

RELIGION, SPIRITUALITY, AND RATIONALIZATION: MEANINGS OF SOCIAL ACTION FROM THE WEBERIAN PERSPECTIVE

RELIGIÃO, ESPIRITUALIDADE E RACIONALIZAÇÃO: SENTIDOS DA AÇÃO SOCIAL NA PERSPECTIVA WEBERIANA

RELIGIÓN, ESPIRITUALIDAD Y RACIONALIZACIÓN: SENTIDOS DE LA ACCIÓN SOCIAL DESDE LA PERSPECTIVA WEBERIANA

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ABSTRACT

This chapter discusses religion, theodicy, and spirituality from a Weberian perspective, highlighting their implications for social action in modern and disenchanting societies. Based on Max Weber's sociology of religion, religion is addressed as a form of rationalized social action, linked to different modes of religious domination and to the process of the disenchantment of the world, in which rationalization and bureaucracy weaken the institutional centrality of the sacred. The chapter then explores the concept of theodicy as a set of religious explanations for suffering, evil, fortune, and misfortune, emphasizing its role in moral and social legitimation. Drawing on the comparison among traditions such as Protestantism, Catholicism, Confucianism, Hinduism, and Buddhism, it analyzes how distinct religious ethics produce specific rationalizations of economic and social life. Finally, it examines the emergence of spirituality as a contemporary, less institutionalized and more subjective category that engages with central questions formulated by Weber, especially the search for meaning, the experience of suffering, and the orientation of social action. It is argued that even in highly rationalized contexts, religion and spirituality continue to act as decisive dimensions in the construction of meaning and in the legitimation of forms of life.

Keywords: Disenchantment of the World. Rationalization. Bureaucracy. Comparative Religious Ethics. Search for Meaning.

RESUMO

Este capítulo discute religião, teodiceia e espiritualidade na perspectiva weberiana, destacando suas implicações para a ação social em sociedades modernas e desencantadas. Com base na sociologia da religião de Max Weber, a religião é abordada como forma de ação social racionalizada, vinculada a diferentes modos de dominação religiosa e ao processo de desencantamento do mundo, no qual a racionalização e a burocracia enfraquecem a centralidade institucional do sagrado. Em seguida, explora-se o conceito de teodiceia como conjunto de explicações religiosas sobre sofrimento, mal, fortuna e infortúnio,

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ressaltando seu papel na legitimação moral e social. A partir da comparação entre tradições como protestantismo, catolicismo, confucionismo, hinduísmo e budismo, analisa-se como distintas éticas religiosas produzem racionalizações específicas da vida econômica e social. Por fim, examina-se a emergência da espiritualidade como categoria contemporânea, menos institucionalizada e mais subjetiva, que dialoga com questões centrais formuladas por Weber, especialmente a busca de sentido, a experiência do sofrimento e a orientação da ação social. Argumenta-se que, mesmo em contextos altamente racionalizados, religião e espiritualidade seguem atuando como dimensões decisivas na construção de significados e na legitimação das formas de vida.

Palavras-chave: Desencantamento do Mundo. Racionalização. Burocracia. Ética Religiosa Comparada. Busca de Sentido.

RESUMEN

Este capítulo analiza la religión, la teodicea y la espiritualidad desde la perspectiva weberiana, destacando sus implicaciones para la acción social en sociedades modernas y desencantadas. Basándose en la sociología de la religión de Max Weber, la religión se aborda como una forma de acción social racionalizada, vinculada a distintos modos de dominación religiosa y al proceso de desencantamiento del mundo, en el cual la racionalización y la burocracia debilitan la centralidad institucional de lo sagrado. A continuación, se explora el concepto de teodicea como un conjunto de explicaciones religiosas sobre el sufrimiento, el mal, la fortuna y el infortunio, resaltando su papel en la legitimación moral y social. A partir de la comparación entre tradiciones como el protestantismo, el catolicismo, el confucianismo, el hinduismo y el budismo, se analiza cómo diferentes éticas religiosas producen racionalizaciones específicas de la vida económica y social. Por último, se examina la aparición de la espiritualidad como una categoría contemporánea, menos institucionalizada y más subjetiva, que dialoga con cuestiones centrales formuladas por Weber, especialmente la búsqueda de sentido, la experiencia del sufrimiento y la orientación de la acción social. Se argumenta que, incluso en contextos altamente racionalizados, la religión y la espiritualidad siguen actuando como dimensiones decisivas en la construcción de significados y en la legitimación de las formas de vida.

Palabras clave: Desencantamiento del Mundo. Racionalización. Burocracia. Ética Religiosa Comparada. Búsqueda de Sentido.



1 INTRODUCTION

Religion occupies a privileged place in classical sociology, as it is understood not only as a set of beliefs, but as a force that structures social relations, moral practices, and forms of domination. Among the authors who contributed most to this understanding is Max Weber, whose analysis of the religious phenomenon allows us to understand how symbolic systems are articulated with the economy, politics, ethics, and rationalization processes characteristic of modernity, especially in his works published in 1996 and 2004. Unlike approaches that treat religion as something merely collective or irrational, Weber (1996; 2004) conceives it as a form of rationalized social action, endowed with internal coherence and capable of guiding human conduct and legitimizing the social order.

In investigating the role of religion in traditional and modern societies, Weber (1996; 2004) describes different types of religious authority — the priest, the sorcerer, and the prophet — and shows how each of them can contribute both to the consolidation of bureaucratic structures and to movements of spiritual renewal and rupture with tradition. With the advance of rationalization, bureaucracy and secularization, however, the disenchantment of the world emerges: religious explanations cease to occupy a hegemonic position and begin to dispute meanings with other autonomous spheres, such as science, economics and politics. Thus, a constitutive tension of modernity is intensified: religion loses institutional power, but continues to offer answers to fundamental existential questions, such as suffering, fate and morality, as highlighted by Pierucci (2003) and Gigante (2013).

This permanence is expressed in a particular way in theodicy, a central concept in Weber's thought, which designates religious explanations elaborated to justify the existence of evil, pain and inequalities (WEBER, 1996; 2004). The theodicies of fortune and misfortune, analyzed by Weber and deepened by authors such as Gigante (2013), show how religious beliefs function as mechanisms of moral and social stabilization, legitimizing class positions and guiding individual conduct. The comparison between religious traditions — such as Protestantism, Catholicism, Confucianism, Hinduism and Buddhism — shows, according to Weber (1996; 2004), different ways of ordering the world, interpreting morality and organizing economic life, producing different rationalities.

At the same time, the weakening of institutional religion in modernity opens space for a phenomenon that goes beyond confessional boundaries: spirituality. Although Weber (2004) does not use this concept in the contemporary sense, his work offers bases for understanding it as a subjective experience of meaning, linked to the search for



understanding life, suffering, evil, and finitude, as Gerone (2015; 2022) also indicates. Contemporary authors such as Gerone (2015; 2022), Nietzsche (2024), Frankl (1989), Kohlberg (1981) and Sponville (2001; 2007) allow us to deepen this dimension, understanding spirituality as a movement that can both dialogue with religious traditions and distance itself from them, opening up to theistic, pantheistic and even atheistic forms.

Finally, in Weber (1996), the articulation between spirituality and social action makes it possible to analyze how experiences of meaning influence the ways in which individuals guide their conduct — whether by values, ends, tradition or emotion. This relationship allows us to revisit the tension between the ethics of conviction and the ethics of responsibility, showing that spirituality can operate both as a critical element in the face of excessive rationalization and as a mechanism for reinforcing dogmatic postures, according to the interpretations of Weber (1996; 2004) and Gigante (2013). In view of this scenario, this chapter aims to analyze religion, theodicy and spirituality from the Weberian perspective, evidencing their implications for social action in modern and disenchanting societies. To this end, it articulates Weber's classic concepts with contributions from contemporary authors, seeking to understand how, between tradition and modernity, human beings continue to construct meanings for their own existence and for their relationship with the world.

2 RELIGION, DOMINATION AND DISENCHANTMENT OF THE WORLD IN WEBER'S SOCIOLOGY

In the Weberian perspective, religion can be understood as a specific way of acting in community. Unlike Durkheim, who defines it above all as a collective social fact, Weber (1996) does not oppose religion and rationality: it operates its own modes of rationality through religious and magical acts, endowed with internal logic and practical function in contexts of power. He distinguishes three types of religious domination: the priest, linked to institutional and bureaucratic authority (priests, rabbis); the sorcerer, whose authority is based on tradition and recognized spiritual powers (shamans, healers); and the prophet, based on revelation and charisma, capable of breaking with traditions (Moses, Mohammed, Luther). This typology helps to understand why some religions become centralized structures, while others remain forces of disruption and renewal. With modernity, however, religion loses its position of domination over the other spheres (economic, scientific, political, etc.), because it is recognized as a human construction and its legitimacy is no longer taken as absolute. In this sense, Weber (2004), like Marx, denounces dominating religion as a form of alienation and



defends that it should be understood as a human product, in order to limit its power to legitimize domination. However, according to Pierucci (2003) this does not imply atheism, but criticism of religion that suffocates autonomy and overlaps with other spheres.

In addition, according to Pierucci (2003), religion, in the Weberian perspective, also functions as an instance of justification and perpetuation of inequalities. In the Indian caste system, for example, religious doctrines legitimize stratification by attributing sacred meanings to social positions. Religion presents norms and hierarchies as natural and unquestionable, contributing to the maintenance of order. Thus, for Weber, religion is decisive in social structuring, but when it acts in a domineering way, it conceals its own human nature and places its values as absolutes above the autonomy of the subjects.

A central notion to understand this process is the disenchantment of the world. It is through it that religion, as an instance of absolute explanation of the meaning of existence, loses strength. Weber (2004) argues that in modernity, economic and bureaucratic rationality and the secular mentality begin to organize social life, replacing the old religious references. Social spheres begin to operate according to their own norms, and there is no longer a universality based on a single religious interpretation. This does not mean the disappearance of religion, but its transformation and resignification in new institutional and personal forms.

Bureaucracy is another key theme to understand religion in modernity. Weber (2004) states that bureaucracy is structured in rational norms, hierarchies and impersonal procedures, it seeks predictability and efficiency. Unlike religion, which acts on the symbolic and subjective plane, bureaucracy establishes universal rules applicable to everyone, regardless of belief. Politics, economics, science and culture began to function with relative autonomy, marking the passage from theocratic societies to secular societies. The meaning of life is no longer sought exclusively in religion, but also in other forms of rationality and expression of faith, based on reason and experience. Secularization, however, is not a simple linear departure from religion, but a transformation of beliefs and practices, making them compatible with new social and moral realities.

In this scenario, in which religion transforms and disputes meanings with other spheres, a central question remains: how does it continue to offer answers to suffering, evil, inequality, and human destiny in a disenchanted world? Even in rationalized and plural societies, people continue to seek explanations for pain, misfortune and prosperity, and these answers guide ethical conduct and legitimize social positions. It is here that Weber introduces the concept of theodicy, understood as the set of religious explanations that seek to make

sense of human experience, justify social order, and stabilize the relationship between individual destiny and collective structure. Theodicy becomes a decisive link between religion, morality and social organization, by showing how different traditions elaborate different responses to fortune, suffering and inequality. Next, this concept and its sociological implications will be deepened.

3 THEODICY, MORAL VALUES AND SOCIAL LEGITIMATION IN RELIGIONS

According to Gigante (2013), the sociology of religion in Weber highlights the role of religious beliefs in the formation of moral values that guide human conduct and legitimize the social order. The author presents the idea of *sanctification of life*, that is, the internalization of religious values as a guide to behavior and as a form of social legitimation, in which groups and classes adopt religious systems aligned with their material and symbolic interests. According to Weber (2004), in Calvinism, for example, the doctrine of predestination leads the faithful to seek signs of divine election in work and action in the world: work effort is a moral and religious duty, and prosperity is interpreted as a blessing.

In a life marked by effort and the search for divine blessing, questions about suffering and evil inevitably arise. In the Weberian perspective, theodicy designates the explanations that religions offer for these issues and that different social classes use to justify their material situation. Gigante (2013) when describing the theodicies stated that the theodicies of fortune, common among elites, interpret prosperity as divine favor; On the other hand, the theodicies of misfortune, frequent among disadvantaged classes, see adversity as a trial or test of faith, with a reward postponed to the afterlife, which reduces conflicts and questions. In both cases, they function as mechanisms of moral and social legitimation. In Protestantism, for example, economic failure tends to be seen as a sign of moral deviation, and success, as a divine reward, influencing laws, political, economic, and social systems in contexts of strong religious presence.

Comparing religions, Weber notes that Catholicism, especially in Latin American societies, values material renunciation and does not directly encourage the accumulation of wealth. Weber (2004) points out that salvation is linked to the sacraments and obedience to the Church, emphasizing community values, charity and solidarity. Thus, the Catholic ethic differs from the Protestant one: Catholics would tend to pursue careers linked to the humanities and public service, while Protestants would be more involved in commercial and industrial activities.

Another case is Confucianism, the normative system that structured the social and bureaucratic order of imperial China. Unlike Western religions centered on the individual-God relationship, Confucianism organizes an ethic focused on social harmony, respect for hierarchies, and adaptation to the existing order, without requiring a strictly religious foundation. According to Weber (1996), the search for wealth is not condemned, but must respect the established hierarchies. This configuration, while guaranteeing significant kinship networks and social support, limits social mobility and prevents the emergence of an autonomous bourgeoisie, as in Europe, restricting the development of a fully rationalized modern capitalism.

According to Weber (1996), in Hinduism, asceticism assumes a passive and extramundane character, reinforcing the caste structure and the acceptance of the social order as an expression of the cosmic order. The belief in karma and dharma makes social position the result of previous lives, legitimizing conformism and discouraging structural change. Ascension is not the effect of individual effort, but of the fulfillment of a pre-assigned role. The division between castes – such as Brahmins (religion) and vaishyas (economy) – separates religious and economic functions, unlike the Protestant ethic, which values economic work as a divine calling. The absence of a spirit focused on the rational transformation of the world makes it difficult to form a modern capitalism in India, keeping the economy in traditional patterns.

Weber (1996) also analyzes Buddhism, one of the first missionary religions, widespread in China, Japan and Tibet. Buddhism deepens the distance from the material world, proposing the renunciation of desires and attachment as the path to enlightenment. This limits economic and political engagement, although the absence of a rigid caste system allows different social groups to adopt its teachings, facilitating cultural adaptation. In contrast to Protestantism, which associates vocation with work and the accumulation of wealth, Buddhism does not encourage economic rationalization and entrepreneurship.

Thus, by analyzing the sanctification of life, the theodicies of fortune and misfortune, and the various religious ethics, Weber shows that religion has a double function: it morally guides action and gives meaning to suffering, but it also legitimizes the social order and inequalities. With the advance of modernity and the autonomization of social spheres, the power of institutional religion to define the ultimate meaning of existence weakens. A space then opens up for more subjective experiences of meaning, which do not depend exclusively on traditional religious doctrines or structures. It is in this scenario of disenchantment and

transformation of the forms of the sacred that the contemporary notion of spirituality emerges with force – more fluid and less institutionalized, but still deeply linked to the existential questions that Weber identified in his analysis of human action and the rationalization of the world.

4 SPIRITUALITY IN THE WEBERIAN PERSPECTIVE

Spirituality in the Weberian perspective is related to his sociology of religion. Although Weber (2004) does not treat spirituality as an autonomous concept, he analyzes religion in depth not in theological terms, but by comparing religious beliefs, social structures and behaviors, especially in the development of Western capitalism. As Gerone (2022) points out, the distinction between spirituality, religion, and religiosity is recent, non-existent as a category of its own in Weber. Even so, his analysis of the religious phenomenon encompasses a subjective dimension of the state of mind, a rational posture towards life, marked by the search for meaning and personal and collective ethical behaviors, beyond Christian doctrines. Thus, by treating religion as an organized system of beliefs – close to the notion of religiosity –, Weber opens space for readings that touch on the idea of spirituality, which justifies its importance as a theoretical reference in this study.

Weber (2004) indicates that, although religious values have been central to social organization, scientific, political and moral modernity promotes a move away from absolute religious explanations, making room for rational and secular forms of social ordering. For Gerone (2022), this is articulated with the contemporary emergence of spirituality as a distinct notion from institutional religion, multifaceted and linked to existential experience. The loss of traditional religious legitimacy contributes to a field in which spirituality involves the possibility of adhering or not to a religion, shifting the focus from the mere acceptance of beliefs to the construction of meaning, personal norms and position in life. In plural societies, faith becomes choice, no longer an unquestioned social obligation.

According to Gigante (2013), in the "Zwischenbetrachtung" Weber analyzes forms of religious rejection of the world, highlighting intramundane and extramundane asceticism. The first implies living religious discipline within the world, seeing work and daily activities as a divine vocation, as in Protestantism. The second emphasizes withdrawal from the world and renunciation of pleasures. Added to this is mysticism, aimed at a subjective and immediate experience with the transcendent. Although formulated in a religious context, Gerone (2022) argues that these concepts allow us to understand spirituality as an essence common to

traditions: rites, norms, and values are crossed by a search for meaning that may or may not take on a religious form.

In addition, the notion of religion in Weber (2004) is guided by Gerone (2015; 2022), who highlighted how a way of acting in community, mediated by a system of beliefs that guides practices and social organization, is compatible with current conceptions of religion and religiosity. Spirituality, on the other hand, can be seen as an underlying dimension of central themes such as the "disenchantment of the world": religion loses the monopoly of social organization, but does not disappear; it is transformed and reinterpreted in a secular, cosmic and subjective key. Associated with spirituality, this condition points to a search for meaning that integrates religious and human values (solidarity, humanism), aiming at a more integral view of the person. For Gerone (2015; 2022), in a world governed by technical and impersonal norms, spirituality rescues the subjective and emotional dimension, functioning as a human differential and offering meaning even in the face of death and suffering.

This proposal to give meaning to life's impasses can be read in the light of Weber's theodicy. Despite the persistence of currents that instrumentalize pain and suffering as a spiritual bargaining chip, Gerone (2015; 2022) highlights the emergence of emerging theologies that reject the theology of prosperity and suffering and conceive spirituality as something that goes beyond religion, not reduced to the good/evil binomial. The response to suffering becomes the result of an experiential construction between the subject and what is cosmic, moving away from rigid schemes of punishment and reward. In this horizon, Nietzsche (2024) proposes a divinity beyond good and evil, symbolized by Dionysus, in which joy and pain are integrated into the fullness of existence. Inspired by Nietzsche, Frankl (1989) sees the search for meaning as a fundamental need: attributing meaning to suffering allows one to endure and transcend it. Kohlberg (1981) admits that theistic or pantheistic perspectives respond to uncertainty in the face of evil and death, while Sponville (2001; 2007) argues for an atheistic spirituality as the "life of the spirit" that thinks, feels, and loves beyond doctrines, including experiences such as agape love.

Thus, understanding spirituality from a Weberian perspective means recognizing it as an essential dimension of human experience and as a form of relationship with the world, the sacred (or the cosmic) and others. It gives meaning to experiences and promotes values that permeate the interior of the person and their external actions, and can both transform and sustain social structures. Spirituality, therefore, influences the types of social action, guiding

not only how people behave in the world, but also how they legitimize their choices and perceive their place in society.

4.1 SPIRITUALITY AND TYPES OF SOCIAL AND ETHICAL ACTION

Social actions, according to Weber (1996), can be articulated with spirituality in its four ideal types. In rational action with respect to ends, the subject chooses effective means to achieve an end, and spirituality can act as a criterion for judging whether the end is worthy and which means are morally acceptable (e.g., refusing fraud or violence). Thus, it functions as an ethical limit and a form of rationalization. However, when faith is instrumentalized only for practical purposes, there is a risk of emptying its existential dimension and producing forms of fundamentalism, approaching the metaphor of the "iron cage": an extremely rationalized life, without the spirit that gave it meaning.

In traditional action, guided by culturally transmitted customs and habits, spirituality is expressed in religion as a social phenomenon that preserves rites, festivities and doctrines. Religion can function both as a resistance to change and as a critical space, in which to ponder whether or not certain changes threaten the essential values of a tradition.

In affective action, moved by immediate emotional states, spirituality appears in experiences of ecstasy, epiphany, conversion, and belonging, which transform personal and collective life. Examples are communities of religious fervor (such as Pentecostalism), charismatic leaders such as Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr., or humanitarian actions and alternative communities motivated by spiritual ideals and empathy.

In rational action in relation to values, the subject acts by principles that he considers valid in themselves, regardless of the consequences. In the religious field, this is expressed in the Puritan who works as the fulfillment of a sacred duty; outside of it, in humanist, pacifist or environmentalist militancy, with strong ethical convictions and a sense of personal transcendence, often in confrontation with the established order.

In the light of spirituality, the types of action help to balance the ethics of conviction (absolute and transcendent principles, resistance to excessive rationalization) and the ethics of responsibility (attention to consequences and the common good, not always linked to dogmas). The same spirituality can underlie both rigid and dogmatic religiosities and pragmatic and instrumental forms of faith. When rationalization completely dominates this field, the "iron cage" also applies to spirituality, imprisoning it in rigid structures that stifle its living and critical dimension.

4.2 CONTEMPORARY DIALOGUES: THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE "PILGRIM" AND "BELIEVING WITHOUT BELONGING"

In Weber's work, the analysis of the disenchantment of the world and the consequent subjectivation of the search for meaning finds an echo and detail in important works of the sociology of contemporary religion. Two authors, in particular, offer concepts that can be seen as empirical manifestations of the processes that Weber described: Grace Davie and Danièle Hervieu-Léger.

Grace Davie, in her influential work, coined the phrase "believing without belonging" to describe the religious landscape of modern Europe. According to Davie (2000), the process of secularization did not result in a disappearance of belief, but rather in a dissociation between individual faith and belonging to a religious institution. People continue to have spiritual beliefs, but they no longer feel obligated to actively participate in the life of a church or religious community. This notion aligns perfectly with Weber's thesis on the loss of centrality of institutional religion. "Believing without belonging" is in many ways a direct consequence of disenchantment: in a world where no institution has a monopoly on meaning, belief becomes a matter of private choice, and belonging optional.

In a complementary way, French sociologist Danièle Hervieu-Léger defines religion as a "chain of memory", a system that connects the present to the past through the continuous transmission of a tradition and a lineage of belief. For her, modernity is characterized precisely by the rupture of this chain. In this scenario of religious amnesia, the figure of the "pilgrim" emerges: a type of believer who builds his own spiritual journey autonomously, selecting and combining elements from different traditions, without fixating on any of them. Hervieu-Léger's (2008) "pilgrim" can be understood as the personification of the individual in Weber's disenchanted world. Having lost the certainties of tradition, he is forced to use rationality and subjective experience to assemble his own mosaic of meaning, navigating freely among the various spiritual offerings available.

Thus, the concepts of Davie and Hervieu-Léger do not contradict Weber's analysis, but deepen and update it, providing the conceptual tools to observe, at the empirical level, the consequences of the great process of rationalization and individualization that Weber identified as the mark of modernity. Contemporary spirituality, fluid and deinstitutionalized, is the field where the modern "pilgrim" exercises his "believing without belonging", in an incessant search for meaning that continues to be one of the main engines of social action. This convergence between Weberian theory and the contemporary analyses of Davie and

Hervieu-Léger reinforces the conclusion that religion and spirituality, although transformed, remain fundamental dimensions of human experience in modernity.

5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The analysis developed throughout this study shows that Weber's contribution to the understanding of the religious phenomenon goes beyond the mere description of beliefs or devotional practices. In Weber, religion appears as a structuring force of social action, capable both of morally orienting human life and of legitimizing inequalities and preserving forms of domination. The typology of religious authorities, the process of disenchantment of the world and the emergence of bureaucracy allow us to understand why religion, although it has lost institutional centrality in modernity, remains influential as a system of meaning, albeit in new configurations.

The study of theodicy reveals that religious explanations about suffering, fortune and destiny are not only symbolic responses to existential concerns, but function as mechanisms of social stabilization and legitimization of class positions. The distinction between theodicies of fortune and misfortune, as well as the comparison between traditions such as Protestantism, Catholicism, Confucianism, Hinduism, and Buddhism, shows how different religious systems produce specific ethics and particular rationalizations of economic, political, and moral life. In these dynamics, the "sanctification of life" appears as a central axis in the constitution of conduct and in the sustenance of the social order.

However, the advance of rationalization, the pluralization of social spheres and the disenchantment of the world weaken the power of institutional religion to define, in an exclusive way, the ultimate meaning of existence. Thus, an expanded space is opened for subjective experiences of meaning that do not necessarily depend on dogmas or traditional religious structures. It is in this context that the contemporary notion of spirituality gains relevance, and can be understood, in the light of Weber and later authors, as a more fluid, less institutionalized form strongly marked by the autonomy of the person in the search for meaning, especially in the face of suffering, evil and finitude. This new religious landscape is well described by concepts such as Grace Davie's "believing without belonging" and Danièle Hervieu-Léger's figure of the "pilgrim," which empirically illustrate the dissociation between individual faith and institutional belonging.

By relating spirituality, theodicy and types of social action, it is also possible to reread the Weberian tension between the ethics of conviction and the ethics of responsibility.



Spirituality can sustain both postures rigidly based on absolute principles — when it becomes dogmatic religiosity or fundamentalism — and more reflective attitudes, sensitive to the consequences of actions and committed to the common good. In this sense, spirituality can act simultaneously as a force of criticism of excessively rationalized forms of life and as an element of reinforcement of structures of domination, depending on the way it is appropriated and lived.

Finally, it is important to recognize that this study has clear limits: it is a theoretical-bibliographical approach that focuses on Weber's work and on some contemporary commentators and interlocutors, without empirically entering into specific contexts of spirituality or religion. Future research can deepen how the categories discussed here — religious domination, disenchantment, theodicy, spirituality, and types of social action — manifest themselves in concrete practices, whether religious, parareligious, or non-religious, illuminating the ambiguities, tensions, and possibilities of resistance present in everyday life. Still, Weber's intuition remains current that, between tradition and modernity, between religion and secularization, human beings continue to make senses of pain, evil, destiny, and purpose—and it is precisely in this search that spirituality finds its place.

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