

# SKETCH FOR NOOLOGICAL SOCIOLOGY AND THE QUESTION OF ORDER

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## ABSTRACT

The article presents a sketch for a noological sociology focused on the problem of order in the context of the contributions made in German cultural space in philosophy, political science and sociology. In this regard we underline the question of order researched by Eric Voegelin, as well as the contribution made by I. Bădescu in his noological sociology developed for the analysis of Christian-Orthodox communities. Using these main theoretical frames proposed we identify four types of latencies which could be applied in the research of other religions, using as exemple Jewish religion.

**Keywords:** *noology, order, latency, spiritual manifestations, social frames, meaning.*

## INTRODUCTION

The establishment of noological sociology finds its roots in German cultural space, with a strong philosophical foundation. Traian Herseni states that sociological noology (noo-sociology) is relatively recent, “having its foundations in W. Dilthey, but is defined as sociology only at Sombart, Spranger, Vershofen” (Herseni 1982, 142). This type of knowledge will be reached through *comprehension*, since the “spirit is a reality endowed with meaning. The accomplishment of the spirit in history is the object researched” (id.). This level of knowledge is reached through the objectifications that the spirit takes, according to Dilthey. For this, Max Weber, Eduard Spranger, Werner Sombart are all considered Dilthey’s followers, his view being considered as the one which brought this deep change in science (Speranția 1944).

In Sombart’s work, considered one of the founders of sociology, as per the introduction made in the *Encyclopedia of Social Theory*, we find the priority of spiritual factor in understanding society, unlike Karl Marx who gave production

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factor a primary role in society. Sombart proposes a “new programme for sociology, which he had called Noo-sociology” (Grundmann and Stehr 2005, 775). The German thinker’s noological sociology is based on the idea that “all society is spirit (Geist) and all spirit, society” (ibidem). The elements of his sociology follows: people are characterised through sociality or spiritual communion because this is specific for the human being, which means people are united by meaning (language) and are connected in social institutions such as family, religion, state (Speranția 1944). According to the German sociologist, in the absence of these inter-spiritual connections, nothing would exist, no religion, no state or any other human creation. Because of this, “general sociology cannot have any other object than the notion of culture, since this notion achieves unity between the society spirituality and the sociality of the spirit. In this sense, General Sociology can be named Noo-sociology” (Speranția 1944, 515).

The problem of meaning is further developed in Max Weber’s sociology, where *comprehension* is the key for social action, as well as in Albert Schütz’s phenomenological sociology focused on meaning. For Weberian sociology of religion the meaning of social action identified in world’s religions formed different types of ethics, behaviours, influenced economic realities and impacted social stratification, and social order. His research of world’s religions reflected the power of ethics in creating social profiles, noological profiles, as it is demonstrated in his writings on Western and Eastern religions.

The meaning creating order is also found in the extensive work of Eric Voegelin, in his philosophy and political science. This author researched different types of order and disorders along human history. From a philosophical and political perspective Voegelin analyzed the profound social and cultural realities of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially the phenomenon of totalitarianism (Voegelin, [1952], 1987, 2011, 2012). In his effort to renew human sciences, Voegelin calls for an analysis of the basic elements of humanity (transcendence, immanence, faith, soul, mortality and immortality), bringing a *paradigm shift* in political science (Liedhold 2018). These categories can be used also in a sociological analysis focused on the understanding of different types of order manifested in social behavior, social actions. Having as premise that “the substance of history consists in the experiences in which man gains the understanding of his humanity and together with it the understanding of its limits” (Voegelin [1952] 1987, 78), this paradigm impacts also sociology. He warns about the empirical field disconnected from these experiences, with methods which surpass theoretical developments, “the present-day situation is even more difficult, because the mainstream of social sciences transformed into a branch of applied mathematics, processing masses of quantitative ‘data’ generated by standardized methods either using electronic technologies for ‘data mining’ or the bureaucratic paperwork approach of filling in questionnaires, considered to be the epitome of ‘empirical survey’” (Voegelin 1987, 2).

Reading from a sociological perspective, the following statements of Voegelin can have a peculiar weight for a sociology of order: “the order of history emerges from the history of order” (Voegelin 2001, 19) and “God and man, world and society form a primordial community of being. The community with its quaternarian structure is, and is not, a datum of human experience. It is a datum of experience insofar as it is known to man by virtue of his participation in the mystery of its being. It is not a datum of experience insofar as it is not given in the manner of an object of the external world but is knowable only from the perspective of participation in it”. (ibid., 39). Thus, as a point of departure we find these types of order, their experiences, the meanings of human and divine dimensions as they are lived and manifested in societies. The investigation of this quaternarian structure (God, man, world, society) is made through “*participation* in being, however, which is not a partial involvement of man; he is engaged with the whole of his existence, for participation is existence itself” (Voegelin 2001, 39). The individual and social existence is an opportunity to view these types of order created in *participation* by the four fundamental categories (God, man, world, society), to view its ways in creating order and/or disorders, of central interest for *noo sociology*.

The work of Eric Voegelin is made towards understanding the great political and social disorders, totalitarianism and the spiritual convulsions of modernity. His notable efforts in philosophy and political science can represent a point of departure for a sociology focused on the manifestation/objectification of spiritual dimension in social realities, on the order and disorders generated by different political and economic ideologies in their impact on society. Thus, inspired by the research of Voegelin, we could see a *sociology of order focused on the participatory tension of man and society between the poles of immanence and transcendence, following the experiences expressed in symbols, which reflect the structure (political, economic, cultural, religious), relations, and behaviors endowed with meaning* (Măndiță 2019).

## NOOLOGICAL SOCIOLOGY

Also acknowledging the primordially of spiritual dimension in society, I. Bădescu suggests a noological sociology through the analysis of religious beliefs, especially of Christian-Orthodox faith, using three categories of analysis: spiritual latencies (potentialities, virtualities of people); spiritual teachings (important spiritual ideas, religious dimensions, traditions); noological frames (frames in which the spiritual latencies are actualized according to the spiritual teachings) (Bădescu 2002). Focusing on the spiritual manifestation and frames of Christian-Orthodox faith, the author constructs a type of sociology of order, according to

specific values, along the disorders generated by weakening of spiritual teachings in damaged social frames.

These types of order/disorders are established according to the main spiritual teachings, representative for a cultural space or religious identity, reflecting the strength or weakness of a community, its vulnerability or its resilience. Thus, for the noological sociology “spiritual power of a people, of a society in general manifests itself entirely in spiritual places in which we can see a growth in number and intensity of social interactions towards a wholeness of existence” (Bădescu 2002, 167). As in the Voegelin’s analysis, the absolute spiritual place in which we find the wholeness of human existence is the relation of man with God, the tension towards transcendence and the manifestation of this *participation*. Starting from a specific spiritual order in analyzing a society, it is also important to analyze the de-actualization of the spiritual teachings, which could result in social pathologies or deviant social manifestations. The noological sociology proposed by I. Bădescu is focused on social realities of the past and present, through biblical lenses, becoming a Christian-Orthodox sociology.

Sociology is described as “the science of these noological and spiritual frames, actualising itself proportional to the intensity of the collective and individual inner experiences, but also deactualising itself when this intensity decreases or when such experiences are deviated (rechannelled) from the customs of Creation” (Bădescu 2002, xxv).

Living inside these collective frames and in accordance with the degree of their actualisation represents a fundamental element in the noological comprehension. It becomes a criterion for analysing society and communities, contributing to the identification of powers or the fallings attested by peoples’ manifestations throughout history. All these are not possible outside the frames of collective experiences, which unify and reaffirm community.

Certain feelings, inclinations, concepts or attitudes, says I. Bădescu, shared by the large majorities, are based on *spiritual latencies*, which actualise themselves in time taking various shapes, the most representative of all being folklore. The folklore is the first one to be attested from a collective identity point of view, where spiritual latencies have been discharged, forming “the sub layer of popular cultures” (Bădescu 2007, 148), the place where the first anticipation of transcendence was found. The experiences of a people took the confirmative form of the “great folk creations of peoples”, born from those “deep spiritual energies which we have called spiritual latencies, manifesting themselves as intense and uplifting spiritual inner experiences” (ibidem). Spiritual latencies are actualised and revealed to us through acts of vocation, character, love, beliefs (religiousness) and through folk creations. Spiritual latencies have a special role because they “defend the society and therefore the

social being of the individual from the dangers of great crises and diseases, great ruptures and conflicts” (Bădescu 2007, 150). They allow the maintenance of identity, of the unique spiritual aspect shaped in the great folk creations of mankind, as well as within celebrations, where they regain unity and enter in a sacred time and space, as also proven by M. Eliade ([1957], 1995).

*Noological frames* are ways in which spiritual latencies manifest themselves, they are the community’s concrete units of experience. Seen as “places of noological gathering, instituted by the spiritual ‘encounter’ of a variable number of individuals have the same feels and thoughts” (Bădescu, 2002, 239), spiritual frames have an essential role in the noological system, with the value of an instrument and of a scheme of indicators for noological research.

The ability to have inner experiences inside these frames leads to the appearance of certain spiritual locations where people gather in units of experience which may provide solidarity, identity, understanding (intelligibility) of the life and destiny of their people. A spiritual place, says I. Bădescu, implies that the members of a community gather because they have the same patterns for inner experiences, the same patterns in thinking and feeling, located in myths and mentalities. These gatherings are made possible by symbols, legends, rituals, art, customs, religious beliefs, celebrations, therefore marking a sacred time-space dimension.

The possibility to attend a celebration and experience it ensures, in the light of the noological system, self-knowledge, communion of participants, strengthening of identity, acknowledging heroes and reaffirming landmarks expressed in myths, legends, rituals. The categories of collective experiences which ensure identity and communion provide the opportunity to comprehend social order, but also lead to discovering the ability to dissolve and divide a community, to disorganize individual and collective life.

The celebration, also seen by Émile Durkheim ([1960], 2005) as an intensification of spiritual inner experiences, as well as the importance of the rituals reaffirming religious identity, are best emphasised in the history of the Jewish people during the Exile. The celebration, the ritual, the spiritual teachings have been the element which contributed to keeping an identity and the survival of the people after the destruction of the Temple and the scattering of the Jews around the world.

The spiritual force, the conservation of ways in which spiritual latencies are actualised, the gathering of Jews in those spiritual places which are in fact places without a place, independent of any other conditionality than the oath to God, gave strength to a people scattered throughout the world. Wherever they may have been, the belief in One God, the Sabbath, Easter and other great celebrations of Judaism allowed the affirmation and consolidation of the people’s identity, as well as its perennality.

Seen as “strengthened fortresses of the collective soul” (Bădescu 2002, 246), spiritual places give the possibility to verify the force of a people by participating to celebrations, by their attitude towards myths, heroes, by their reactions to aggressions or by the falsification of history, by defending the identity. The attitude of the community towards the offenses brought by group to identity represent signs of the group vitality, unifying people in a strong and perennial spiritual place.

Aknowledging the extensive contributions made in philosophy and political science in the research of social order and disorders of the last century (shortly present here), this perspective of looking towards the spiritual factor of society has a long tradition in human sciences, especially in German cultural space. On this line and based on the contribution made by I. Bădescu in the noological understanding of Christian-Orthodox religion, we propose four categories which can be used in researching other religions or communities that could be relevant for the condition of power or spiritual weakening.

#### FOUR LATENCIES<sup>2</sup>

These categories are based on the *meaning* of specific values, which offer access to different types of order/disorders. They help identify the meaning lived or not lived, creating a noological profile for a specific community or society:

- ❖ The latency of discovering divinity (the relation with transcendence)
- ❖ The latency of thrills in front of evil
- ❖ The latency of redemption (salvation)
- ❖ The latency of meaning in/of the world.

*The latency of discovering divinity* – reflects the primordial manifestation that starts the spiritual tale of each religion, the one related to the discovery of a transcendent force, superior to humans. According to Rudolf Otto ([1917], 2005), the religious inner experience comes with a feeling of *mysterium tremendum*, of *majestas*, of the feeling of a state of creature, framed in the concept of *numinos*, an irrational dimension of transcendental feelings. These irrational elements are used by C. G. Jung when he tries to prove the existence of an archetypal image of divinity. From a psychological perspective, Jung analyses what resides within the unconscious in the shape of archetypes, those “shapes or images of collective nature that occur almost everywhere around the globe, as constitutive elements for the myths and, at the same time, as

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<sup>2</sup> This section contains certain fragments of the book *Compared Noology of Jewish and Romanian People*. Măndiță, M. (2017). Aachen: Shaker Verlag GmbH.

individual original products of unconscious origin” (Jung 1997, 57). The importance of referring to divinity is best emphasised at psychological level by the pathologies that the modern man deals with, also studied by Viktor Frankl’s school of psychiatry (2008). Jung reached the conclusion that these deficiencies, impoverishments and falls of the modern man are manifested symbolically, namely as the symbol of quaternity, of the circle, which constantly appear in his patients’ dreams and analysis. These realities have made the psychologist confirm “the existence of an archetypal image of divinity” (Jung 1997, 63). At social level, this reality has major implications if we try to unravel the impact of religious beliefs upon all areas of social life, as in the case of noological knowledge applied to societies. In Jung’s theory, the religious individual has confidence, feeds spiritually from a source that provides reconciliation, receiving answers to the complicated questions of life. We have seen how important are, at the level of peoples, the reference to divinity, maintaining the connection with that axis mundi (M. Eliade [1957], 1995) that links the man and the sky, the importance of sacred places, where and through which the disruption from the profane takes place and one enters in a real spiritual order. This way, meaning and order are given to life, enriched by the experience of a sacralised time, renewed by religious celebrations and other types of religious manifestations. This explains the resistance of the Jewish people in Exile, the powerful reaffirmations of faith during the difficult times in history. The constant rediscovery of divinity and life inside the borders of religion many times meant the salvation of the people from disappearance. Starting from the hypothesis on the modeler impact of religious belief on social life and historical destiny, we understand the way in which the Jewish people exists due to Judaism and to the fact that it remained close to this fundamental archetypal image. When signs of this latency being forgotten or dormant occurred, when the intensity of the connection with God diminished in the soul of the people causing the danger of being lost (a profound disorder), getting back on the path of salvation was achieved through prophetic teachings. This way, the phenomenon and the moment of another latency manifestation is attested in front of the evil.

*The latency of the thrills in front of the evil* – represents an extremely important source both for the individual and the individual salvation, and for peoples and societies – salvation, surviving in history. When confronting natural calamities, hardships of history, the thrills caused at individual level or at the level of popular mentalities triggered the energy necessary for salvation and reactivated unforeseen resources. For example, in the context of numerous empires passing over the Jewish people, the evil could only be confronted by strengthening religious belief, by continuing to reaffirm Judaic identity, by having reactions of survival which focused on study, prayer, gatherings in the synagogue, strategies that would make the defeated stronger than the conquerors. At the foundation of

these successes can only lay spiritual factors, trying to rediscover the spiritual order specific to human existence. We recall the prophetic phenomenon, in the works of Max Weber, Antonin Causse (1937), in order to comprise the true amplitude of these saving texts and of the power of the peoples living inside the frames of faith, saving themselves from disappearance. But salvation, redemption are effects of this latency, one of the most powerful ones, with major implications, especially in the case of Jewish people, but also for other religions of salvation, in what was defined as the latency of redemption.

*The latency of redemption (salvation)*, best manifested in Messianism, represents a central element of Judaic belief, a complex ethical system meant for the manifestations at individual and collective life. Therefore, the purpose of this latency is to wait for the Messiah to be delivered from evil. A telling example is the messianic idea, its social, political and economic contexts where this phenomenon started many times in the history of the Jewish people. The manifestations which are founded upon this latency show an extraordinary social force, embedded in social and cultural currents and movements, all with the purpose to prepare for Messiah's coming. It gets discharged in social manifestations which imprint and direct the individual towards a sustained social activism, either individually or at the society level, and this is only possible because one considers the ultimate aim: the salvation of the people. While waiting for the Messiah, the Jewish people lives and builds a destiny. This latency that never gets dormant is extremely powerful, as it guides the activity, the experience, towards the ultimate purpose – redemption. In order to reach this purpose, there must be a very powerful conscience of what it means, in the case of the Jewish people, to be the Chosen People, best exemplified by the latency of the meaning in the world.

*The latency of the meaning in/of the world* – through these three latencies, we have discovered God, we were thrilled in front of the hardships of life and we yearned for the salvation that only divinity could bring. All these axial manifestations of the individual, as well as peoples', contribute to shaping the spiritual profile throughout history, to understanding our meaning in the world. For example, the Jews, as Chosen People, have a mission, a duty, benefits as well as obligations. Crossing the sea after the liberation from Egypt, the beneficial interactions as well as the dangers in contact with the great empires of the world, the Exile on which they had been forced to go, all these could not have been overcome unless there was a strong feeling that the Jewish people was the Chosen People, with a specific purpose in this world.

## CONCLUSION

These four categories of latencies can also be found and researched in other communities and religions, as they were applied for Romanian and Jewish people. Focusing on the question of order through the manifestation of spiritual values and



characteristics, it is possible to evaluate the power or weakness of a social group. Manifestation of different types of order in society creates specific profiles with impact on all other social, political and economic dimensions. This constitutes a first step in the knowledge of different types of order. This research should be completed with an analysis of the social disorders, especially under the impact of current social challenges, being able to offer a profound comprehension of social reality.

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