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**RELIGIOUS PRACTICE IN CONTEMPORARY
ROMANIAN RURAL SPACE. BOOK REVIEW
AT THE VOLUME DINAMICA
FENOMENULUI RELIGIOS ȘI
MODERNIZAREA RURALĂ. AUTOR
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Religious Practice in Contemporary Romanian Rural Space

Book review at the volume *Dinamica fenomenului religios și modernizarea rurală*. Autor Roxana Necula. Iași, România: Editura Lumen, 2015

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Abstract

Confidence in the church is, nowadays, extremely high opposed to trust in other institutions of the state, especially the political ones. A first explanation is that the church manages to manage best the feeling of trust as key element of individual coping towards the society at risk. Faith in post-existence as a straight world, governed by a benevolent deity deeply contrasts with the disappointment and frustration accumulated during the accelerated course of the process of development implied by the post-industrial society. The sociologist, and especially the social worker has the burden to reply, on the basis of the empirical data, to what is the place and role of religion in the processes of the current social development. The author Roxana Necula answers to this very question in the volume “Dinamica fenomenului religios și modernizarea rurală”, published in March 2015 at Lumen Publishing House in Iasi.

Keywords: *book review, dynamic, religious phenomenon, rural development.*

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Introduction

Confidence in the church is, nowadays, extremely high opposed to trust in other institutions of the state, especially the political ones. A first explanation is that the church manages to manage best the feeling of trust as key element of individual coping towards the society at risk. Faith in post-existence as a straight world, governed by a benevolent deity deeply contrasts with the disappointment and frustration accumulated during the accelerated course of the process of development implied by the post-industrial society. The sociologist, and especially the social worker has the burden to reply, on the basis of the empirical data, to what is the place and role of religion in the processes of the current social development. The author Roxana Necula answers to this very question in the volume *Dinamica fenomenului religios și modernizarea rurală*, published in March 2015 at Lumen Publishing House in Iasi.

On the religious practice in the contemporary Romanian religious space

The author considers the challenge faced when developing the volume, namely that of approaching, using the instrument of sociology, the religious communities under the pressure of globalization and the disappearance of the boundaries between people and communities.

Depending on the environment of belonging, the author shows that there is a dichotomy between the urban and the rural man, putting its mark on the particularities of the inhabitants of the two worlds that polarize the Romanian society. The bond between the two social worlds is seen as being the continuity of the religious feeling (Necula, 2015). The author confesses the considerations that made her approach the dynamics of the religious phenomenon in the context of rural modernization, namely: the identification of the religious phenomenon as a constant of all human societies; the strong influence that the orthodox church has in the life of the rural communities, and also the transformations that the orthodox community in Romania faces after 1989. The lines of research aim to constitute the theoretical frameworks necessary for defining the religious phenomenon and understanding the meaning of the relationships in the contemporary society and the different religions and religious currents. The context of secularism and secularization of the rural environment especially, constitutes another

thematic axis of analysis, which is opposed to the phenomenon of urbanization and urban secularization. The fourth axis targets the rural orthodox community itself, the research being based on a meaningful case study on a rural community in Iasi County.

The first chapter wishes to clarify the contents of the universe of research of religion, religious and religiosity. A central position in studying the religious phenomenon is the idea of sacred with the three dimensions: theocentric, cosmo-centric and anthropocentric (Riviere, 2000). The historical trip in the sociology of the sacred is done in parallel with the phenomenology of the religious. If the analysis of the sacred opens the axiological perspective of the paper, the one the religious circumscribes the work in the area of the phenomenology, and in particular of the phenomenological sociology. This particular way of practicing sociology privileges the understanding of the meaning of social phenomenon experienced by the subject.

This perspective pervades the work with the understanding of the social mechanisms that underlie the dynamics of the rural development. The author places religious right in the framework of these mechanisms. Religiosity as feeling proposes for consciousness an attitude, a way of expression and social action. A correlation of this expression of religious immersed in the everyday of the social experience cannot be shaped other than by looking at a wide investigation of the meta-religious.

The processes of secularization are not only phenomena of disparity between the social debate that takes the way of public sphere and the religious practices that remain in the private sphere. Secularization requires a new meta-language or a new meta-story, in postmodern terms. To see secularization as a process of displacement of the sacred in social practices is a limited way of understanding the phenomenon that need to be completed with that of understanding the secular in terms of religious experience. Secularization cannot work in a cultural paradigm deeply infused by the constitutive frameworks with religious origins.

The author considers that secularization defines a process of diminishing the importance of religion both in the public and the private area (Partridge, 2009). The analysis of the process of secularization has a side that can be objective quantitatively by the frequency of participations to the religious ceremonies and the implication of citizens

in the experiences of the religious values (Necula, 2015). The purely qualitative understanding of religiosity must be accompanied by a quantitative analysis of the phenomenon that must be based on the transdisciplinary perspective, with accent on capturing the religious meanings hidden in seemingly secular messages.

The author of the volume resumes, in the vision of Christopher Partridge (2009), according to which secularization itself is a myth. The dynamic of the religious can take secular forms, but at a careful analysis it has a religious origin. We talk about institutional phenomena (Cojocaru, Cojocaru, Sandu, 2011; Sandu, Caras, 2013) but also of cultural phenomenon such as the transformation of religious holidays in secular celebrations with a more or less commercial tinge. The author talks about the emergence, at European level, of a discourse on post-secular society (Necula, 2015). It cites the words of Jurgen Habermas that, together with Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict the XVIth) raises the issue of a dialectic of secularization in the post-secular context (Habermas, Ratzinger, 2005).

Through the vision on post secular society it gives the religious communities a public recognition of the functional apparatus to the reproduction of themes and desired behaviours, and the introduction in the public consciousness of those of normative institutions with profound consequences regarding the political relationships between believers and non-believers. Secularization, in the vision of the two thinkers, is a process of mutual learning, going to the identification of the cognitive fundamentals of the religious and non-religious visions with the potential of a special contribution in developing controversial themes of the public space (Habermas, Ratzinger, 2005). In the author's opinion, the secularization of the rural model is diffuse, which makes us in fact have two Romania, one of the village and one of the city, that are distinguished both through structural elements, such as the number and structure of the population, as well as functional: the arrangement of the houses, the port, the language etc. Quoting Mircea Vulcănescu (1997), the village is an organic civilization, natural and behaved, with few needs, with care for common sense and soul. Continuity of spiritual traditions in traditional societies, less exposed to the transformations of property in the communist period, constitute, in the author's opinion, a proof that the phenomenon of secularization of the Romanian rural is circumstantial and connected to the harmful influence of communist

policies, targeting the secularization, and even imposing the dialect materialism as a dominant vision on the world. The Romanian rural is conservative in terms of religiosity and it adheres to a traditional vision, infused by religious faith.

However, irradiation of urban mentalities, political decisions, economical transformations and the influence of mass-media have generated the beginning of the secularization process, and in the framework of the rural communities (Necula, 2015). The author brings a critical accent on urbanization, and especially of instituting the urban model of community, as the matrix of transformations of all types of communities, which influence, in the rural environment, secular perspectives such as atheism or religious indifference. The critical accent that transpires the author's exposure targets the assumption of axiological supremacy of urbanism, of the secular on the traditional infused by religiosity.

Without being critically expressed, critics targets the claim for axiological referee endorsed by the interpretative communities and accepted uncritically by a large majority. Valuable supremacy of the secular model cannot be claimed in a justified manner in a post-secular society, rather than ignoring the critics of the deconstructionist and post-structuralists Foucault and Derrida regarding the myth of the progress specific of modernity and that founded, in the vision of moderns, the need for secularization.

Conclusions

In our opinion, this book is a necessary one not only in the horizon of the sociology of religions and sociology of community development, as a starting point for researchers, targeting the intrinsic matrices of transforming the Romanian society that differs from the post-industrial societies, through the existence of a rural social strongly rooted in the traditional values, and whose process of secularization and globalization is only at the beginning. If this is a historical misfortune for building a secular Romania, there is still the question that we address to the future researchers who will lean towards the religious phenomenon in rural Romania, and that we believe cannot ignore the results of the studies included in this book.

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Biodata



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