

Book review

Ioan Dura. 2002. *Dialog, toleranță, libertate. Configurații ale religiei în tranziția de la secularizare la pluralizare*. Cluj-Napoca: Editura Presa Universitară Clujeană, 214 p. (Ioan Dura. 2022. *Dialogue, tolerance, freedom. Configurations of religion in the transition from secularization to pluralization*. Cluj-Napoca: Cluj University Press, 214 p.)

Ioan Dura, deacon and Associated Professor at the Faculty of Theology - Ovidius University of Constanța, is well known in the academic space as a researcher by vocation, specialist in the field of the History and Philosophy of Religions, author of several works of deep analysis of philosophical and religious phenomena (Christian and non-Christian) and, last but not least, organizer and coordinator of the appreciated international conferences Religion, Knowledge, Society (RKS). The books and articles of Ioan Dura are vibrant and always in contact with the latest theoretical and experimental developments in the field of research, stylistically and thematically adapted to a national, regional and global spiritual and social context extremely diverse and volatile, which characterizes - unfortunately - the

current times, but always maintaining that rigor specific to serious topics.

The book *Dialog, toleranță, libertate. Configurații ale religiei în tranziția de la secularizare la pluralizare*, published in 2022 by the prestigious Presa Universitară Clujeană publishing house, gives the impression of an theological approach built according to the strictest criteria of scientific rigor. Despite a humble statement, very appropriate (and rare) for a professor of Theology, of distancing from the claim of exhaustiveness and positioning itself in the direction of a contribution to a deeper awareness, primarily on the part of specialists but also on the part of the general public, of the contemporary religious phenomenon, the book that I am reviewing reaches the level of analysis and clarity achieved by only a few works (for

example: Leonard Swidler, *Dialogue for Interreligious Understanding. Strategies for the Transformation of Culture-Shaping institutions*, Palgrave, Macmillan, 2014).

The themes addressed in the five chapters of the book are dedicated to the synchronous research of the contemporary religious phenomenon, configured in search of a balance, not without inherent contradictions, between globalization and identity, between pluralism and exclusivism. The author rejects the idea that globalization, despite its challenges and risks (pp. 16-17), could ultimately abolish the religious phenomenon. The apocalyptic theory of globalization is considered unfounded: "Theoretical analyses have shown that globalization is not an all-powerful, unidirectional force that levels everything in its path" (p. 15). Globalization itself is not a monolithic phenomenon, but we are dealing with alternative globalizations that determine or generate alternative social movements and consequences including religious ones (Turkish neo-Ottomanism, Taliban movement etc.).

An increasingly arithmetic pendulum of the contemporary world between secularization and desecularization is leading religion to the center status of societies: either as the perpetual enemy of radical theories or as the temptation of absolute power for political

fundamentalism. In relation to its approach, we can say that religion is experiencing a deviant form of effervescence consisting either in an extreme "consolidation" of its own fortifications (isolationism, triumphalism, formalism, cultural and spiritual unproductivity, loss of universality, etc.), under siege of radical secularism, or in an authoritarian upheaval (reformism without form or substance, deliberate confusion between religion and secular power, political interference in the intimate space of religious life, support for militarism, etc.) designed to destabilize the democratic and peaceful foundations of society. The author, expressing his concern about the uncontrolled reactions that may come, under the conditions outlined above, towards and from the religious sphere, takes a firm stand on the line of moderation and human common sense that should govern a vigorous and fruitful spiritual life and religious manifestations: "Beyond any theological criticisms, which in my opinion are not connected to contemporary realities, a democratic policy, religiously neutral, has made it possible to relocate religion in the public sphere. Moreover, it offers possibilities for tolerance in the same spatiality through regulations and legal rules that are intended to avoid conflict" (p. 42).

The need to guarantee the fundamental right of religious freedom, understood and practiced in democratic societies in terms of both *res humani juris* and *potestas naturalis* (pp. 148-149), cannot, however, be extended to its fullest extent until it has once again reached the ancient meaning of *res Divini juris* on a universal level. Although he subtly suggests this transcendent vocation of religious freedom, the author addresses, understandably given the current context, only its quality of *jus humanis* and that of *potestas*.

It is the dynamism of religion that maintains the perpetual actuality of the teaching and the freshness of its approaches in relation to the human person, in particular, and to other religious beliefs or philosophical systems, in general: "Even religions with a traditional or conservative structure and doctrine do not belong to the past, since tradition, at least in Christianity, does not suggest something confined to the past, but a continuous application of the teaching in today's context, but also in tomorrow's context, which will be different from today one" (p. 45). Or

this healthy dynamism can be identified and characterized by the interreligious dialogue that each religion is willing to initiate and maintain regardless of the impediments and obstacles that might arise in the course of the sincere and mutual openness facilitated by the "working word" (pp. 167-173).

The author initiates a moving manifesto at the end of the work in the favor of interreligious dialogue as an antidote to extremism in general and religious fundamentalism in particular (pp. 182-188). As in a classic work, Ioan Dura, to whom the expression "un homme d'une grande finesse" can be applied without unnecessary aplomb, ends his book by leaving the reader in a pleasant tension of the mind, drawing him in by the thoroughness of his exposition and his style, thus elegantly involving him in the future editorial project, which is already to be expected.

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