 1998, p. 246).

This transcendental dimension rests without access since we can attain only the *cogitationes* of the pure Ego. Then, we have to assume the certainty of the pure Ego in

order to proceed any kind of reasoning, however, it promotes a scission between the object itself and its appearance to the consciousness. Therefore, pure Ego rests enigmatic and without the possibility of being really known. Instead of proposing a possibility of resolving the crisis in modern philosophy, the retrieval of the Cartesian Meditations by Husserl's transcendentalism helped to deepen even more the problem (RICŒUR, 2004, p. 14; 44) bequeathing to the posterity the impossibility of accomplishment of the famous religious maxim from the Temple of Apollo at Delphi that always stimulated philosophy – *ΓνωθιΣαυτον*.

However, we could try to put consciousness in suspension through a phenomenological approach, nevertheless, it is half of the way. We need to understand the feasibility of this method with the aid of other insights, because the knowledge of the human ego is the most important element in cultural development since it is the source of every human construction. The impossibility of knowing it for sure from rationalist and idealist perspectives helped to promote an insufficient proposition to analyse the complexity of human being. Man became massified and his signification was reduced as a result of a simple evolutionary process.

4 THE CONSCIOUSNESS IN SUSPENSION

Since we have identified the impasse of the Cogito that modern philosophy has promoted, the way to search for an answer is open to try another possibility. For this reason we would like to resort to Paul Ricœur's proposition based on Freud's theory about the consciousness and the discovery of unconsciousness. Ricœur proposes an Epoché in reverse (*epochè retournée*) submitting consciousness itself to a phenomenological reduction. (RICŒUR, 1965, p. 132). Then, consciousness is suspended becoming less known and demanding a relation to what is conscious. Consequently, the unfolding of this proposition will allow us to pass the word unconscious from the adjectival to the substantive usage. Unconsciousness cannot be perceived by itself, because it is only perceived by its relation to consciousness.

Whereas the Husserlian Epoché was a reduction to consciousness, the Freudian Epoché is seen as a reduction of consciousness; thus we speak of it as an Epoché in reverse. This reversal is achieved only when we posit instinct (*Trieb*) as the fundamental concept (*Grundbegriff*), with everything else being understood as a vicissitude (*Schicksal*) of

instincts.[...] The Epoché in reverse implies that we stop taking the "object" as our guide, in the sense of the vis-a-vis of consciousness, and substitute for it the "aims" of the instincts; and that we stop taking the "subject" as our pole of reference, in the sense of the one to whom or for whom "objects" appear. In short, we must abandon the subject-object problematic as being that of consciousness. (RICŒUR, 1970, p. 122).

Through this proposal we could understand that there is an intermediation between the relation subject-object that cannot be exhausted. This element of intermediation that arises from the Freudian Epoché shows a path towards a deeper dimension of human being responsible for guiding human capacity of interpreting reality. We can conclude, then, human Ego is deeper than presupposed when we found the unconsciousness. In this perspective, the depths of the human being are uncovered and systematized by a method such as the psychoanalytical, instead of being confirmed by a descriptive method such as the phenomenological. Moreover, the experience from the psychanalysis imposes on us the dynamic of the energetic system that proves this deeper level of the subject-object relation and allows a new approach to the complexity of consciousness. Consciousness, then, is not considered as a homogeneous entity since we verify through the dynamic of the energetic system the presence of unconsciousness. This conclusion shows the modality of unconsciousness (Freud refers to psychical acts of unconsciousness) that can become conscious or not.

Ricœur states that consciousness is not a right, it has to be conquered from unconsciousness. Become conscious is an emancipatory act; it is to penetrate in... being unconscious is to move away from being conscious. This suspension of consciousness shows how unconsciousness arises pointing to a more complex dimension of human ego. Indeed, the human ego is far more profound than we thought and it demands an approach that does justice to this complexity in order to give to us a clear comprehension of the inner being of man. This dimension helps us to understand the most complex phenomena that originate in human life beside the phenomena in culture. These latter can be perceived objectively and give the conditions to penetrate deeper in the former. The inner being of man can be uncovered by the cultural symbols, since they materialize it. Cultural expressions and institutions reflect the deepest of human being because they represent the values that a community supports.

At this moment we could ask what kind of relation between the suspension of consciousness and religion is set up? In Freudian literature we could find another paradox that can enlighten this relation.

In the Freudian literature, the sense of guilt is consistently understood in this archaic sense. But an epigenesis of guilt cannot be directly established by a psychology of the superego; it can only be deciphered by the indirect means of a textual exegesis of the penitential literature. In this literature there is constituted an exemplary history of conscience (*Gewissen*). Man arrives at adult, normal, ethical guilt when he understands himself according to the figures of this exemplary history. (RICŒUR, 1970, p. 546).

At this moment, we can establish the relation between the psychoanalytic theory and hermeneutics. This tension opens a field of investigation through a hermeneutical perspective enriching the analysis towards the inner dimension of human being. According to Ricœur's conclusion of Freud's proposal is that the result is the inverse of Freud's conception about religion as an illusion. To become conscious is to become religious not because religion is a part of the energetic system that Freud identified, but human ego is structured to relate to its divine origin that transcends man himself. From the relation to this divine origin, human ego acquires the content needed to build the whole structure of interpretation to decipher the meaning of reality. Furthermore, it engenders the cultural expressions present in a civilization that mediate the matrix formed by all values and presuppositions of a given society. This relation between human ego and its divine origin embraces all aspects of human life. Therefore, we can consider human Ego as religious, mainly because of his religious relation to his divine origin, he is able to find the origin of his own existence. The ontological content of human existence is provided by this religious relation to the divine origin that attributes real meaning to human existence, it will be better explained further. Moreover, being religious is to become conscious of the self. The phenomenon of guilt represents the failure of the human Ego relates to his divine origin. This failure is materialized in cultural expressions and through this materialization we can understand our experience of fault in our everyday life.

This device of Epoché in reverse of Ricœur's analysis of Freud's proposal discovers that there is something at the bottom of the human ego. Neither Husserl nor Kant did not want to recognize this dimension in their inquiries because they should assume a contrary stance to the presuppositions that founded their systems. Freud shows

that the subject-object relation is more complex than it was thought, however, this conclusion falls prey of its own analysis due to the absolutisation of the psychical aspect of reality limiting the inquiry to the energetic analysis of impulses, instincts that drive human being. This absolutisation revealed itself contradictory when it was required to analyse the phenomenon of guilt due to the fact that it is against the previous understandings about this issue, namely, the concept of guilt in religion, its function and the dynamic in societal order. Guilt comes from an inner recognition of the offense perpetrated by someone else. The offense must be exposed externally and consequently man forms so many symbols, narratives and works about guilt in every human culture.

Therefore, consciousness cannot be reduced to a single temporal aspect of reality in order to find in that a true answer about itself. Consciousness spans in all temporal aspects that forms the fabric of reality. Through a hermeneutical approach of the cultural formation we can identify the real religion shared in a society by their members by the materialization of *les états de choses* of consciousness. Even the concept of guilt, for instance, is materialized in every human culture in every period of history through narratives, monuments, and symbols, etc. that show clearly this phenomenon as something deeper in human life. It drives us to conclude that it reveals too much about the relation that man has with his divine origin. The materialization of this notion of guilt through narratives and other cultural works that remains through time is the objective pole of analysis. However, if there is an objective pole, there is also a subjective pole in this process of analysis and to this pole we turn at this moment.

5 MYSELF AND I

The complexity of the human Ego was demonstrated by the previous analysis, however, we need to identify correctly the deepest dimension of human Ego that is characterized by a supratemporality due to the impossibility of being described by any aspect of the temporal reality. In Kantian and Husserlian system the deepest dimension is identified with the Pure Ego and it cannot be known indeed. In consequence, we can consider the pure Ego as enigmatic (DOOYEWEERD, 2012b, p. 17, 18, 21, 23, 24). The pure Ego in Kantian philosophy identified as the logical unity of transcendental apperception is defined by its absolute simplicity which configures the condition of possibility of any act of thinking. This logical unity of transcendental apperception

cannot belong to the empirical realm because it precedes all data of the intuitions making it possible, if it were not, no cognition could occur since it needs a unity caused in consciousness by this transcendental apperception. (KANT, 1998, p. 232). In this way, we are able to identify, in one hand the empirical Ego as the psychophysical “I” of human personality and in the other hand, this pure Ego of logical unity of transcendental apperception that cannot be known as affirmed above. As a result of this impossibility, it can be considered as mythical. (DOOYEWEERD, 2012b, p. 18). Furthermore, it is not possible, indeed, to consider the pure Ego absolutely simple as Kant affirmed, because it necessarily has a multiplicity since it has to relate to the acts of thinking.

This kind of reasoning, such as in Kantian and Husserlian systems, is due to the fact of reducing the reflexion to a specific aspect of reality. The pure Ego is reduced to the logical aspect by which it is explained and identified. When it happens the pure Ego loses its real meaning and fades away to nothing.¹ Only through a relation to its divine origin the Ego can know itself and found all cultural development. Freud, Kant, Husserl and others achieved to discover that human Ego is far more complex than thought, however, the analysis they conducted were reductionist due the absolutisation of a single aspect what prevented them to identify accurately what is human Ego, and what kind of relation it establishes with itself in order to make knowledge of itself and the possible reality.

Human Ego is characterized by an impulse, but not as Freud’s energetic system foresaw; this impulse (*sensus divinitatis*)² always points towards to the divine origin that every man in the world has. As a result of this impulse, every culture exhibit a religion, namely, there existed no society even today without a religious manifestation and, consequently, without the record of the phenomenon of guilt. As the French Reformer of the XVI century, John Calvin stated echoing Cicero:

But, as a heathen tells us, there is no nation so barbarous, no race so brutish, as not to be imbued with the conviction that there is a God. Even those who, in other respects, seem

¹ The absolutized aspect of reality can provide only a part of the meaning of something requiring an explanation that it cannot do derailing the self-reflexion up to the culmination of a self-deceived Narcissistic perspective.

² This concept arises in Cicero’s book *De Natura Deorum*; Calvin takes this concept to demonstrate that man has an impulse towards God due to the fact that he was created in his own image. It is not a merely knowledge about the existence of God, nevertheless it is an existential knowledge that englobes the whole man conducting him towards God. Then, normally, we utilise the word *sensus*, because it is a kind of sense in human life and not a simply knowledge, that is, it is not simply epistemological, but it englobes the entire human being.

to differ least from the lower animals, constantly retain some sense of religion; so thoroughly has this common conviction possessed the mind, so firmly is it stamped on the breasts of all men. Since, then, there never has been, from the very first, any quarter of the globe, any city, any household even, without religion, this amounts to a tacit confession, that a sense of Deity is inscribed on every heart. (CALVINO, 2007, p. 43).

This impulse so discussed nowadays in Alvin Plantinga's books is responsible for the variety of religions that we have, since human ego is empty in itself. It is determined in a positive sense by its concentric relation to the divine origin. As the Dutch philosopher Herman Dooyeweerd stated:

For, as the concentration point of all meaning, which it finds dispersed in the modal diversity of its temporal experience, the human Ego points above itself to the Origin of all meaning, whose absoluteness reflects itself in the human Ego as the central seat of the image of God. (DOOYEWEERD, 2012b, p. 24).

The human Ego driven by this impulse towards its divine origin finds expression in the basic motives. These basic motives give content and direction to this impulse in human Ego as a spiritual centre powering the thinking and acting. According to the basic motive, the act of thinking, the act of feeling and the act of willing will acquire a specific shape in the life of the individual and in the life of the society. If the basic motive is apostate, it will drive the impulse of the human Ego to the temporal horizon of experience in order to seek the meaning of itself and its Origin. This tendency gives rise to idols originated from the absolutisation of an aspect of reality that has a relative meaning. This absolutized aspect becomes a kind of god taking place of the divine origin of man. The human Ego starts analysing the surrounding reality by the paradigm established by the idol through the content taken from the apostate basic motive. In other words, it seeks the absolute meaning needed to know itself, its origin and the reality in a relative aspect of the temporal reality. This posture divides reality in realms, creating irreconcilable dualisms that prevents the advance of reasoning.

The human Ego directed by an apostate basic motive attributes the absoluteness to something that is relative, bound to temporal horizon, (DOOYEWEERD, 2012b, p. 25) this is the genesis of all religions. Only through a true religion, the relation between the human Ego to its divine origin through a faithful basic motive is able to acquire real knowledge of itself and of reality. This is the only path in order to (1) on the one hand, not create an absolutisation of an aspect of reality that reduces the meaning of human

being, and, on the other hand, promote the knowledge of the self and give the condition of possibility to perform all of his potentialities as a human person; (2) not break reality into irreconcilable parts that create dualisms, but understand reality as a coherent whole with meaning to be respected and discovered by the process of cultural opening. This route is the only one that can give us the real knowledge of ourselves. It is no coincidence that the John Calvin started his book affirming that:

Our wisdom, in so far as it ought to be deemed true and solid Wisdom, consists almost entirely of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves. But as these are connected together by many ties, it is not easy to determine which of the two precedes and gives birth to the other. For, in the first place, no man can survey himself without forthwith turning his thoughts towards the God in whom he lives and moves; because it is perfectly obvious, that the endowments which we possess cannot possibly be from ourselves; nay, that our very being is nothing else than subsistence in God alone. In the second place, those blessings which unceasingly distil to us from heaven, are like streams conducting us to the fountain. (CALVINO, 2007, p. 37)

At this moment, we need to turn to the basic motives to understand the dynamic of the content that directs human Ego towards to its divine origin or misdirect it.

6 THE GROUND-MOTIVES

Evidently, since human Ego is empty in itself, it cannot be the starting point of any development, as Dooyeweerd affirmed, however, the basic motives [or ground-motives – *religieuze grondmotieven*] give to us the content that directs consciousness. They are responsible for anchoring every single intellectual and culture endeavour due to the absolute character that these basic motives acquire to grants stability. Then, through this anchorage of thought in basic motives, we can understand the reason that they are religious by nature due to that all development derived depends on the relation between the basic motives and the human Ego. Thus, all cultural development of Western Civilization is driven by these religious forces. Dooyeweerd explains:

It is a force [Ground-Motive] that acts as a spiritual mainspring in human society. It is an absolutely central driving force because, from the religious centre of life, it governs temporal expressions and points towards the real or supposed origin of all existence. (DOOYEWEERD, 2012a, p. 8).

The ground-motive is present in every human development as its foundation. It does not have an individual character, namely, it is not ascertained from a personal faith

or ideas. It has a communal character responsible for guiding the individual even when the individual is not aware of it. The ground-motive sets up everything in a society and it is revealed by the feelings, the ways of thinking, artistic endeavours, moral standards, legal structures, emanations of the religious beliefs. Then, nothing is neutral at all. Dooyeweerd points to the depth of the ground-motive:

In the profoundest possible sense it determines a society's entire life- and worldview. It puts its indelible stamp on the culture, science and the social structure of a given period. This applies so long as a leading cultural power can in fact be identified as giving clear direction to the historical development of society. If such ceases to be the case, then a real crisis emerges at the foundations of that society's culture. Such a crisis is always accompanied by spiritual uprootedness. (DOOYEWEERD, 2012a, p. 8)

Therefore, we can understand the real crisis we face in our culture. The post-modern period is characterized justly by the tension of a possible replacement of the ground-motive at work. People cannot control the ground-motive, rather they are governed by it. Furthermore, the ground-motive is a source of spiritual force in which people become participants in the founding process of a community. It gathers people towards a goal. As Dooyeweerd has stated, they are responsible for guiding society in its development setting up the paradigms and standards of values used to build all features of society. When the ground-motive does not work any longer, it is because the values of the whole society start not responding to the new demands. It points to the fact that the ground-motive has been replaced by another one. Due to the religious nature of the ground-motive, the spiritual uprootedness arises in the scenario, because of the searching for new spiritual forces that are able to respond man's desires. Man searches for an absolute point to anchor all of his deeds unless we would face a complete relativism, or a scepticism, however, if the ground-motive erects gods those are not big enough to satisfy man's desires, they are fated to collapse.

As soon as philosophical thought begins to lose its definite direction in consequence of the undermining of its religious basic motive, it falls into a state of spiritual decadence and becomes a victim to a radical relativism and nihilism. At present the symptoms of such a spiritual uprooting can readily be established in what is called the fundamental crisis of contemporary Western thought. In this the distress and disintegration of the human ego itself is revealed. For the Ego necessarily dissolves itself into nothingness when it loses its direction towards the Absolute. (DOOYEWEERD, 2012b, p. 25)

The Western Civilization was formed by four ground-motives, Dooyeweerd highlights. The first ground-motive is the Greek Form-Matter motive that has ruled the Ancient Civilization (Greece and Rome); the second one is the radical Biblical motive of creation, fall into sin and redemption by Jesus Christ in the communion of the Holy Spirit, this biblical motive was fused with the first one creating the third ground-motive, namely, the scholastic ground-motive of Nature and Grace that governed the Christendom up to the modern period where we could verify the advent of the fourth ground-motive of Nature-Freedom which characterizes the modern humanism. Except the radical Biblical ground-motive (creation-fall-redemption), the three others ground-motives (Greek Form-Matter; Scholastic Nature-Grace; Modern Humanist Nature-Freedom) have a dialectical nature.³

These ground-motives, as affirmed above, are responsible for providing an absolute anchorage point for every cultural development. Each one of them were present in the formation of each period of the development of the Western Civilization, giving support and being absolutized one of the poles each time. Every cultural expression, juridical institutions, artistic endeavours, political structures, scientific advancements or religious manifestations have the dialectic of a ground-motive as their background. Since a relative point in reality is absolutized, it becomes a deified aspect that is considered as self-sufficient to anchor every human endeavour, however, the deification of a relative aspect calls forth the deification of the aspect correlated, namely, “the counterpart in reality with which the former is connected and which now claim the same pretended absoluteness as the initial absolutisation.” (DOOYEWEERD, 2012a, p. 13). Dooyeweerd concludes the state of this dialectics as such:

The result is a religious dialectic: a polarity or tension between two extremes within a single ground-motive. On the one hand, the ground-motive breaks apart; its two antithetical motives, each claiming absoluteness, cancel each other. But on the other hand, each motive also determines the other’s religious meaning, since each is necessarily related to the other. (DOOYEWEERD, 2012a, p. 13).

Therefore, these ground-motives are responsible for providing the content of the religious beliefs in society, that is, the true religion presents in society is the relation of

³ To a complete analysis of how each ground-motive has been at work in the formation of the Western Civilization, Dooyeweerd’s trilogy “Reformation and Scholasticism” is recommended to understand this dialectics and the influence that it had on the formation of the western philosophical thought.

the human Ego searching for its divine origin filled in by the dialectics of a ground-motive. Normally, the true religion supported by a society is confused with religious manifestation itself. Furthermore, the ground-motive of our contemporary period evinced by a very apostate nature averse to religion due to its effort of banishing anything that sounds metaphysics from every philosophical reasoning. Although, religion can be very metaphysical, it does not need to be necessarily, as we have verified through this article. Religion permeates all aspects and relations that man has with reality, because he seeks its divine origin in it, however, he is not able to recognize his transcendental and personal divine origin. Then, he creates new gods to serve instead, and in consequence, they become the paradigm to understand everything. Religion, then, is redefined.

7 REDEFINING RELIGION

After this exposition about some problems of our contemporary time, we understand that we have misled the real meaning of religion. Losing the perspective that man is a religious being, we started replacing this human feature by new cultural elements and rational argumentation, however, they just hide the real religious impulse present in human Ego. If we proceed with a reduction of the motivations of man in producing its culture, we are going to find a religious relation in every area of human endeavour, because man needs an absolute point to fix his thought. The Enlightenment promoted a redefinition of religion with the implementation of a new standard of rationality. The shift of the Scholastic ground-motive of nature-grace to the new humanist ground-motive of nature-freedom brought a tension to the concept and the role of religion. Religion had to be thought in accordance to this new religious ground-motive.

Kant has delimited God to the same realm of the things in themselves, which cannot be known effectively, however, Schleiermacher proposed a new definition for religion through an idealist paradigm considering it as a relation of the finite to the infinite. He states:

The contemplation of the pious is the immediate consciousness of the universal existence of all finite things, in and through the Infinite, and of all temporal things in and through the Eternal. Religion is to seek this and find it in all that lives and moves, in

all growth and change, in all doing and suffering. It is to have life and to know life in immediate feeling, only as such an existence in the Infinite and Eternal. (SCHLEIERMACHER, 2006, p. 36, 37)

Incapable of being defined through the Nature pole on the ground-motive, Schleiermacher switches to the Freedom pole cancelling the objectivity of religion, unless religion would be considered irrational due to its inherent metaphysical nature from the Scholastic period. An example of the naturalistic approach to religion could be seen in the Freudian concept that highlights the deterministic aspect of religion as a result of the investments of the impulses from the libido, however, this approach is too extremist not doing justice to the real nature of what religion really is. These redefinitions of religion are rooted in the dynamics of the modern humanistic ground-motive. Even those that support an atheist or a despising posture regarding religion show how religious they are with their critics based on an absolutized pole of the ground-motive. The personal attachment to the parameter to judge religion is already from a religious nature, indeed. In this way we can understand the phenomena of radical rationalisation of the Christian faith present in Deism and a more elastic mystical concept of spirituality from a subjectivist understanding of religion.

In Deism, Christianity has incorporated elements from the rationalistic worldview to conform to the anthropocentric shift we had in the modern period. Modern Christians started pulling away the supernatural dimension of Christianity, the personal relationship between creator and creature and the implication of God in human fate. These notions gave rise to a religion without revelation putting human reason as its criterion of truth. God is just an entity needed to make the system function. If religion has no role in society any longer, but it is just a feature of the human being, the absence of it, then, is totally possible. From this possibility we can verify the advent of the secularization as a viable way in the formation of post-Christian societies. Christianity was always the foundation of the whole Western Civilization, it gave the justification for the moral systems, the ontological comprehension of reality and the epistemological conditions to understand everything; however, within the replacement of Christianity in Western Civilization by a secularized understanding of everything, Christian faith has no room any longer.

This uprootedness of Christianity from Western Civilization gave rise to new

forms of religiosity, mainly, new conceptions based on the market logic as a mystical spirituality that sells. This new conception is purified from the dogmatic development, since it brought several problems in history and it seeks to avoid the critical path of rationalism becoming something essentially subjective based on feelings. Furthermore, the rising of this variety of spirituality seeks to fit the need of each individual as a product to be consumed. The pendulum from one pole of the ground-motive goes from one side to the other. Religion does not need to give answers any longer; it needs to make people happy or to be filled in by something that gives a reason to go on.

The problem we have with this variety of definitions of religion is that each one gives its own view about man, namely, each religion sets up its own concept of human being, however, it, indeed, reflects the new paradigm from the modern humanist ground-motive. Taylor resumes this shift as follows:

By secular humanists, it is often framed by what I call a “subtraction” story: the religio-metaphysical illusions fall away, and human beings discover that they just *are* humans united in societies which can have no other normative principles but those of the MMO (Modern Moral Order), and so on for the other features of the newly defined predicament. (TAYLOR, 2007, p. 295).

This description reflects exactly the anthropocentric shift that man pulls away everything that is not in accordance with himself and keep everything that is convenient to his welfare. Man is the criterion of all judgement and here we find an unfolding problem of redefining the concept of man through a redefinition of religion – the process of cultural development becomes limited due to a limited worldview ballasted in man himself. The concept of man becomes a metamorphosis and man is not a concept heavy enough to hold a complete civilizational development. Although, in modern times we have had a huge progress in many different domains of human life, we can verify that they are from the remnants of the Christian tradition conveniently selected and secularized. Due to this redefinition of religion, we have a crisis of foundations that we face today, indeed, we can assert that the crisis of modern culture as the crisis of religion. This modern humanism is not able to surpass this crisis, because it criticizes the foundations and at the same time its proposals cannot replace them.⁴

⁴ It is important to verify Arendt’s words when she asserts: “Modern ideologies, whether political or psychological or social, are far better fitted to immunize man’s soul against the shocking impact of reality than any traditional religion

Therefore, religion must promote the correct understanding of reality and not alienate man from it. It must engender the conditions to interpret the phenomena searching for the harmony of the whole reality in order to develop a solid culture and progress in human life. Then, we should turn to the last point of this article to understand the process of cultural formation.

8 DIFFERENTIATIONS

Since the Enlightenment, religion has been considered as an element responsible for alienating man from reality. Religion is a kind of illusion as Freud has stated or something to languish the consciousness, however, true religion should promote the opposite. Freud was not totally wrong, because man as *homo religiosus* produces culture from his religious attachment as we could verify above. Nevertheless, religion as the most important feature of the human being should foment the conditions to correctly interpret reality and advance it. Religion should help the human progress in every area of life. Unfortunately, this is not what we see in reality in the present time.

Although, in the past huge cultural progress was made in society by a religious individual, in the present time, religion seems to embarrass cultural development. However, it is a false impasse, because every human attempt is religious by nature as we saw. Even an atheist has his faith in something, what happened is that the human Ego guided by the content acquired from the operating ground-motive gives a direction to the structure of reality. The operating ground-motive of modern humanism is apostate in nature, it will always consider religion as an only subjective aspect of human life with no impact in the public square. This feature of the modern ground-motive is responsible for eliminating any trace of religion in our contemporary society, mainly, Christianity, due to the impetus of breaking with the Middle Ages that was controlled by another ground-motive. This is the reason for a secular process has taken place in our modern society. The problem is that this modern humanist ground-motive does not do justice to the complexity of reality. It absolutizes a single aspect and blurs the differences through a reductionist analysis. This perspective is promoted by the

we know.” The modern period replaced religion by an ideologies which prevent man to understand reality. However, true religion promotes the understanding of reality. (ARENDDT, 1961, p. 135). See also the diagnosis and the critics of Edmund Husserl in relation to the state of culture in Europe (HUSSLERL, 1970).

scientific ideal present in our society, namely, science is one of the most influential features that gives the guidelines to modern worldview; however, science considers reality through one single aspect each time and due to it, a reductionist perspective of the whole arises in our manner of perceiving reality.

Although, this manner of perceiving reality is reductionist, it does not preclude the moments of truth that allows the process of discovery and scientific progress; however, the biblical ground-motive is the only one able to not create dualism and interpret the whole arrangement in a perspective that makes sense. Dooyeweerd states:

The scriptural ground-motive of the Christian religion liberates our view of reality from the false prejudices imposed us by idolatrous ground-motives. The motive of Creation continually drives us to examine the inner nature, mutual relation, and coherence of all aspects in God's created reality. When we become conscious of this motive, we begin to see the richness of God's creation in the great pluriformity and colourfulness of its temporal aspects. Since we know the true origin and the religious root-unity of these aspects through God's revelation, we do not absolutize one aspect and reduce the others, but we respect each on the basis of its own intrinsic nature and its own law. For God created everything after its kind. (DOOYEWEERD, 2012a, p. 43).

The aspects of reality “cannot be reduced to each other in their mutual relation” as Dooyeweerd asserts. Therefore, each aspect has a sovereignty in its own domain what Abraham Kuyper, the famous Dutch Statesman and Founder of the Free University of Amsterdam, called as Sphere Sovereignty [*Soevereiniteit in Eigen kring*]. Sphere Sovereignty is a concept developed to show that the aspects of reality have their own authority and they have an independency. They form spheres that are not under the control of any other; however, they are in relation to each other. Family, State, Church, Education, Science, Civil Justice, Economy and Labour, Artistic Expression, they are all spheres that have their own sovereignty and one cannot govern the other, but they work harmoniously. When the sovereignty of the spheres is respected we can observe the development of the potentialities of each domain of life, the diversity present in reality is acknowledged and it can be unfolded through a historical process of cultural disclosure. We notice that our culture has been developing faster since its structure became more specialized. In the past, society did not have much differentiations in its structures, for instance, Church and State were bound together that precluded several different developments due to the interference of one power over the other.

The same can be noted in the ancient concept of kinship, tribe or folk wherein the structures are undifferentiated and the cultural development is rigidly bound to the needs of the organic development of the communal life. The cultural development occurs when the aspects of a culture, by a historical process, are differentiated into spheres that have its proper nature and no one is governed by another, but they interact with each other according to their nature. Then, the process of development of a culture is the historical passage of a state of undifferentiated to a state of differentiated characterizing the process of becoming. Therefore, cultural development is not independent or autonomous, it depends on God's providence. The Creational motive from the biblical ground-motive gives the appropriated conditions to develop culture in all its potentialities. Dooyeweerd exemplifies:

The organic development of life begins from the still undifferentiated germ cell, out of which the separate organs gradually differentiate. The emotional life of a new-born child is completely undifferentiated, but gradually it unfolds into a differentiation of sensuous feeling, logical feeling, lingual feeling, artistic feeling, juridical feeling, and so forth. The course of human societal development is no different. (DOOYEWEERD, 2012a, p. 81).

Therefore, the historical development of a culture depends on the capacity of a society differentiates its spheres and allows their mutual development without the interference of one power into the other. This has been happening through time inevitably, mainly, in Western society through the Christian influence, however, if the biblical ground-motive had been adopted, the cultural development would be faster. We can observe this progress, because it is inevitable unless a culture that does not differentiate its domains is destined to disappear or keep its membership in a lower level of development. Furthermore, even a developed culture can retreat if it does not acknowledge the differentiation of spheres and that each sphere has its own nature and sovereignty. This happens, for instance, when Marxist philosophy is applied in society conjugating economic power with state power. The life of the individual is massified in the communal dimension precluding the cultural development through creativity. Religion is automatically replaced by the ideal of State. The government takes the place of the religion and establishes itself as a Lord. This is the reason to struggle against the crisis of our culture since it fell prey of its ideals. Our culture retreats because man was convinced to put his faith in ideals that are not enough in themselves to satisfy him as a

religious person. Due to it, the sovereignty of the spheres was blurred retreating culture. Man needs something else and nothing in this world is able to satisfy him.

9 CONCLUSION

Since the Enlightenment the process of differentiation has achieved a level more elevated than in any other period of time. Science has developed enormously since this period; economically, the individual initiative has got a new impulse promoting the advance of industrialization in Europe. We can observe the process of differentiation delineating the modern constitutional state under the rule of the law and the separation of powers in their own areas. The concepts of natural law helped to establish the rights of the individual and treat persons with more dignity abolishing torture and barbarianism. The freedom of speech and the freedom of religion were assured in public space and artistic endeavours were freed in order to represent the surrounding reality. Evidently, many adjustments have been done with the view to advance society and adapt to the new states of affairs. However, since the Enlightenment, new ideals have been controlling our culture and they cannot stand any longer. Then, Western culture starting getting collapsed, because the ideal of autonomy of reason, relativization of the absolutes, economic progress, absolute freedom and social justice demonstrated that they are not able to continue with the cultural disclosure. The two World Wars demonstrated that despite all development achieved in this era, the emancipation of man towards the wrong ideals can devastate an entire civilization. The humanist modern ground-motive failed and man does not know where to go any longer. Man cannot fall prey of any utopian view of a glorious future. Cultural development became an end in itself and man started loving his achievements instead of using them to achieve his true end.

Augustin of Hippo was right, the crisis of our culture is nothing else than a crisis of love. Modern man loves himself and the good things he is able to produce forgetting to acknowledge the source of all good. He seeks his satisfaction in the things of this world and puts aside that he belongs to another world. He forsakes his origin and the end of his life. The commandment of Jesus Christ has never been more current:

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second like [unto it] is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. [Matthew chapter 22, verses 37 – 39].

This is the key to start thinking a way to leave this cultural crisis.

REFERENCES

- AGOSTINHO, *Da Doutrina Cristã: Manual de exegese e formação cristã*. Tradução de Ir. Nair de Assis Oliveira. São Paulo: Paulus, 2002.
- ARENDT, Hannah. *Between Past and Future*. New York: The Viking Press, 1961.
- CALVIN, John. *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Christian Classic Ethereal Library, Grand Rapids, 2016 available on: <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/institutes>.
- CALVINO, João. *A Instituição da Religião Cristã*, Tradução de Carlos Eduardo de Oliveira et ali. Ed. de 1559, São Paulo: UNESP, 2007.
- DOOYEWEERD, Herman. *Roots of Western Culture: Pagan, Secular and Christian Options*. Tradução de John Kraay. Grand Rapids: Paideia Press, 2012 a.
- DOOYEWEERD, Herman. *In the Twilight of Western Thought*. Grand Rapids: Paideia Press, 2012 b.
- FREUD, Sigmund. El Porvenir de una ilusión. In: STRACHEY, James. *Obras Completas de Sigmund Freud*, Vol. XXI, Buenos Aires: Amorrortu editors, 1976 a.
- FREUD, Sigmund. El Malestar en la cultura. In: STRACHEY, James. *Obras Completas de Sigmund Freud*, Vol. XXI, Buenos Aires: Amorrortu editors, 1976 b.
- HUSSERL, Edmund. *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenological Philosophy*. First Book, The Hague: Martinus Neijhoff Publishers, 1983.
- HUSSERL, Edmund. *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, Evanston: Northwest University Press, 1970.
- HUSSERL, Edmund. *Méditations Cartésiennes: Introduction à la Phénoménologie*. Tradução de Gabrielle Peiffer e Emmanuel Levinas. Paris: Vrin, 1947.
- KANT, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Tradução de Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood. The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant, London: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- RICŒUR, Paul. Phénoménologie et Herméneutique. In: ROMBACH, Heinrich; RICŒUR, Paul et Alli. *Phänomenologie Heute, Grundlagen Und Methodenprobleme*, Freiburg-München, 1975.
- RICŒUR, Paul. *Les Conflits des Interprétations*. Paris: Edition du Seuil, 1969.
- RICŒUR, Paul. *A L'Ecole de la Phénoménologie*. Paris: Vrin, 2004.
- RICŒUR, Paul. *De L'Interprétation: Essai sur Freud*. Paris: Edition du Seuil, 1965.
- RICŒUR, Paul. *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*. New York: Yale University

Press, 1970.

RICŒUR, Paul. *Du texte à l'action : Essais d'herméneutique II*. Paris: Edition du Seuil, 1986.

SCHLEIERMACHER, Friedrich, D.E. *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*, Public Domain, 2006.

TAYLOR, Charles. *A Secular Age*. Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007.