

INTRODUCTION

THEORY AND METHOD IN THE STUDY OF RELIGION

TEORIA E MÉTODO EM CIÊNCIA DA RELIGIÃO

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This issue of INTERAÇÕES opens with the editorial *The Epistemology of Religions and Spiritual Traditions*, by Marià Corbí, which presents an approach to religions and spiritual traditions grounded in axiological epistemology and in an anthropology that defines the human being on the basis of linguistic competence. The text describes the experience of the absolute dimension as a constitutive element of the human condition and analyses its historical expression through collective axiological projects. From this perspective, the editorial discusses the common structure of religious traditions, their forms of symbolisation and their relationship with different modes of social organisation, contributing to methodological debate in the study of religion by offering analytical categories for understanding religious diversity, without resorting to ontological or hierarchical models.

The current dossier, *Theory and Method in the Study of Religion*, brings together twelve articles that advance theoretical, methodological, and epistemological discussions within the field of religious studies, particularly from the disciplinary perspective of the Study of Religion. The idea for this dossier originated in an event of the same name, held within the Graduate Program in Religious Studies at PUC Minas and organized by the

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Religion and Culture Research Group, which I have had the privilege of leading since 2005.

The first article, *Decolonial Challenges to Religious Studies*, by Frederico Pieper, critically examines the epistemological foundations of the field from decolonial theories, problematising the notion of science and its links to modern conceptions of rationality, based on the thought of Walter Mignolo. In continuity, Mailson Fernandes Cabral de Souza, in *The Study of Religion as an Autonomous Discipline: an epistemological history*, analyses the constitution of the Study of Religion in Brazil through its historical discontinuities and recurrences, engaging with Joachim Wach and with Georges Canguilhem's Historical Epistemology in order to reflect on the disciplinary autonomy of the field.

The third article of the dossier, *The Italian School of the History of Religions: Raffaele Pettazzoni and the study of religious facts*, by Márcia Maria Enéas Costa, examines the manner in which Pettazzoni conceived the study of religious facts, drawing on interviews with Italian scholars that allow the reconstruction of the intellectual context in which the author worked and exerted influence. Subsequently, Patrícia Rodrigues de Souza, in *Theory and method in material religion: religions studied in their bodily-and-material aspects*, presents a systematisation of a field in consolidation within Brazilian Religious Studies, highlighting approaches that investigate religious practices, objects and experiences from their bodily and material dimensions.

The dossier continues with *The Essay in the Study of Religion: possibilities of use and contributions*, by Danilo Souza Mendes de Vasconcelos, which examines the essay as a form of writing and as a methodological resource in the field, discussing its relationship with the philosophical tradition and its possibilities for theoretical reflection and the analysis of religious phenomena. Next, Jandher Gomes, in the article *Scientific Dissemination in the Study of Religion in Brazil*, analyses how the field has understood and practised scientific communication, investigating how knowledge produced in postgraduate programmes is translated into broader social benefit, based on interviews and the mapping of perceptions and gaps. Among other aspects, the article highlights the contribution of the interview programme Religare – Knowledge and Religion as a successful case of scientific dissemination in the Study of Religion in Brazil. With more than twenty years of activity, the programme is a partnership between the Graduate Programme in Religious Studies at PUC Minas and TV Horizonte. I have the satisfaction of having led this project, analysed by Jandher Gomes, since its inception, as presenter and editor, working as a journalist specialising in the study of religion.

In continuity, the article *Teaching Religious Education from the Study of Religion*,

by Romário Evangelista Fernandes, Cleyton Vasconcelos and Marinilson Barbosa da Silva, defends the Study of Religion as the epistemological basis for a non-confessional model of Religious Education in public schools, articulating a historical synthesis of the curriculum component, its epistemological foundations and guiding principles for teaching practice. Fábio Stern and Gustavo Sanches Duarte, in *Characteristics of Brazilian Applied Religious Studies*, examine the specific configuration assumed by Applied Religious Studies in Brazil, in contrast to international approaches, highlighting Latin American influences and recurring elements such as methodological agnosticism and attention to graduate employability. The debate on Applied Religious Studies is also addressed by Renato Carvalho de Oliveira, Daniel Judson da Silva and Eutrópio Aécio de Carvalho Souza, in the article *The concept of application in Applied Religious Studies: an analysis of problems and perspectives*, which problematises the use of the term application in Brazilian disciplinary discourse, defending its understanding as a relational category and critically discussing Area Document 44 – Religious Studies and Theology of the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES), Ministry of Education of Brazil (MEC).

Leandro Evangelista Silva Castro and I, in the article *Lived Religion: preliminary considerations on the approach in the North American context*, analyse Lived Religion as an emerging approach in religious studies, delimiting its conceptual foundations based on North American academic production and highlighting the centrality of practices, ordinary people and everyday life.

The dossier approaches its conclusion with *The Study of Religion at the Crossroads: methodological challenges for a scientifically established epistemology*, by Nestor Figueiredo, which discusses methodological and epistemological problems related to the use of the concept of religion, the distinction between religion and religiosity, and difficulties in achieving definitional consensus in the field. Finally, Tatiane Almeida and Andrey Rabelo, in *Theoretical-methodological profiles of postgraduate programmes in Religious Studies in Brazil (2017–2020)*, comparatively analyse the pedagogical proposals of stricto sensu graduate programmes in Religious Studies in Brazil, based on data from the *Sucupira Platform*, discussing conceptions of disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity and their impact on the consolidation of the field.

In addition to the dossier, the *Articles* section, with free themes in continuous flow, brings together three contributions. *The first, In Search of God: aspects of the religiosity of Hermann Broch*, by Kátia Marly Leite Mendonça and Isabel Cristina das Neves Oliveira, analyses religiosity in the fictional, poetic and essayistic work of Hermann Broch,

highlighting the persistence of the question of the absolute and the search for God in dialogue with his psychosociological analyses. Subsequently, Lívia Fajin de Mello and Antônio Marcos Tosoli Gomes, in *Religious/spiritual coping among mothers of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder*, investigate the use of religious/spiritual coping as a strategy for dealing with challenges, based on a quantitative study that identifies risk and protective factors mobilised after diagnosis. Concluding this section, the third article, *Religious pluralism and decolonial thought*, by Claudio de Oliveira Ribeiro, presents research results that articulate the pluralist principle with decolonial approaches, discussing critiques of modern democracy, voices dissenting from the colonial project and the notion of critical interculturality.

The issue is completed by the *Debates and Communications* section, which brings together two translations and two communications. The translations present classic texts that discuss the notion of homo religiosus and the influence of Darwinism on the study of religions. The work entitled *Is the human being a homo religiosus? A historical-religious perspective*, by Theo Sundermeier, was translated by Eduardo Rodrigues da Cruz and Valdemar Klassen. The work entitled *The influence of Darwinism on the study of religions*, by Jane Ellen Harrison, was translated by Brasil Fernandes de Barros. The communications include *Basic notions of Marià Corbí's axiological epistemology and the deconstruction of mythical epistemology as an expression of subalternity*, by Milene Costa, and *Digital platform of the Allan Kardec Project: trajectory and perspectives*, by Klaus Chaves Alberto.

To conclude, we invite readers to explore the works brought together in this issue of INTERAÇÕES, accessing the articles, translations and communications presented here. We hope that the reflections proposed will contribute to the deepening of theoretical, methodological and epistemological debates in the field of religious studies, the Study of Religion and related disciplines. We also invite the academic community to share their perceptions, critiques and developments of these debates in future issues of the journal, whether through the submission of new articles, contributions to the Debates and Communications section, or through the submission of translations and book reviews of relevant works in the field, thereby strengthening academic dialogue and the qualified circulation of knowledge produced.