

“CIVIL” RELIGION – AN UNEASINESS OF THE MODERNS? GUEST EDITOR’S PREFACE

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By collecting these essays, our aim was to reopen the issue of the relations between religion and politics, which are, once again, at the forefront of scientific debates and political polemics¹. We have done so based on a preliminary choice and a risky wager: return to Rousseau and his *Contrat social*, making his “civil religion” the lever of a renewed historical reflection, capable of capturing the runaway sources of our current political uneasiness. Even though it’s manifestation is surely *modern*, the uneasiness itself can actually be traced back to the ambivalence of Saint Augustin and the nascent Church with regard to political power. Thus, we have tried to seriously consider Rousseau’s proposal of a civil religion for modernity, in so far as it requires a reconsideration of the latter’s history, as well as an attempt to rethink the theologico-political conflict in a way that would allow us to bring forth the necessity of religion *for* democracy. The first part of the essays gathered here therefore aims at clarifying the idea of « civil religion » itself, beginning with its formulation by Rousseau and all the way to the manner it has been revived by contemporary historical sociology. In the first article of the anthology, I show how the way that Rousseau takes up the concept of “civil religion” in a Christian context enables him to theoretically ground a question which had been evacuated by modern political science, since its appearance with Hobbes, namely, the problem of the irruption of the question of faith in the field of politics. In « The legislator and the people’s unconscious », Francesco Callegaro rigorously prolongs the implications of a sociological

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reading of Rousseau: if the figure of the legislator undermines juridico-political interpretations of the *Contrat*, it remains nonetheless that once we fully acknowledge the rupture it implies, this figure enables us to rethink both the presuppositions and the sense of our modern political categories. Mauro Farnesi Camellone then provides an important contribution to the field of philosophical and political clarifications of the concept of “civil religion”. In his article, he sheds light on a central element of the Hobbesian system of power, namely, the exclusion of any form of contact, or any form of overlapping for that matter, of earthly salvation and the possibility of a final redemption.

In short: these analyses clearly show that a religious order is necessary if our own political and social order is truly to be a “civil” one. Such a proposal surely seems paradoxical given that, historically, the political affirmation of Christianity, in so far as it has erased the ancient forms of civil religion, has coincided with a constitutive un-adjustment of the forms of belonging and obligation with regards to the way our societies have envisaged their own political continuity in time. Considering this constitutive un-adjustment of the social and the political order produced by Christianity as one of the prominent characteristics enabling us to question the origins of the modern project, presupposes at the same time that we renounce the belief that “democracy” arose from a simple progressive affirmation of the critical spirit, relegating religious and political intolerance to a marginal place destined to be absorbed by reason. Thus, other analyses contained in this volume propose, on the contrary, that critique, in the sense of an exercise of judgment belonging to a rational faculty and having practical and social implications, cannot be maintained and revived without renewing its ties with its original religious context. This is particularly the case of Nicola Marcucci and his article “The enlightenment of sociological reason. A reading of *Elementary forms of religious life*”, where he returns to the debate between Spinozism and Kantism, to show that the challenge that Durkheim’s sociological rationalism has set itself from the beginning was precisely surpassing this alternative. But it is also the intention of Goran Gaber, who, in his article “Critique and religion”, proposes to investigate the sources of contemporary critique’s uneasiness and disorientation, through a reinterpretation of Michel Foucault’s famous conference “What is critique?”.

A final word is in order. By suggesting a tight route from political philosophy of Rousseau and Hobbes to the sociology of Durkheim, passing by Freud and arriving at Foucauldian governmentality, the authors of this monographic number wish to contribute to contemporary debates on the

relations between religion and politics while at the same time keeping away from the “mined fields” of the theologico-political debate, as it was triggered at the beginning of the XXth century by Carl Schmitt and prolonged, among many others, by Erik Peterson and Hans Blumenberg.² This choice is not so much dictated by the fact that the German jurist had subjected Christian theology to the demands of a *mortal God*. It is rather the consequence of the awareness that if we follow the historical framework posed by the narrative of *secularization*, we risk neglecting the important contributions of the three monotheisms to contemporary forms of being-together in our societies.

² This debate was quickly reduced, at least in the field of political philosophy, to the following question: do we, today, still have valid reasons to maintain the concept of *Repräsentation*, given its intrinsic ties with the concept of the human person, or should we, on the contrary, rather simply change all of our political categories.