Ancient Judaism and Its Sociological Analysis. A Classical Perspective

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Abstract: The scientific analysis concerning Jewish history is a challenging task from the point of view of human studies, especially for those concerned with the spiritual uniqueness of a community that marked European history and culture. Here, we try to benefit from the contribution of Max Weber, and his research of Ancient Judaism, a major work written at the height of his sociological thinking, viewed in the mirror with the French sociology, marked by a functionalist perspective over social world, using the study of Antonin Causse. In the end, we try the widening of classical sociology with Eric Voegelin's philosophical perspective, for which the order of history begins with Israel and Revelation. Thus, it can be said that starting from a sociology of immanence it could be foreseen a sociology of transcendence, through a perspective that asserts the axial role of spiritual identity in understanding people and their history through religious manifestations.

Keywords: *Ancient Judaism; pariah people; Voegelin; disorder; order; Yahwe; Weber; Causse.*

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1. SOCIOLOGY OF IMMANENCE

1.1. *Man in search of God - Max Weber's Ancient Judaism*

Ancient Judaism (Weber, 1967) represents the maturity of Weber's sociological thinking, published after *Economy and Society* (Weber, 1919), a research in which he applies his fundamental sociological categories of understanding Jewish people, in order to explain the peculiarities of this community and its importance for the Western culture, in which we find a "methodological care and a breadth of substantive concern that qualify Ancient Judaism as a model of Weberian empirical research, certainly a better model than the narrower and more speculative *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Weber, 1913)" (Fahey, 1982, p. 63).

Max Weber does not claim to discover new facts in Jewish history that would change radically the understanding of this people but to apply a new type of sociological view through a theoretical apparatus that could bring another approach to one of the main sources of Western cultural legacy. Weber starts with the cultural and natural environment of emerging Judaism, analysing the social structures of the confederacy of peasants and husbandmen in search of land. The Hebrews were stratified warlike peasants and stock breeders, different from the Bedouins. The tribal confederacy was guarded by Yahwe, a war god, having in mind that some „specific historical and social reasons led early Jewry to adopt Yahwism” (Weber, 1967, p. xvii). He chooses Jewish people to whom he made a *berith*, marked by mutual obligations and rights, he was the god of natural disasters „he was and always remained a god of salvation and promise. What mattered chiefly, however, was that salvation as well as promise concerned actual political, not intimate personal affairs. The god offered salvation from Egyptian bondage, not from a senseless world out of joint. He promised not transcendent values but dominion over Canaan which one was out to conquer and a good life” (Weber, 1967, p. 126). His first sociological analysis is the relation of Yahwinism and the development of social structure of ancient Jews. A second problem is the question of urbanization in relation with the peasantry and the stock breeders. The social changes brought by monarchy, the hereditary kingship under Solomon that ended with oriental despotism and division of kingdoms, when „social differentiation sharpens, religious leaders reorient themselves and at pressure zones the great scriptural prophets arise in whose oracles the organization of the Old Testament is determined” (Weber, 1967, p. xviii), all were of concern for a sociological research. These social changes and antagonisms are „the so-called ‚Biblical’

social evils which the prophets chastize are located in these tensions” (Weber, 1967, p. xix). Due to the establishment of oriental model by Solomon and his succes, „Solomon's Temple was essentially a court chapel and attempts to attach religion to the palace and establish exclusive royal prophets were unsuccessful. The emergence of ‚free’ or ‚socially unattached’ religious prophets and religious leaders upholding popular traditions of old opposed to despotism could not be prevented. The sociological, psychological, and ideological explanations of this constellation constitute the core of Weber's book” (Weber, 1967, p. xx).

The main definition of Jewish people that concentrated his view of sociological thinking about the peculiarities of this community is the one which considers the Jews as *pariah people*. This is the main focus of criticism to Weber's *Ancient Judaism*. The concept of *pariah people*, is used along with *guest people*, meaning that the guest people „refer to groups or individuals who as a result of invasion or conquest have been expropriated from their lands by immigrant groups and have been reduced to economic dependence on the conquerors (...). The status relationship between the guest and host groups may vary, the guests may be legally and conventionally privileged or underprivileged. Where the status relationship is implemented by ritual barriers Weber proposes the term ‚pariah reople” (Weber, 1967, p. xxiii). Relevant is the fact that these two concepts are related with the sociology of the stranger, minority groups, and the utility of this concept is used also concerning the Levites, a *guest tribe* in the Jewish community. In the *Preface* of the book it is rejected the misunderstanding of using this concept by Weber, reminding of Robert E. Park and his studies of minority groups, contributions that acknowledges that *race-issues* were attributed to the consequences of conquest and migration.

Weber compares the status of Jewish people with the caste system in India, noticing the differences of Jewish people, which became a pariah in a world without castes. The Indians maintained this status for future salvation, unlike Jews, who considered the world created by God, the one that will revolutionize the world in its social and political structures. With the ritualism and ostility towards all forms of magic and of any irrational quest of salvation, Judaism differs from all the oriental religions. The main characteristics of the pariah status was founded on the ritual segregation accomplished by the work of prophets. This is the sociological analysis of Weber's work, adresing the peculiarities of Jewish ancient history, in an extensive sociological study written before his death, at the height of his theoretical development.

1.1.1. Berith - the God of war

Understanding the social conditions of the main legal forms of Deuteronomy, with the origin in pre-exilic times but largely revised by the theologian of the Exile, helps Weber to analyse the relation of God with his people, founded on the *berith*. An oath was a confirmation of every political alliance in those times, observes Weber but for the Jewish community „the peculiarity consists in the first place in the extensive employment of the religious berith as the actual (or construed) basis of the most varied legal and moral relations. Above all, Israel itself as a political community was conceived as an oathbound confederation.” (Weber, 1967, p. 75). The instability of social organization needed a type of oathbound, and „apparently only such a religious organization provided solid basis for permanent political and military structures”, and „once the religious fraternization had proven its efficiency as a political and economic instrument of power and was recognized as such it contributed, of course, tremendously to the diffusion of the pattern” (Weber, 1967, pp. 79-80). Thus, the Israelite confederacy was a „war confederation under and with Yahwe as the war god of the union, guaranteeing its social order and creator of the material prosperity of the confederates” (Weber, 1967, p. 81).

This special oath, one that is not guaranteed by God, but is made with God himself, puts Israel in special relation with God and other nations, underlies Weber. Acknowledging that everywhere deities represent the guardians of social order, with God as a partner of berith, Israel wondered about God’s actions especially in times of political troubles or great social instabilities. The duties of the people to God were connected with the promises of God to his people, which made him „god of promise for Israel in a sense unknown of any other god” (Weber, 1967, p. 118). Being founded on an oath, these relations between God and his people meant a vow of God, a promise that would shape the world history.

The social reception of Yahwe, as war God, must be seen as one that guarantees the social organization of confederacy, at least for old Israel, concludes Weber. He was „the god of confederacy but also the contractual part partner of its law established by berith, above all of the socio-legal orders” (Weber, 1967, p. 131). The question of *holy land* is a later acquisition „derived from Baal worship, in part from the localization of Yahwe as the god of the king’s residence. This conception of the ‘holy land’ is first documented for David in the time of kings” (Weber, 1967, p. 131).

1.1.2. The prophets

After an extensive sociological analysis of ancient social structures that formed the Jewish people, Weber proceeds with a social psychology of prophets, a unique phenomenon without which the entire Jewish history would have been impossible. Starting from the world empires and their politics in relation to Israel, along the social troubles generated by the structural changes that monarchy produced, Weber considers these to be the main factors of the prophetic movement with an impressive impact. After war prophecy, it appeared the one related to the foreign politics of world empires, the oracles concerning the faith of the state and people, and the question was „absolutely religious, oriented toward the fulfillment of Yahwe's commandments” (Weber, 1967, p. 275). The salvation comes only „through a miracle of God, as once at the Red Sea, but not through autonomous military power, and, least of all, through political alliances”, because the people „stood in the berith with Yahwe. Nothing must enter competition with the berith, especially not trust in human help, which would bespeak of godless disbelief and evoke Yahwe's wrath” (Weber, 1967, pp. 281-282).

Another aspect identified by Weber is the fact that the prophets did not take an ascetic or ritualistic type of salvation above the established ethic, showing the importance of *berith*, which stated the teaching of Yahwe in Torah. These do not contain a quest for individual salvation, but a „special promise of salvation held out to Israel made morally correct action and the abidance by everyday ethic all important. However banal and self-evident this may seem, here alone it was made the basis of religious prophecy” (Weber, 1967, p. 296).

Another characteristic of Jewish prophecy, unlike early Christian prophecy is that it was interested in the political aspect of community, and not in cult, this being considered by Weber an important sociological difference. The Jewish perspective did not assume a new conception of God, another way to obtain grace or a new law, but only to obey Torah. The prophet never sought God for salvation, wondered about the meaning of the world, searched for perfection, he did not work for deification or liberation from suffering, only from sin, „there was no thought of a metaphysical gnosis and interpretation of the world. The nature of Yahwe contained nothing supernatural in the sense of something extending beyond understanding. His motives were not concealed from human comprehension. On the contrary, the task of the prophet as well as the Torah teacher was, indeed, to understand Yahwe's counsels in terms of

justifiable motives” (Weber, 1967, p. 314). And this is because „like prophecy itself, world events are rational in character; they are determined neither by blind chance nor magical forces. They have understandable reasons” (Weber, 1967, p. 314). Man must obey Yahwe and his laws, because „conduct according to the commandment of God, not knowledge of the meaning of the world behoved man” (Weber, 1967, p. 317). Decisive was not only to respect the commendement, but the faith, ”it signified only the unconditional trust in Yahwe's omnipotence and the sincerity of his word and conviction in its fulfillment despite all external probabilities to the contrary” (Weber, 1967, p. 318).

The grandeur of eschatology was needed in Exile, the need for revenge and hope becoming pressing, especially for a „religious cohesion to the politically destroyed community” (ibid., 385), and „the substance of the eschatological message consisted solely in sublimation of the traditional religion into ethical absolutism. This definition of the new association as a continuation of the old ritualistic folk community was not possible for Christendom in the long run” (Weber, 1967, p. 386).

1.1.3. Pariah-people

After an extensive analysis of social and religious structures of ancient Israel, along the tremendous impact of prophecy, Weber discusses the pariah characteristic, founded on the traditional ritualism and prophetic movement, established by the priestly Torah. The ritualistic segregation is observed by Weber to appear only when it was developed the confessional association, with two pillars, Torah and prophecy before the Exile. When Israel lost his land „the ideal value of the political territory was definitely and ritually fixated for the henceforth developing internationally settled guest people” (Weber, 1967, p. 338). Weber considers that the new purely religious form of the community, strengthened by the prophetic movement, has contributed to the political segregation from the rest of the nations.

The *berith* was also transformed by the theological construction, and „only when Yahwe had increasingly become the heavenly sovereign of heaven and earth and of all people, Israel became his ‚chosen’ people”. That is why „the general and primordial dualisms of in-group and out-group morality now received this supporting pathos for the Yahwe community”, like in the case of Amos (Weber, 1967, p. 342). The way towards separation was initiated by the Babylonian community through the people that returned to Palestine.

The promises of prophets that consolidated the religious community assured the pariah situation, according to Weber, underlying a paradox in

which a god that did not protect his people from territorial destruction, is more and more worshipped, being an „unexampled in history and is only to be explained by the powerful prestige of the prophetic message” (Weber, 1967, p. 364).

The realities of the Exile transformed the phenomenon of prophecy and the future of the community is now forseen, from the ones that warned about the doom we have the ones that announce the salvation, the hope. Starting with Jeremiah and Ezekiel, Weber analyses the social structures that qualifies what he believes to be the pariah characteristic. A change is observed when „the universalism of God went the world mission”, with „Trito-Isaiah, the most energetic advocate of the religious world propaganda” (Weber, 1967, p. 372).

Weber states that „the situation of the pariah people and its patient endurance were thus elevated to the highest station of religious worth and honor before God, by receiving the meaning of a world historical mission. This enthusiastic glorification of suffering as the means to serve world deliverance is clearly for the prophet the ultimate and in its way supreme enhancement of the promise to Abraham, that his name in days to come shall be great and that he shall be „a blessing” (Weber, 1967, p. 376). Weber affirms that the idea of a Servant of God that offers himself to death for the sins of people went into oblivion in Judaism, and that, „in particular, nothing indicates the acceptance of a martyr who by his voluntary and uncomplaining sufferance expiates the sins of the people of Israel, not to mention those of the whole world. Job is totally ignorant of the Deutero-Isaiahic form of theodicy of suffering and its god-pleasing nature. Moreover, the naive Messiah hope of folk belief has never taken this as its point of departure. The same holds for early rabbinical literature. It, indeed, visualizes a Messiah dying in combat, but not one suffering as a redeemer. Only in the Talmud is such a figure (b. Sanh. 98b) to be found and only since around the third century A.D. the teaching of the suffering Messiah and of suffering per se. These came to the fore again under severe oppression. Until then only the substantive mood of Deutero-Isaiah toward silent suffering exerted lasting influence. This mood was transmitted and reenforced by several Psalms; Deutero-Isaiah's attitude was well known as evident in repeated quotations. The lasting pathos of the pariah situation and the peculiar perspective of the Jews had, in this extraordinary book, their strongest inner support, until this product of the Exile constituted one of the strongest influences in the emerging belief in Christ. Not only the stylistic form, but also the conception of prophetic charisma have been influenced by the fact that the Exile prophets and many of the post-Exile religious writers were no

longer demagogues oriented toward contemporary religious politics” (Weber, 1967, pp. 377-378).

Other elements of segregation imposed to themselves or in relation with others that Weber analysed are: the *hasidim*, a pious sect, the *perusha*, the ones that segregated from the impure, the *chaber* (brother), an order that obey the most rigid levitical rules, „the aspect of the brotherhood movement decisive for Jewry was that they segregated themselves not only from the Hellenes, but also precisely from non-observant Jews” (Weber, 1967, p. 386), the differences between phariseic ‚saint’ and the ignorant, nonobservant of the rules, with whom they rejected connection. This is why „the powerful rise of the Jewish Diaspora since Maccabean times and the complete unshakability of its communities by the foreign environment from which they segregated themselves was largely the work of their brotherhood movement” (Weber, 1967, p. 387). These peculiarities of the Jewish religion are considered with the analysis of Pharisees.

The structures formed by the Pharisees, their innovations were, according to Weber: eucharists (love feasts), which become important for Christians too, blessing of the meal, the synagogue, education in the law, interpretations about Sabbath, other festivals, the importance of the teachers in the law, rejection of philosophical speculation, the importance of practical-ethical rationalism, the talmudic teacher valuing the understandability by anyone, the circumcision and Sabbath differentiating from the others, the rabbis and their interpretations that rejected all irrationality towards God, preaching attachment to the Law, all „was due to the ethical rational content of the Torah and the prophets” (Weber, 1967, p. 987), this rational understanding that characterized the rabbinical thought meant a religious pragmatism.

In the end, Weber concludes that „Jewry increasingly assumed the type of a ritualistically segregated guest people (pariah people). And indeed Jewry did this voluntarily and not under pressure of external rejection” (Weber, 1967, p. 417), under the influence of Pharisees, which propagated a ritualistic doctrine, segregation from the impure, and „all of this makes the Jewish community remain in its self-chosen situation as a pariah people as long and as far as the unbroken spirit of the Jewish law, and that is to say, the spirit of the Pharisees, and the rabbis of late antiquity, continued and continues to live on” (Weber, 1967, p. 424).

1.1.4. Reception of Ancient Judaism

In *The Agrarian Sociology of Ancient Civilizations* (Weber, 2013), Weber researches the ancient civilizations, using the socio-economic structures to

understand social systems and their rise and decline, this work being considered his neglected masterpiece. Here, he explains the importance of oath-bound confederations, an important theme also developed in *Ancient Judaism*, in which he underlines the peculiarity of this new social structure, only to be found in Jewish people. The oath-bound is made with God, it has a special religious dimension, with extensive social, political and individual consequences. Moses, the founder of the Jewish confederacy, had the role to control the tensions risen from the conflicts of interests in a „monetized agrarian economy. But Moses gave his social legislation a distinctively sacral character by linking it to the requirements of a specific god (Yahweh)” (Fahey, 1982, p. 64). In *Ancient Judaism* Weber analyses the covenant as contract, *berith*, considered as „the initial great uniqueness of Israelite religiosity and political organization” (Fahey, 1982, p. 64), „as primarily a sociopolitical instrument for the maintenance of the external boundaries and internal structures of the confederacy” (Fahey, 1982, p. 66).

On this social-religious reality, the entire Jewish history writes itself, bringing along the peculiarities developed in the violent contact with world empires, with the social effects of monarchy and the phenomenon of prophecy. With the Exile and the prophetic movement it was established the originality of Jewish identity, consolidated by prophecy and ritualism (elements of the pariah status), a path that survived for millenia and was validated by the history of Jewish survival. But the most important part, underlines Fahey, is the process in which the Yahwism of the confederacy is transformed in majestic monotheism, although this section did not attract analysis as the phenomenon of prophecy and the characteristics contained in the pariah status of Jewish people. The fall of Jerusalem and national home are viewed by prophets as „Yahweh's majesty and justice. (...) As a divinely ordained chastisement designed to bring back the chosen people to their former loyalty. This conception consolidates Yahweh's monotheistic character: it elevates him to the level of god of the universe, manipulator of empires, a majestic divinity who plays with history to chastise his people. The exile in Babylon crystallized the distinctive eschatology of hope of subsequent Judaism (...). Thus development resolves the paradox of the Jewish congregation's pariah status: the occurrence of disaster confirms rather than denies God's justice. It strengthens his people's faith in his promises for future political salvation and bonds them together in their present political degradation” (Fahey, 1982, p. 72)

If *The Economic Ethics of the World Religions* was concentrated on the economic consequences of religions, the *Ancient Judaism* represents a research which clarifies the identity of Jewish people, with the understanding

of a religion that shaped history not only for his believers, but also for the European culture, and two world religions. This massive work, which cannot only be seen as an ethical rationalization perspective is full of possibilities in understanding the importance of political and social relevance of Judaism. Weber offers a sociological view of the salvation towards this world which marks the entire history, with the prophetic movement that justifies the world catastrophes that Jewish people have to endure, strengthening the faith in God, the birth with God, with his obligations and rights, all defining the Jewish experience and its world orientations. His interest in the Jewish people is seen from the start in *The Agrarian Sociology of Ancient Civilizations, Economy and Society*, finishing with his massive *Ancient Judaism*. Tom Fahey reminds of the two different ways used by Weber in which the empirical material can be used in sociological research. One which focuses on causal analysis and the formation of abstract concepts. This is why the references made about the Jewish people in previous works by Weber represent the empirical base for the formation of the most important weberian concepts: prophecy, priesthood, charisma, rationality, ethical rationality.

The empirical material used in *Ancient Judaism* brings the explanatory dimension, and the concepts become instruments, not an objective to be attained, as in *Economy and Society*, mentions Fahey. This is why „in the conceptual work of *Economy and Society* references to Israel approximate to the first activity and in the historical study of Ancient Judaism to the second. Ancient Judaism and *Economy and Society* are thus the two halves of a single enterprise, logically separable but in practice thoroughly interdependent” (Fahey, 1982, p. 75).

Using his conceptual apparatus elaborated in *Economy and Society*, Weber is apart from other sociologists, this final work being „a useful indicator of the exercise of Weber's historical sociology in practical research” (Fahey, 1982, p. 84). It is comparative, analysing this people among world civilizations, it is interpretative, concentrated on the „meaning complexes and meaning construction in social groups but also, in its analysis of the great prophets” (Fahey, 1982, p. 84), becoming the „fully matured Weberian sociology at the peak of its substantive and methodological development”, proving the „combination of elements that distinguish his work: concept development, analysis of historical causal relationships, and interpretive analysis of meaning, all conducted with a concern for disentangling the strands of the entire course of Western civilization” (Fahey, 1982, p. 85).

Another contribution was the importance attributed to the covenant, as a decisive moment in Jewish history. The crux of the covenant is

acknowledged by A. Momigliano, considering that Weber was the one who underlined the legal structure of the berith with God, but „did not appreciate the consequence. Throughout the centuries this pact remained the foundation of the self-regulation of the Jewish communities and therefore saved the Jews from whatever self-abasement can be associated with the word pariah” (Momigliano, 1980, p. 318).

The intriguing history of Jewish people and its peculiarity represent a challenging reality, especially for the human studies. Their role, of sociology in this case, is to explain the social, economic, religious realities that formed, survived in the Jewish people, of Judaism as a religion at the root of Christianity and Islam, a religion that contributed to the *rationalization* of Western world. Understanding how this people survived and maintained its identity represent the focus of *Ancient Judaism*, sociology being called to respond how “besides its ‘universal’ significance, the survival of Jewry as a ‘particularistic’ body is to be explained” (Shmueli, 1968, p. 178).

The merit of Weber, according to W. Schlutcher, is that in the face of the irrationality of world, the reactions was to counter the magic, to bring into a unity God with the world through ethic. This is the moment that “religious rationalization has progressed a long way in relative terms” (Schluchter, 2004, p. 47), underlying Weber’s conclusion that the Levite rationalism combined with prophetic precepts stabilized the Jewish religiousness that protected this people from the negative outside.

One of the main themes of Weber’s sociological thinking was to analyze the ways that religious beliefs shaped social and cultural structure in the history, a path followed in the *Comparative Sociology of World Religion* (Weber, 2001). A special part is attributed to the Jewish people, to the evolution of Judaism from ancient times, explaining its uniqueness.

S. N. Eisenstadt attested that Weber not only took into consideration the external factors of exile in order to understand the special development of Jewish religiousness, but also the cultural and institutional mold in its development. For the Jewish people, “he had also to consider or to explain the relations of the processes of religious rationalization in the framework of the peculiar contribution of this rather baffling continuity of collective identity, with the changes in the cultural institutional worlds” (Eisenstadt, 2004, p. 9), and this complex reality represents the puzzle that Jewish history represents in its troubled history.

The uniqueness of Jewish heritage, characterized by Weber to be based on the weakening of magic, rationalization, and universalization of the religious view, is where we find “his greatest creative insights which are important both from the point of view of general sociological analysis as

well as for the interpretation of Jewish history” (Eisenstadt, 2004, p. 10). A second stage in his analysis is the development of institutional molds based on specific religious precepts, linking the universalistic and rationalizing elements of prophetic movement with the legal and ritualic constructions of rabbinical schools, even though not fully examined, it “constituted the crux of his analysis” (Eisenstadt, 2004, p. 10). Eisenstadt considers that Weber did not fully explore the conditions and consequences of such an important transformation from the Second Temple time to the rabbinical institution.

Concentrating on the structural-institutional dimension and on the religious-ideological dimension in understanding the Jewish history, Weber followed the main events that made possible the rationalization of this religious beliefs with tremendous impact on social structures to come. He discussed the cultic and ritual precepts reflected in the religious orientations, like one God, first tribal, national, and then transnational, transcendental, the Covenant with God. The stage of transcendental God, along the weakening of magic, the universalization and rationalization with the “strong emphasis on the ethical dimension of the religious experience” (Eisenstadt, 2004, p. 17), organizing the social behavior and the very beginning of “the rational organization of daily conduct in the secular spheres of life according to such religious precepts” (Eisenstadt, 2004, p. 17). Another important aspect is the “accountability of rulers and of the community to a higher authority, i.e., God, Divine Law or the like, and to the emergence of earthly, concrete autonomous social groups or categories which represent, as it were, such higher authority” (Eisenstadt, 2004, p. 17).

The cultural and institutional molds, based on the religious rationalization, are made by the changes in social structure of groups, the persistence of certain social structures and their relations with new religious precepts, all representing pieces of Jewish identity, a powerful collective identity.

A weak point is considered by Eisenstadt to be the rationalization of religious beliefs with their institutional effects in relation with the elements of Jewish collective identity. The situation for this people was that the national, ethnic identity, these primordial political symbols were integrated in the later on universal religious view, inevitably predisposing to tensions between the ethnic element, political identity, and religious identity in universalistic perspective. All these combinations were used by religious and political elites and became important “in the context of attempts to define the symbolic institutional boundaries of the Jewish nation in relation to other nations and to demarcate the parameters of collective identity in terms of its various components and of the basic religious orientations”

(Eisenstadt, 2004, p. 22). From this situation it is important to understand the relation with other nations, in the context of universalist claim, and at the same time preserving the particularistic symbols of their identity, also in the context of international troubles, exposed to the risks of dissolution. Within this reality, the Jewish people is marked by the tension between the religious universalism and the primordial national group, “differentiating itself ideologically and symbolically from its neighbors through the combination of religious and primordial symbols built into the construction of Jewish identity from the beginning of Jewish history” (Eisenstadt, 2004, p. 22). This is why Eisenstadt considers that this reality is not to be attributed to the pariah status of Jewish communities but it must be considered the “consequence of the unique construction of the Jewish collective identity and its relation to the institutional setting in which it lived” (Eisenstadt, 2004, p. 23). Another aspect mentioned by the author is that even the prophetic movement and the monotheistic vision “emerged – as recent research indicates – not only, or even mainly, out of a pure ‘religious-philosophical’ orientation but out of a motivation to legitimize the distinctiveness – often the political distinctiveness – of the Israelite entity. As is well known, all the apocalyptic visions of the later prophets contained the restoration of the House of David as a central element” (Eisenstadt, 2004, p. 23).

It was true, according to Eisenstadt, that the Jewish history was formed by the relations with the neighbors, by religious developments and institutions created by elites, but he is not agreeing with Weber in pointing to the pariah status as “the major feature characterizing the relations of the Jews to the nations surrounding them – whether in the period of the Second Temple or even afterwards in the period of the Dispersion” (Eisenstadt, 2004, p. 39).

1.2. Antonin Causse – from primitive mentality to moral individualism

The interest for the ancient Jewish people and its history, a community made from and by its religious beliefs, was also present in the French sociology, one marked by the Durkheimian school of thought. Here we have Antonin Causse, the sociologist preoccupied with the changes of the Jewish primitive mentality towards rational and individualist ethics established by the prophets.

In 1937 A. Causse publishes *Du groupe ethniques a la communauté religieuse. Le problème de la religion d'Israël*, recognizing the contribution of Max Weber in *Ancient Judaism*, except the definition of the pariah status of ancient communities, considering that it was a recent assessment transposed in

ancient time. Even if Weber identified and analyzed certain political and cultural realities relevant in the research of this people, the main critique was that he did not acknowledge enough the primitive mentality of social organization and its transformation into a rational and individualistic ethic that marked the beginning of a religion with a tremendous heritage.

The family, clan and the tribe represents the main social structure that offers an „organic solidarity, which unites the group and assures the absolute dependence of the individual of community” (Causse, 1937, p. 20). The one who provides this type of solidarity is Yahwe, and „the cult appears as one of the strongest social relation and fundamental for the group solidarity” (Causse, 1937, p. 27). Antonin Causse is concentrated on the dissolution of this type of solidarity under the impact of urbanization and monarchy, on the social changes that produced the social crises, when „the uproot of Israel begins”, when the man lives apart from his medium, when the war is no longer made by the clans, „when the war is replaced with organized repression of a mediator power, with compensation system” (Causse, 1937, p. 49). All these changes happened with the institution of monarchy, when „the covenant lost its primitive force, this mystique connection, stronger than any other physical connection between men, with sworn fidelity, respect for the contractual law, and a spiritual connection between allies” (Causse, 1937, p. 53). This social crisis, concludes A. Causse, is inevitable to produce also a religious crisis, the monarchy with his king weakening the power of the national God, of Yahwe, the trust in military means representing the lost of the faith in Yahwe, the only one that could bring victory in the war. This is the time that the work of prophets is emerging, in the need for a new vision of covenant.

From now on, the solidarity of the people with his God is no longer made by the magical and mystical ways, but on an ethic ground, „the protection of the national God for his people is no longer the consequence of a natural connection which unites the people, it is the result of the moral belief of the people. If Israel does not fulfill the will of Yahwe, the alliance is broken and the connection is broken” (Causse, 1937, p. 101). Through their morality and rationality in the notion of the cult, the prophets opened the way towards an individualistic view of religion and of social organization. Causse considers that this is the decisive moment that marks the personal dimension in the relation of God and his followers, we have the transition from primitive collectivism to moral individualism. The expression of these new events is brought by the Deuteronomy, „a book of reform and teaching, which represent the beginning of a new religious conception, the religion of Torah” (Causse, 1937, p. 137), where we find a powerful rational

dimension, with a voluntary solidarity, a brotherhood above the mystical and magical stage, one that assures the survival of the Jewish people in the harsh historical challenges.

The prophets of the Exile will bring the „great weakening of Israel”, not a new social and national life, but a „new sociological formation, one which will not be a confederation of clans, not a people, but a religious community with a life that will no longer be tied to the realities of an ethnic group with the destiny of a nation” (Causse, 1937, p. 195). This is the beginning of a personal connection with God, the value of piety is recognized, a religion of Torah, an individualist relation with God, all this was the great heritage of Judaism, in A. Causse analysis. In this context the eschatological hopes appear, detached by the increasingly unfavorable realities, with a perspective of utopic future and transcendence. Now Torah was the essential connection of the religious community, the one that maintained the group, the explanation for the survival of small minorities being „the fanatical belief and rigorist practice” (Causse, 1937, p. 235). Causse attests that the purpose of the cult is to bring the man closer to God, the religious community helps the personal piety in relation to God, the study of the Law is a sign of this piety, not as a burden in the meaning of a rigorism, but as a sign that separate the pures of the impures” (Causse, 1937, p. 274).

In the exclusivity of this piety we find the rejection of all that it is foreign, the nationalism of the community does not disappear but it is manifesting differently, in spite of sect character we also have the tendency towards universalism, according to A. Causse. This is why „this denationalization and universalization of religion are the expression of a new need of human soul and of a particular social evolution in which the religious community tends to organize itself outside of political institution and territory” (Causse, 1937, pp. 305-306). This is not only a crisis of Israel, underlines A. Causse but a tremendous social and religious movement ”that will bring new visions about spiritual life and other religions” (Causse, 1937, p. 306).

Indebted to the French sociological thinking, A. Causse brings a psychological and sociological perspective on the evolution and history of ancient Judaism, one which must be reminded when we speak of Weber’s *Ancient Judaism*. His contribution refers to the transition that took place in early Jewish communities, in which he identified the primitive mentality changed by the development of rationality, piety and individualism. In this perspective, the influence of E. Durkheim, L. L. Bruhl are to be considered. For Weber changes in the structures of socio-economic realities brought

changes related to the religious dimension, through the work of prophets. A. Causse reaches the same conclusion independently from Weber, when discussing the social inequalities when entering into Canaan and with the period of monarchy, when „a social question becomes a religious question” (Kimbrough, 1972, p. 200). But for Causse, the decisive element is the transition from primitive mentality to the logical thinking, which corresponds with the elaboration of the Deuteronomy, and the „individual begins to be formally recognized in literature and religion, and the ethical teaching of personal responsibility is introduced. Individualism tends to replace collectivism” (Kimbrough, 1972, p. 201). This type of evolution towards individualism does not enter in collision with the institutional forms of religious community, „since Torah was seen as means of propagating the personal presence of Yahwe in the presence of his worshipers” (Kimbrough, 1972, p. 202). Considered as a monumental work, the research of A. Causse attests that the transition from primitive mentality to the moral individualism is owed to the Torah (Kimbrough, 1972, p. 202).

The Jewish people had a special identity constructed in the troubles of history, weakened or powerful, and this undoubted reality is concentrated in the concept of *chosen* people, either starting from the changes in economic, social, demographic, migrational patterns, religious developments or international situation in key points of history, or from the primitive mentality towards a change in collective and individual thinking. All transformed this community from a national one in a primarily religious one, with Torah as a national country, considers A. Causse.

From the understanding of this concept – *chosen* people, an identity crux, it could be elaborated an extensive research that irradiates on all the dimensions of social and personal identity, as manifestations and operationalization, adapted for every time period, country, or international power dialectics. In this way we can respond to the question concerning the preservation of identity, the survival and purpose of a religious community based on Jewish past, present, towards future.

The axial importance of this people, for Western culture as well as for the two world religions, is also of concern for Eric Voegelin, the philosopher confronted with two totalitarianisms, preoccupied by the problem of order in world history, manifested especially in political science. And the special starting place in understanding the order and its history begins inevitably with the Jewish people, with *Israel and Revelation*.

2. A SOCIOLOGY OF TRANSCENDENCE?

2.1. *God in search of man – Eric Voeglin's Israel and Revelation*

Faced with the question of the meaning of the world, man tries to understand his existence and his history. In this endeavour, the problem of order arises, one that needs to provide answers especially in the face of the disorders. Eric Voegelin turns over the metaphysical source of order, *Israel and Revelation* being the first volume of his magnus opera *Order and History*. The quaternarian structure of reality is formed by the categories God, man, world and society, and become the ways that man partakes in those fundamental dimensions through *participation*.

In *Israel and Revelation*, Voegelin (2001) analyses the political existence of ancient Israel, with his quest towards meaning experienced in the form of Revelation. This type of existence and creating history is contained in a series of symbols, like Revelation, Covenant, Sinai, promised land, chosen people, monarchy, prophetism, all events open to empirical investigation. The history of order, of Israelite order, was a continuous dialectic between the approachment or derailment from the Revelation, his political existence being best articulated in the prophetic movement. The prophets reminded the power of Covenant to the derailed community, the most important significance of this phenomenon being the order the soul. The conflict between the order of the spirit/soul enter in collision with the immanent order, human order, because „the covenant provided the right relationship between God and humans and between humans themselves but made no provision for governmental organization, thus raising the question of the relationship between pragmatic and paradigmatic history” (Voegelin, 2001, p. 6). Considering the monarchy period as a „fall from being”, and a „reentry into the Sheol of cosmological civilization” (Voegelin, 2001, p. 6), a special attention must be given to the two dimensions of history: pragmatic and paradigmatic. Between these poles the history of order created a people, an identity, even a world history.

A critique of Voegelin refers to the inadequately treatment of „the social reality of Israel. There can be no true attunement to the transcendent God unless it is manifested in the social sphere. Those who are in relationship with God are called to act in the world, to assume responsibility for mundane affairs so that justice can prevail” (Voegelin, 2001, p. 9). This shortcoming is explained because Voegelin does not fully analyse the positive accomplishments of Israel's political organization. He views the royal covenant as a *derailment*. In his view, „the decision to have a king ,like the nations’ represented a ,fall from being’ when Israel slide into

cosmological society under David and Solomon. It is difficult to be satisfied with such a negative appraisal of the monarchy in Israel. For one thing, the Old Testament witness itself is ambivalent (1 Sam. 8–12)” (Vogelin, 2001, p. 9). He views the prophetic movement as an effort to recover the true Covenant, neglecting „the ethical and social concerns of the prophets” (Vogelin, 2001, p. 10).

Voegelin works to discover the symbols of order, starting from the premise that the order of existence has a meaning, there has been an approachment or the derailment from the right order of the spirit. This reality represented the main part of Jewish history, existence in truth and untruth becoming the poles that the researcher must investigate in order to access the social and personal order in which man and society live.

The *participation*, as a method to access the quaternarian structure (God, man, world, society), can be investigated through sociological means, starting from the order lived by the different communities in history (Măndiță, 2019). In the case of Jewish people, the symbols are the Sinaitic event, the Exodus, the Desert, conquest of Canaan, Covenant, because they were „animated by a new spirit” (Vogelin, 2001, p. 153), „the irruption of the spirit transfigured the pragmatic event into a drama of the soul and the acts of the drama into symbols of divine liberation” (Vogelin, 2001, p. 153). From now on we have a new people that looked towards a *beyond*, a new type of history was constructed, one who’s identity was shaped by the dialectic of paradigmatic and pragmatic reality.

This conflict between pragmatic and paradigmatic existence is most visible in the time of monarchy. The Covenant at Sinai is the essential type of the relation between Yahwe and his people, and from this point appeared the prophetic warning about the social evils of the conquest. This is why „if we penetrate the paradigmatic redaction to the pragmatic core of the events leading up to the call for a king, it appears that the Israelite invasion of Canaan had been only partially successful, that the foothold gained was precarious, and that the attacks of the Philistines threatened the Israelite position with a reduction bordering on extinction” (Vogelin, 2001, p. 221), the conquest was considered completed after the establishment of kingship.

After the conquest, contended Voegelin, it was also a revival of interest in Moses, when the monarchy was seen as something evil, existing a dual reference: either the people could not survive because the wars, either survived, but astray from Mosaic rules. Without the monarchy the prophetic movement could not appear, „the Yahwism of the prophets probably could never have become a universal historic force” (Vogelin, 2001, p. 224). This is why Voegelin refers to the Canaan moment as “a perpetual mortgage of the

world-immanent, concrete event on the transcendent truth that on its occasion was revealed. The mortgage had become heavier and heavier down to the foundation of the monarchy because the original promise of Canaan made every advance of the people in worldly establishment appear as a fulfillment of the order instituted by the covenant. When the prophets began their work, the mortgage had reached staggering proportions” (Vogelin, 2001, p. 224).

Voegelin underlines an unresolved difficulty that the Jewish people experienced, the collision between the life of the spirit and the life in the world. Although the balance exists, the „habituation, institutionalization, and ritualization inevitably, by their finiteness, degenerate sooner or later into a captivity of the spirit that is infinite; and then the time has come for the spirit to break a balance that has become demonic imprisonment” (Vogelin, 2001, p. 227). If for Christians the Sermon on the Mount separated the life of the spirit from the order of a civilization, the prophets warned about the spirit of Yahwinism and the social order, to make clear that an obedience to the political order does not mean a substitution for the divine rules, that the status in social order does not assure a status before God, that social success is not a proof of righteousness, reminds us Voegelin. It was important was that the prophetic phenomenon „shifted from successful pragmatic existence to the substantive order under the covenant” (Vogelin, 2001, p. 229).

Voegelin understands the *order of Israel* as the „history of a society, held together by a core of ethnical identity and the forming power of the Sinaitic revelation. Within the course of its history, now, the order of that society has undergone remarkable changes. It was originally created by the Sinai Covenant. And the berith was somewhat extraordinary under the aspect of order, for it provided for the right relation between God and man, as well as for the relations between the members of the Chosen People, but made no provision whatsoever for a governmental organization that would secure the existence of the people in the power field of pragmatic history” (Vogelin, 2001, p. 349).

A peculiarity of the Jewish people, noticed Voegelin, was that it started „with a radical leap in being; and only after the people had been constituted by that initial experience did it acquire, in the course of centuries, a mundane body of organization to sustain itself in existence. This sequence, reversing the ordinary course of social evolution, is unique in history” (Vogelin, 2001, p. 365). If a community is suppose to begin with primitive rites and ascend towards transcendent religion, the fact that „the mystery of Israel’s start at the wrong end of evolution must be accepted, the

progressivist thesis that first things come always first notwithstanding. In this one case the sequence actually was reversed; and the reversal was the cause of Israel's extraordinary creativity in the realm of symbols" (Vogelin, 2001, p. 366). This periodic fall from being or descending in the Sheol of civilization mean for Voegelin the effort to create the symbols by which these experiences are lived, one of them being the prophetic movement. We see a dialectic of pragmatic and paradigmatic history, „a model experiment in the creation of symbols of mundane existence under the conditions of an already enacted leap in being" (Vogelin, 2001, p. 366).

Only in the ninth century the meaning of this clash was established with the help of prophets, historians and the people that codified the will of God and the obligations for the Jewish people.

The despair of the prophets brought the actuality of Moses and its Covenant as a reaction to the derailments experienced in the social and political existence of Israel, in an effort to reverse the *leap out of being*, in a dangerous international situation. The task was difficult, contends Voegelin, because the prophets had to warn that the God of Israel was not only one among other, but that no other God existed; there were changes in the identity of Hebrew clans in the monarchy; also the difficulties of organizing the postxilic community. This is why „Yahwe tended to become a universal God of mankind, while the protean Israel became smaller and smaller. Hence the prophets were torn by the conflict between spiritual universalism and patriotic parochialism that had been inherent from the beginning in the conception of a Chosen People" (Vogelin, 2001, p. 407).

Voegelin views the prophetic movement as a struggle with the Law, „as the attempt to disengage the existential from the normative issues. That this is indeed the essential core of the prophetic effort is confirmed by the Talmudic interpretation of prophecy, which has for its purpose the reversal of the effort and the assertion of the supremacy of the Torah" (Vogelin, 2001, p. 500). This break between the existential and normative field was identified by Voegelin in the merger of divine and human order in the theopolitical realm, in the rejection of immanent dimension, „the prophets apparently were not only unable to see, but not even interested in finding a way from the formation of the soul to institutions and customs they could consider compatible with the knowledge and fear of God. The attitude of the prophets is tantalizing in that it seems to violate common sense" (Vogelin, 2001, p. 500).

Here Voegelin analyses the *prophets ontology*, meaning the concrete response in a question of public order. When comparing the actual behaviour of Israelites with the Covenant, they see that the *berith* was broken,

and what could this mean in terms of consequences? Would the Jewish people still be the *chosen people*? These are considered by Voegelin in the symbolism of Covenant. The distance between faith and revelation became big, although „the revelation of God, once it had entered the reality of history, could not be thrown out of history by a human decision to ignore it” (Vogelin, 2001, p. 514). The astray could be an assumed reality for the Jewish people, with the risk of annihilation by the imperial powers, but „for the first time men experienced the clash between divinely willed and humanly realized order of history in its stark brutality, and the souls of the prophets were the battlefield in this war of the spirit” (Vogelin, 2001, p. 514). Voegelin considers that this was the moment when all these ontological problems with its symbolism appeared, in the form of the tensions between divine order and human disorder.

Voegelin views *Israel* not as the empirical people that kept the Covenant or astrayed from it, „but the expansion of divine creation into the order of man and society” (Vogelin, 2001, p. 518). This empirical reality cannot be reversed to a previously type of order or with a substitution of divine order with one created by man, because there „is no history outside the historical form under revelation” (Vogelin, 2001, p. 518), one which deeply shaped Western civilization, as we also see in Weber’s sociological work.

3. Conclusions

All three authors recognized the value of Jewish existence and history for the Western culture, probably for human history, if we consider the changes in religious, cultural, economic and political realms of various people that started with Revelation and continued in different symbols created around the world. Understanding the power of revealed transcendence that discharged in immanence, its history that influenced people and cultures, helps to create a profile that stands on the potential of power of spiritual/religious shaping of societies, communities. All authors analysed the *berith*, the transformation of social structures determined by religious values in an ever changing world along with their institutional molds. From a sociological perspective, Weber researched the ancient social structures under the impact of religious beliefs, with his extensive theoretical apparatus, in an effort to explain the peculiarities of Jewish people; as well, A. Causse explained this special character of Jewish people through a change in the primitive thinking of ancient communities towards an individualist and rational ethics under the influence of the same religious values. From a

philosophical perspective, Voegelin considers the problem of order with the Revelation experienced by Jewish people, but one with reversed direction, from transcendency towards immanence, not from primitive towards elaborated religious symbols. All agreed and recognized the crux represented by the works of prophets, explained by the conflict between paradigmatic and pragmatic history, or by a reaction to the social and political evils, or from an evolution towards universalism of a dispersed community, in Exile almost all its history. All agreed upon the relevance of Revelation in human history, under the form of Jewish history, from a sociological, economic, political, philosophical realms that shaped and influenced cultures and people. For this purpose, they studied the power of *berith*, the Exile, the prophetic movement, the monarchy, Sinai event, all symbols created to understand new realities and define new paths in history.

Either considering the Jewish people a pariah people because of its ritual segregation and of the work of prophets, like Weber, or as a people that followed a path from a primitive mentality towards a rational and individualist type of thinking, like A. Causse, the question of Jewish people continues to rise interest from the human studies concerned with the problem of identity and its survival in history or with the importance of religious values in time. This is why we consider that the symbol of *chosen people* as a very complex one, a crux of divine and human interaction and reaction in the world, being able to offer a complex understanding of social and institutional changes. The ways in which the symbol reflect inside as well as outside the community represent the defining enterprise of a provocative Jewish history that continues to intrigue researchers. Being a chosen people unifies the divine and human dimensions, speaking of the rights and obligations, reflecting the ways to relate to social realities or people, and explaining the complex sociological relations, structures or institutions developed in history.

If we consider that sociology is a restricted view upon the reality by focusing on the immanence of lived values, philosophy could bring another level, benefiting from a more generalized perspective over existence. This way brings another way to understand the question of order, existence, reality, offering a series of symbols that could be traced in the history of societies or people, very useful in a comparative sociology that pursues the problem of identity, survival, social resilience in the face of history's orders and disorders.

This is why a *sociology of transcendence* could be viewed as a sociology of divine order experienced in the human order, with its conflicts and

interactions, from a perspective that defines man and societies through religious manifestations.

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