

**”BABEȘ-BOLYAI” UNIVERSITY  
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***KANTIAN PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION***  
**PhD THESIS SUMMARY**

**PhD supervisor:**

**Prof. Univ. Dr. Muscă Vasile**

**Fellow student:**

**Diaconu Mircea**

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## **Keywords**

Kantian philosophy, Enlightenment, criticism, the idea of God, pure reason, practical reason, transcendental dialectics, moral theology, cosmological ideas, theological idea, dynamically ideas, ideal of the pure reason, ontological proof, cosmological proof, physique and theological proof, mathematical sublime, dynamical sublime, sacred/holy, numinous, mystery, fantastical imaginary, faculty of judgement, moral religion, cultic religion, symbolic language, mirage, history, Christianity, faculty of symbolic designation, hierophany, esthetic idea.

## **Synthesis of the main ideas**

My research takes place in the field of classical interpretation, developed by the German neokantian authors, of a theology that is only practical, which believes that the religious phenomenon understood by Kant only as a way of uplifting the moral of the human spirit and never as a field that has its own purpose. His moral theology is not a real theology, but only an a priori practical structure built deductively to sustain the coherence of the practical life of man.

On one hand, my intercession talks about all the themes related to religion, but also those related to the religious phenomenon, even if they are an outsider to the domain, for example the sublime and also all the connections that exist in between these themes. On the other hand, I try to compose a criticism of the reductionism centered on morality that is a characteristic of the Kantian philosophy viewed from an opposite point of view elaborated by Rudolf Otto and Mircea Eliade. The thesis of my research has four thematic levels, the main one is related to general information and explains the themes and ideas of the Kantian philosophy that are connected to the religious and religion field or any other issues related to it. The second level is the analysis of the evolution of Kantian judgement with the purpose of dealing with various themes of religion only from the prospect of the practical rationality, which begins with a theoretical and logical analysis of the principles and reasons of speculative theology and ends with a negative conclusion, theoretically speaking, but saving faith, from a practical point of view. At the same time, the spirit and the way of thinking of the epoch are being analysed, along with the orientative ideas that have influenced the development of the critique of religion and moral. The third thematic level analyses the experience of the sublime and its relationship with

the experience of the sacred. The fourth level of my research is related to the polemic regarding the critique thinking about the function and the logic of the symbol as a fundamental and autonomous structure of the human spirit, separated by the plan of practical activity.

My thesis is situated at a crossing between disciplines, involving themes and ideas from many cultural domains: philosophy, theology, logics, esthetics, history and the history of religions. The analysis of the criticism that Kant applies to theology, the dogmatic metaphysics and especially the Idea of God that sits at the base of theological speculations and syllogismus that go towards the transcendental sophisma. The analysis of the sublime, the faculties implied in its experimenting and its report with the experience of the sacred implies the entrance on the esthetics field and the achievement of connections between it and the history of religions and myths. The understanding of all implications in the theme of sublime relevates the non-religious rate that Kant has with the absolute, assumed from the cultural and profane point of view. The issue of the history of philosophy has been taken into consideration in order to understand well the meaning of cultic or moral religion, in the Kantian thinking. The general consideration of the historic phenomenon and the sense of history points out the cultic religious facts in history. The meaning of history and the meaning that Kant gives to the historical events affects his own perspective upon cultic religions that manifest themselves in history and that are influenced by the horizon of event development.

The onset of my intercession presumes the undertake of both a historically research and also a synchronic one. In the first chapter, the manner of examining is one regarding the timeline of events, due to the historic analysis and the way of thinking in the Enlightenment epoch, but also the biography of the German philosopher. The historic factor and the biographic factor have been taken into conderation as they have happened. In the second chapter, the one regarding the Idea of God and the analysis of the speculative principles that are the basics of metaphysics and theology, I followed the synchronic method, not taking into consideration the historical factor, but only the logic and conceptual analysis of the principles. The third chapter is also based on a synchronic perspevice of study, analysing some faculties and experiences of the human spirit, while not minding the historic process. The fourth chapter used both research methods, but the synchronic one dominates the general approach. An eterogeneous appearence is present, regarding the themes that are being considered in my thesis, but in a more profound way, these themes communicate to one another and form a coherent system of an ensamble of ideatic

structures that are complementary and very well put together. The order of the chapters partially indicates the way in which the Kantian thinking upon religion has evolved in time.

**The first chapter** of my thesis analyses the context of the epoch seen from the Kantian perspective, it determines the main purposes in the Enlightenment thinking and also their reference with the religion and the influences of the XVIIIth century spirit upon the Kantian philosophy of religion. I have researched the general biography of the philosopher and some relevant details which show the attitude that he has upon religion. These details can be a very important factor that develops and show the main ideas of the philosopher from Königsberg. The third level of my first chapter research is also the relation between the culture in the time of Enlightenment and the critique thinking. The Kantian approach upon the philosophy of religion is tributary to Enlightenment and the century in which the German philosopher has lived, but not only that. The way in which Kant was thinking keeps himself in some Enlightenment coordinates that are very general on one hand and on the other hand brings the direction of thinking at a top of a meditation state that has never been possible until him. He forced the limits of the Enlightenment perspectives, imposing his own vision upon the religious and moral fact. However, the philosophy of religion is the field in which Kant has been the least original. He was influenced by the Enlightenment spirit of the epoch that ignored the archetypal dimension of the human mind and also of the cultural and religious phenomena. The only dimension of religion that is familiar to the philosopher is the one that finds itself in a positive rapport with the moral one. The phenomena of the sacred is seen as an exaggeration of the feelings and imagination, an unuseful experience for a rationalist from the Enlightenment period that needs specific and rigorous principles in order to fundament any intellectual and cultural speech. The rational vision upon life and culture has made the analysis of archetypes almost impossible, as well as the religious phenomenon represented by the sacred, as an autonomous fact, in rapport with the morality.

**The second chapter** analyses the Idea of God, the dynamical Ideas of cosmology and also its contradictions, that accompany this Ideas in the claim of reason to know the supreme being purely and without experience. This analysis brings us to the Kantian negative conclusion which shows that the faculty of knowing has no access in the transcendental realm, and any theoretical and scientific knowledge is always dependant on the land of immanency. The first subchapter represents an introduction in the themes of transcendental dialectics, in which I analyse and I present the structures of the basic concepts implied, the way in which the reason lets itself caught

through the transcendental subreption sophisma in the transcendental illusion and it loses itself in dialectical speculations that are not related to the experience. Ideas of the theoretical reason are being researched and also the way in which they are deduced from the function of totalization unity between all interceded reasonings. The second subchapter explains the dynamical Ideas of cosmology and their contradictions. The first dynamical contradiction is the basis from which Kant begins elaborating the argument of development in the domain of practical philosophy, giving practical reason the intelligible fundament that offers meaning to the moral in the horizon of practical activity. The theoretical reason transforms the category of causality into an Idea. The Idea of spontaneity gets born from this, which is related to the thesis of the third contradiction, which postulates the intelligible principle of the causality from freedom. The spontaneity is also an Idea of theoretical reason. The practical reason derives from it the Idea of freedom, which is its fundamental Idea from which the Law of moral is determined positively. The second dynamic Idea takes us to the disproof of cosmological proof. The idea of existence as an absolute necessity was a fundamental concept in the construction metaphysics. From this concept others were born and used to think about the conceivable objects. For Kant, this particular concept remains important for hypostatic determination of the Supreme Being which is necessary as a postulate for the activity of practical reason.

The third subchapter develops the topic of the Idea of God that stands at the basis of any theology or metaphysics. This Idea uses the instrument of dynamic Ideas to build its dialectics edifice, but also the categories of the intellect, used outside experience. I analyse the genesis of the Idea of God, which begins with the Idea of the totality of all possibilities, and which becomes the Idea of the actual totality of reality, from which reason extracts the Idea of a supreme and perfect being. The transcendental subreption presumes the sophistic jump from the Idea of a potential totality of reality to the actual totality of reality, thought as a determined and knowable object. The superior being is a concept that integrates more than the one of an absolutely necessary being and as a result the last one is overdetermined through integration in the first concept. The causality from freedom is overdetermined as well through the integration in the concept of the supreme being. I analyse in this part of the thesis the three arguments in the existence of God, from a logical, cosmological and physico-theological point of view, but also the Kantian critic against them. I also explained the pre-Critique Kantian thought that led to the abolishment of these arguments. Reducing the homonymy of the concept of being at just two



meanings - the rapport between the object with the faculty of knowing in transcendental logic and the copula in judgment in the elementary logic - led to the abolishing of the theoretical meaning used in the ontological argument. In the cosmologic and ontological proofs, the origin of transcendental error is found in the affirmation of the congruence between the formal structures of logic and the real content of knowledge. The physio-theological proof is related to empirical objects seen as proofs of the existence of an organization of the empirical matters with determined purposes. The purpose is thought sophisticatedly as being constitutive and an interior part of reality. We have a Demiurge deity thought through anthropomorphic analogies. The second thematic level of my thesis has researched the development of Kantian thinking in the direction of creating the point of view of a religion only in the limits of practical pure reason. This process has begun from the theoretical and logical analysis of the principles and arguments of speculative theology and led to a negative conclusion on the theoretical field, saving faith in the practical realm of moral. Rational theology is not dissolved, its theoretical fundament is replaced with a practical one. As a result, the theoretical theology is replaced by a moral theology, which has practical principles instead of theoretical ones.

**In the third chapter** I analyse the sublime which shows how a spirit influenced by the Enlightenment reports itself to the infinite and totality, not through a religious relation that involves a mystery that is beyond the reason and that cannot be determined through concepts. The aesthetic experience doesn't pass „on the other side”, as it is a contemplation of the Ideas of the reason, so it is compatible with the vision of the Enlightenment which reveals everything that can be determined as a concept and considers everything as being intangible. The rapport with the infinity has been integrated by the critic conscience in the realm of aesthetics, and the experience of the sublime has taken the place of the sacred in the rapport that the conscience has with the infinity and totality on the emotional level. My research wants to show that in the lack of a contemplative direction that is mystical and religious, or an metaphysical speculation that loses itself in the transcendence, Kant remains only with the aesthetic contemplation of the absolute. The rapport between the conscience and the absolute has moved from the realm of cultic to the realm of culture. We show that the sublime rapport with the absolute does not involve a reductionist approach that aesthetises the religion, but demands an autonomous experience that is specific to the human spirit. The sublime can be seen also as a gate of entrance on the realm of the religious experience because of its vicinity to the sacred. We also show the differences and

the resemblances that are present between the sublime and the sacred, in order to understand better the border and the specific significance of each one of the two.

**In the fourth chapter** I analyse the religious phenomenon in its moral and cultic dimensions. An important element is the analysis of the cultic religions in rapport with the history, where I make a general presentation of the Kantian philosophy of history. The Kantian vision upon the cultic religions is conditioned by the lack of a constitutive transcendental principle that would determine the reason and the significance of history. History remains just a complex of a contingently and particularly phenomena, without any principles that raises the events and the dignity of necessity and universality. The criterion that Kant uses to appreciate the progress of history is the development of the capacities of reason and the raise of its autonomy up against the nature and past history. In parallel with the development of reason, there is another process that is the development of the conscience of the autonomy of moral law versus religion, history and nature. Kant pays tribute to an evolutionist vision upon history. Christianity is understood as the superior religion, the top of a historical progress since the oldest barbarian history of human civilization.

Kant doesn't recognize any autonomous dimension of religion or any interpretation or specific analysis based on independent premises of other plans and activities of the spirit. The only fundamental content of religion is pure moral, presented differently and in a symbolic and schematic way. The archetypes and the symbolic structures of religion are interpreted as schemes of the principles and the process of moral development of man, and the history of religions is the realm of manifestation of the process of the moral enlightenment of humanity.

For Kant, religion is understood as a servant of morality because of the incapacity of the reason to prove the existence of God, but also because of the lack of some principles of pure reason that would fundament an autonomous religion based on moral, history and nature. The moral is based on the moral law, which is an idea of pure reason, in its practical functionality, its fundamentals are autonomous regard of nature and the history of human kind. On the other hand, religion is based on Revelation and the institution of the Church, which is historically inherited by the humanity from all the past generations. Kant refers to Revelation, Church and all the elements that are related to their structure historically speaking, as an „ecclesiastical religion”, which is different than the religion of pure reason, fundamented on the moral principles of practical reason. The Revelation as a fundament of religion comes from the outside and it is part

of a rapport of dependency with the nature and history. The empirical vehicle of history cannot pass on anything that is universal and necessary, and this is why Kant denies the absolute truths of the christian Revelation. The transcendental autonomy of principles is the absolute quality criteria on which Kant builds his way of thinking in the field of practical philosophy. The moral principles are a certainty in an absolute way. Since the christianity, the only sublime religion in the vision of Kant, the law of moral reaches the conscience of its own autonomy. In the case of religions where the believers act morally not because of the necessity of moral law imposed by the pure reason, but because of the fear of gods, we cannot talk about the sublime, but neither can we talk about autonomous moral. The moral that has been there before christianity is in a dependant relation with the nature and the mythical and symbolical anthropomorphic constructions of old religions. The fourth subchapter of my final chapter develops also a polemic between the critical and antireductionist thinking of Mircea Eliade, this being representative as the most original part of my thesis. A parallel between the Kantian view upon religion and the writings of Eliade about history of religion has never been stated before. I will try to integrate the Kantian faculties that can reveal the symbolical thinking (the practical reason with its esthetic Ideas, the faculty of symbolic designation and the faculty of analogical reflexive judgement) in a whole that keeps together with the approach of Eliade upon hierophany and the symbol.

Kant, as well as all the authors of the epoch that have been interested in the religious phenomenon, ignores the ontological and phenomenological specific of the liturgical spirit of religion and of the sacred. The cultic dimension of religion, through its mythical and symbolical system, creates a direct and ontological rapport with the ultimate reality. The cultic realm implies an ontological function of religion, different than the moral one, the social one or any other kind, but also than the theological or metaphysical speculation. The ontological function gives meaning and autonomy to the cultic dimension of any religion. This is a conclusion that came out from the writings of Eliade.

**Conclusion.** The view of the German philosopher upon religion is decided, firstly, by the conclusions of the transcendental dialectics, and by the *Critique of Pure Reason*, which finds reasons for a position that demolishes the fundamentals of any speculative metaphysics or theologies. The faculty of knowledge doesn't have any access to transcendent, and theology and the symbolic language related to it that have the pretense of becoming ineffable, become pure illusions. The speculative theology of christianity is being replaced with a moral theology, whose

fundament exist on the realm of moral, from where its principles are deduced. Abolishing the theoretical organ of religion, Kant heads towards the practical philosophy and elaborates a moral theology that takes the place of the theological moral which has been fundamented on theoretical principles. At the same time, it denies any value of the religious experience, mystical or liturgical, the cultic religion becomes just a way of mediating the moral life of human kind. Even if the ontological meaning is different than the moral one, they go into a complementary rapport. All the basic subrealms of religion, theological-theoretical, moral-existential and cultic-symbolic combine synthetically and complementary in a whole that is a complex and multifaceted rapport with the absolute.

The problem of religion is integrated in the critique system in a procustian way by the transcendental method. The religious phenomenon is forced to go well with the critique principles, hereby it reaches a certain reductionist approach, centering religion on morality. The reality of the archetypes and of the experience of the sacred are ignored or reduced to the esthetic plan of the spirit. The dogma of christianity is rendered again in order to be congruent with the transcendental critique system: the themes, the symbols and the christology become schematic symbols that explain the moral life of man, founded on the Ideas of practical reason. The symbolic plan of cultic religion is seen in critique philosophy from three points of view. The first one understands the cultic customs, laws and symbols only as superstitious remains that have no spiritual meaning. The second point of view refers only to the cultic dimension of christianity and understands it as an instrument towards moral evolution of man and never as a purpose. The third point of view refers to reducing the symbolic elements to the esthetic plan, through the theory of esthetic Ideas. All these elements have value only through the expression of the Ideas of practical reason in the artistic creations, and their mythical and symbolical function, regarding the formal constitution of hierophany and symbolical structures through artistic representations, are considered just a superstitious construction. For Kant, these esthetic Ideas have only a cultural meaning and function, but not a cultic one, because the plan of the cultic and symbolic don't have any meaning and value just by themselves, independently from moral. The disappearance or the atrophy of the symbolic religious experience in modernity leads to occupancy of the realm that has been left empty, in the human soul, with cultural and esthetic experiences.

The ones who haven't been on the same page with Kant's judgement about the religious phenomenon, have accused him of reductionism and of ignoring the specific spirit of religion. However, they ignored the main problem – the disability of the rationalist spirit of Enlightenment to understand the specific function of the symbol and the logic of the symbol. The main originality of my thesis and research is to approach this Kantian reductionism about religion through the work of Mircea Eliade, who tries to restaurate the autonomous function of the symbolic thinking with its ontological, existential and understanding tasks.

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