

Irrationalism and Its Consequences in Religion

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Abstract

According to irrationalist philosophers we can not achieve God knowledge in a rational way through experience. Human knowledge has its value but it can not be limited by scientific methods. Human reason is unable to achieve the knowledge of the truth and objective metaphysical principles. Modern thought pretend that God can be known only with irrational methods, which are expressed with the will to believe in God existence and in a personal religion experience. God idea is never objective and transcendental, but always subjective and immanent. Reason is not important in the searching of god. Belief discovers what the reason can not understand. In this paper we will deal with the consequences of irrationalism in religion. On one hand irrationalism preserves religion from rational attacks, as something that goes beyond what may be known rationally, on the other "irrationalism" it is equally dangerous for the catholic faith as rationalism may be. (Berkower, 2007). It is known that the irrationalist uncertainty is against the guarantee of the catholic faith. Rationalism is not the only enemy of faith: irrationalism is an enemy, too. For this reason faith has built a new relationship of belief with reason. Irrationalism is the inevitable consequence of the supremacy of reason that brought with it human loss in the relationship with itself, with the others and in the moral sphere until any religious feeling get lost as an opening to transcendence. This is human progress. Soul sinks; culture pauperizes getting unified in all societies; costumes degrade and human being loses its difference with animals.

Keywords: Irrationalism, religion, reason, belief.

1. Religion as a Matter of Feeling, not Reason

Many philosophers, including Hume, Kant, Bergson, Russell, Whitehead etc., share the opinion that we can not attain knowledge of God rationally and through the experience. Whitehead writes that philosophy begins with the recognition that a review of the present world can not be brought on the current state of the world, nor can reveal more than the elements derived from the experience. On other terms, it can reveal the permanence of God, but not completely transcendent.

This rejection of metaphysics is found in all modern thought. Human knowledge is valuable and useful, but it can not be limited to scientific and experimental knowledge. Human reason is unable to achieve the recognition of objective truths and principles of metaphysics. Modern thought claims that God can be known only by irrational methods, expressed willingness to trust subject to the assumption of God's existence and personal religious existence. The thought of God is never objective and transcendental. It is always subjective and immanent. In this case God is replaced with the idea that everything is God himself. The idea that everything is God himself is more important than the existence of God itself, which takes value of individual symbol.

These findings reflect Kant's doctrine. His transcendental idealism (inability to achieve transcendent reality) is at the origin of this tendency of modern philosophy of religion. Kant claims that the inability of the soul to recognize the realities of meaning transcends the experience. By defending metaphysics somehow he protects the religious realities, addressing the affective side of human nature to these realities.

For Kant the reality of God is necessary, but there is no corresponding objective reality. Man is Lord autonomous and self sufficient. God is useful to meet the demands of our moral life. For the individual, already used to this, is no matter whether God exists, regardless of his opinion. God is a subjective and immanent reality. Our era can not escape this vision. Kant's modern has its echo in our contemporary world. He invented the idea of God that everyone has replaced God, Substance uniqueness, freedom and everything that transcends the universe. The essence of the Kantian criticism was precisely this: the practical reason fine attributes to itself the right to limit the prerogatives of what we can not recognize.

Even though we may not ever know if there is a God who gives purpose and meaning to life, the irrationalists say, he must nevertheless take a "leap of faith", because not doing so would be even worse. For many true believers, the reason is irrelevant in search of God. Faith reveals what reason can not distinguish.

This position allows us to share the human experience in two areas that coexist without any significant contact points: The rational sector of life and irrational one, and generally speaking they have nothing to do with each other. This position

has had its ancient exponents such as Protagoras, Plotinus, etc., but got no philosophical spread to the work of Kant in the late twentieth century. Although some defenders of religious irrationalism take into account the irrational status of religion as a good reason to ignore or leave it, many others have welcomed it as a defense that puts religion beyond rational attack. Irrationalist treatment also tends to see religion as something that some people have and others do not, and these agree with scholasticism at this point, although the irrationalists differ a lot between them in terms of the faith causes.

2. New and Old Irrationalisms

We live in an era of great irrationalism. This is definitely a crisis era. Today, the moment in which our universal world is reaching the remote limits of its growth, producing a degree of social and ecological confusion that the optimistic spirit of enlightenment would be never unable even to imagine, it seems that our societies dive still in shape of the irrationalism that surpass anything we have recognized as such in traditional society.

Modern differentiated irrationalism appears in two basic aspects: on the one hand, a dark worship of the science and technology (which constitutes dominant mythology of Western world), detached from any normative context and set of values; On the other hand a sudden gust spreading different groups of folk and irrational beliefs (a process that is ongoing since 1960), among whom we may include phenomena such as astrology, esoterism, unclear ideologies as neopaganism or 'new era', as well as major religious revivals within traditional religions, which lead to political practice what we perceive today under the term of fundamentalism, that threaten the old religions, especially in West.

We can define generally an irrational belief system as a system whose core beliefs are not derived from rational methods (ie reason and / or facts) but from intuition, instinct, feeling, mystical experience, revelation, will etc. As such, these beliefs are beyond any rational discussion. This is especially true for all religions that have always been characterized by the existence of a set of essential irrational truths (God, the immortal soul, karma and others) that are usually described in a sacred text like the Gospel, the Koran, the Vedas, etc.. In this sense, the world of essential truths that characterizes all religious systems is and has always been a closed world.

It is imperative at this point to make an important distinction between the "old" and the "new" irrationalism - something that will lead us back to the 'Age of Reason', so to enlightenment and development of rationalism. This distinction is made necessary by the fact that the causes of the birth of modern irrationalisms, as we shall see below, are specific to our era and as such differ significantly from historical causes that led to the birth of classic irrationalism that flourished in century XIX and early XX century, as a reaction to classical rationalism.

The classic irrationalism was born more as a reaction to rationalism and absolutization of reason. Rationalism, as view that considered reason as the main source of knowledge, has been deeply rival to belief systems that claim to esoteric knowledge, whether mystical experience, intuition or revelation. For the same reason, the rationalism has always been opposed to the various irrationalism to emphasize the organics, the emotional, the unconsciousness or the existence, at the expense of the rational. In fact, it was in the context of the fight against religious irrationalism, which was rampant in the Christian West, that the thinkers of Enlightenment began the project of creating a science of history and society, made up of hypotheses and laws that are analogous to those achieved by theories of the physical sciences. People like Condillac and Condorcet in the eighteenth century and Henri de Saint-Simon, Auguste Comte and John Stuart Mill, and Henry Thomas Busk in the nineteenth century believed that it was possible to apply scientific procedures in the study of human society. It was in the same social context that gave birth to modern science, as the type 'orthodox', which takes the status quo as given, or radical kind, aimed at a new society (scientific socialism). (Fotopoulos, 1998)

The reaction to the rationalism that characterized the Enlightenment came in the form of the 'old' irrationalism, which took place in nineteenth-century in Europe. However, the objective of this 'old' irrationalism was not returning to religious absurdity and the truth of revelation. Its stated objective was "... to enrich the human understanding of the life extending it beyond its rational dimensions in full." (Bonardel, 2007). The roots of irrationalism were like metaphysics or in a unique self-consciousness of human experience. Its emphasis was on the dimensions of instinct, feeling and will, over and against reason. As we stated in the first chapter classical irrationalists were separated on whether religion is true, - Schleiermacher and Kierkegaard who were theists, and Schopenhauer and Nietzsche that were atheists- but all had a common disdain for reason. They all condemned the reason as a completely artificial and limited skill, that should be abandoned in brave search to embrace reality.

While modern irrationalism is created from other causes and brings other consequences related to religion. The irrationalism of this type are created by the combination of some situations as uncertainty about unemployment and underemployment (which marked the emergence of the international neoliberal market economy) together with the uncertainty created by the crisis parallel in science, which in combination with accelerating cultural homogenization can

explain the emergence of irrationalism in this period. In this way, people went to religious dogma or irrationalism in general. This movement reflected the internal needs of the many people to 'some truth' in consequence of the crisis of 'objective' rationalism (science) and 'scientific' socialism in particular (trust in historical, social and economic 'laws' etc.). In all these cases, people, taking for granted the world should have a sense, independent from the one we give her, began looking for external sources of truth. This led to the revival of traditional religions or the spread of other forms of irrationalism as: (astrology, esoterism, New Age mysticism, etc.).

The birth of the movement "New Age" (Terzakis, 2009) for example, was originally a joke, but today it has become a big business, financially and spiritually, and threatened the stabilized churches, showing perfectly the crisis of techno science and rationalism in general. A flight to shallow irrationalism is being presented today in the name of protest against the idea of the great philosophical systems developed from the past. Naive belief in UFO, astrology and New Age aims to replace the great philosophical questions of the past for the meaning of life and evaluation systems. 'Philosophy' New Age "contains the irrational rational elements in a monstrous ideological 'soup' that reflects the degradation of intellectual activity in our era" (Terzakis, 2009).

In these modern times of crisis, the return to tradition and, especially, to the irrational beliefs of different kinds of religions and resurrection in the form of fundamentalism seem like the only option for people. Especially, when religion was seen as a moral code that preaches the equality of all people before God set against injustice. Does this new type of irrationalism constitute a favorable condition for religion or he risks and hurts it just like rationalism?

At first glance it looks like irrationalism paves the way for religion, but different researchers, including its believers are unsure about this and feel the threat posed by irrationalism as much rationalism.

3. Irrationalism and Uncertainties of Recognition

Irrationalism has resulted in a huge increase of the lack of security in the nineteenth century onwards. Berkower in his article "*Modern Uncertainty and Christian faith*," says that the uncertainty that has spread, poses a great danger for humanity. In the modern world, the lack of safety is the source of a range of other problems and cause for many disappointments. The safety problem is not essentially a new problem because uncertainty reigns for a long time. At all times the problem of unsafety and doubt has threatened human life. For a long time religion and the message it conveyed, gave people certainty. In XX century the threat of uncertainty becomes even more dangerous. Certainly in previous centuries people facing the threat of unsafety but they have confidence and hope. They were confident in the stability of the world, for the safety of their culture and religion, they were certain of their church and political system. Of course, it certainly was not always come from the certainty of faith. Safety was the belief that human reason can explain the cause of human life, because of the existence of God and immortality. They found safety in a period in religion.

During Enlightenment the faith was set to human reason and scientific discoveries, particularly in the natural sciences. In this certainty there is no need for an omnipotent God. With optimism in science, with the confidence of a modern world that should be every day better and better, people would not need God anymore. They know the laws that govern the universe and no longer believe in miracles. They were living in a world full of confidence because of what man had arrived and that he thought he was able to achieve. People felt safe in this world. Human pride can not be threatened by the judgment of God (Berkower, 2007) This certainly was based on the results of the science of a closed world. It was certainly reinforced by the idea of the evolution of human life. A whole deterministic trend went through the century, and it is no surprise that this was a period of religious and theological modernism, which attack the very foundation of faith. It was emphasized that human autonomy and the Lord was already 'human reason'.

The certainty of enlightenment is already gone. There is no more glorification of power and human reason. There are obviously detected endless possibilities of power and human intelligence, but also it is understood that human actions are now a new security threat. This is today a problem that is found everywhere. Reaction to the security of the reason is of course the early nineteenth century but people have questioned more and more the importance of human reason. The confidence of man to possibilities of reason has degraded and irrationalism is seen everywhere; the issue is not reason but intuition, feeling, dangerous matter of life and threatened existence. For this reason "the struggle between rationalism and irrationalism is one of the greatest conflicts of the current philosophy." (Berkower, 2007)

But how does irrationalism influence to faith, to religion? What consequences brings the irrationalism to the religion?

Seeing the church attacks against rationalism, the arrogance and the ridiculousity, it may seem that the transition from rationalism in irrationalism is an advantage for the faith. Is it really so? It is irrationalism favorable to religion? We should not forget that the reaction against the supremacy of human reason becomes more and more a protest against the safety and security forms in the world. Life can not be captured by reason; life is experience; man must live with risks. It is

the irrationalist solution. Nor essence, nor reason, nor safety, but the uncertainty existence and nothing more. We are thrown into this world and the only thing we should do is to live, to choose, to act without any security. That is why "irrationalism is equally dangerous to the Christian faith as the rationality". (Berkower, 2007)

It is clear that irrationalist uncertainty is contrary to the guarantee of religious belief. Rationalism is not the only enemy of the faith: the irrationalism is the enemy too.

Amid all the uncertainties in the human heart of the Christian faith proclaims a wonderful certainty by having a vision of what is and remains beyond the ruins of the time. Catholicism asserts that it is impossible to achieve personal safety, because the believer must cooperate with God's goodness. This assertion is a grand illusion to irrationalism. This certainty is an illusion and criticism of irrationalism against religion are as severe as those of rationalism. This criticism is directed against everything absolute in the world. Behind this criticism lies relativism of our time. The final score of demarche of relativism is only a deep concern.

Even religions and believers have understood the risk to religion by growth in the size of irrationalism. For this reason, it is not surprising that, in his encyclical in 1998, "Fides et Ratio," in which he addresses the relationship of truth, faith and reason, Pope John Paul II stressed the interdependence of mutual trust and understanding, and emerges in favor of reason (apparently to attack irrationalism of New Age that threatens the church), showing the weaknesses of each of them when it isn't hijacked by another: "Deprived of what offered by Revelation, then reason has taken tracks that expose it to the risk of losing its final goal "(the discovery of the truth). "Deprived of reason, faith has stressed feeling and experience, and so goes to the risk of not being a universal proposition." (II, 1998) According to the Pope, the right reasoning will lead us always to the Lord (it seems that he has assumed its conclusion).

But as it shows the papal Encyclical, Western religions have complicated relationships, in conflict with reason. "My concern is not the operation of reason in religious tradition, but the operation of faith in a secular world." (Ibid.) However, the attempt to reconcile faith and reason we find formulated in the opinion of St. Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, since medieval period. According to Aquinas, the reason and the faith are not mutually contradictory but complementary to each other, because both are in search of the ultimate truth even they follow different ways. Thus, although the Pope encourages all philosophers "to believe in the power of human reason," he continues by stating that we should not "abandon the passion for ultimate truth" as whatever is true, there can be life threatening for the faith, because God is real. His idea is: "Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to behold the truth." For the Pope, the faith urges reason to achieve what -was "beautiful, good and true" and thus it becomes advocate of reason. (II, 1998)

Of course, the concept of reason which Pope is referred too, has little to do with the concept of the Enlightenment, which was identified by the power by which people understand the universe and improve their conditions. Indeed, one could argue that the three main pillars of the Enlightenment were: devotion to reason, faith in progress and the pursuit of freedom in political and social institutions.

The recovery of Greek philosophy in the field of Christianity has represented a major step forward in the culture of all mankind, for allowing, affirming the rationality of faith, to release the area from every form of superstition and mythology. Moreover, with the motto "quaerens intellectum fides" (II, 1998), to trust, to religious activity, involving the whole man without the risk of falling into dangerous dichotomy between intellect and feeling. Man is a being who feels and knows, and between the two there is no conflict, we should not fall into fideism and choose one at the expense of the other.

Finally, the harmonization of different cultures has contributed to the preservation of all Greek-Latin heritage, transmitting to successive generations. By differentiating from the neoplatonic philosophies, says Benedetto XVI in the discussion of 16 January 2008, written for the University "La Sapienza" of Rome, in which religion and philosophy were intertwined inevitably, the Fathers had presented the Christian faith as the true philosophy, noting also that this religion responds to the demands of reason in search of truth; that religion is the 'yes' to the truth, compared with mythical religions. In this way, the church fathers have risked to not adequately distinguish between two areas, that of the faith and the reason. So how have caused criticism of Aquinas, which put clearer limits in the field of proverealized only in the realm of truly natural and not those supernatural, where the role of reason is one telling fact that there is no contradiction between faith and reason. Aquinas redefined genius the the proportion between the faith and the reason under the sign of unity and differentiation, so philosophy and religion are complementary to each other, they relate among them, although each must preserve its identity.

Theology must continue to be drawn to a treasure of knowledge that did not invent itself, that always outstrips and since it is never exhaustible through reflection, starts again the thinking. Philosophy does not resume from point zero of thinking subject in isolation, but is always in great dialogue of historical knowledge, that it always gets critically and develops; therefore it should not be closed before what the religions and in particular the Christian faith have received and given mankind.

It is important the topic of dialogue with the tradition; it is worth a pause to find the light on the report to be inserted between the 'reasons'. The tradition is to transmit from generation to generation, from thinker to thinker, that cultural heritage that is occasionally examined, compared and deepened. It's precisely the Dialogos the Logos to be overcome (dia means exactly overcomes) the time, the thoughts and cultures. This makes us unique thinkers fused in a 'sociality' that exceeds the barriers of time and space.

Thus, the development of Greek philosophy within the faith has provided all the tools that have been proven as indispensable in the systematization of doctrine. If, in fact, the supernatural truths can not be subject to demonstration, however, Theology is obliged to show their non-contradiction with the truths of reason. It is for this that the doctrine of substance has proved a particularly efficient processing of Trinitarian and Christological dogma.

Aquinas, by expanding later Aristotelian into thinking Aristotelian and into Greek philosophical heritage was able to make a step forward in the effort to harmonize between faith and reason, giving us fullness and systematization in the gnosiological field, to the moderate realism by surpassing to the end the eventually exaggerated Platonic realism.

This expansion and clarification, as we shall see, is a benchmark for subsequent deviations of understanding of philosophical thought and be able to overcome. Errors that are created in the culture of peoples, in the current mentality in the ethical convictions ranging from such deviations can find solutions by returning to Aquinas. It may seem surprising that, to return to "clearly see" on our reality, we are forced to go back so many centuries, but it is necessary to traverse steps made by philosophical thought until identifying the origin of errors, and, together, see where he lost authenticity that made our reason to be valid and correct, assumption of a luminous faith and a strong belief, with no breakdowns, no compromises.

We might ask why, to show all this, it seems necessary to turn our gaze to gnosiology. In many cases, it has the great merit of returning to the origin of those errors, by emphasizing deformations of philosophical approaches that will lead, in other fields, in true and typical forms of irrationalism.

Ultimately, irrationalism is the inevitable result of the absolutization of reason. And, together with the loss of the human person in relationship with themselves, with others, in the moral sphere, while strangling any religious feeling towards transcendent opening.

This is our progress! We lost ourselves, the soul sinks, culture impoverishes increasingly creating a worldwide unification, habits are degrading, the human being is transformed and loses difference with animals.

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