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On the cover: Damaged statue of Jesus Christ at the abandoned section of village cemetery in Staré Sedliště, Tachov region (photo: Dušan Lužný).

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Articles

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Playing with Language and the Structural Anthropology of Claude Lévi-Strauss[1]

Abstract | The sources of structural anthropology are many, with linguistic models playing a pivotal role among them. They offered Lévi-Strauss the analytical key with which to unlock the semantic richness of a variety of seemingly incongruent cultural texts only to find these very keys, together with their locks, like platonic universals, *in situ*, in the human mind. In effect, language is both an adjustable lens through which we can see the world better and a light that casts the shadow across which we can never step. This paper takes a closer look at the philosophical foundations of this apparent dichotomy in an attempt to map its place in the genealogy of the of Lévi-Strauss's thought.

Keywords | Structural Anthropology – Linguistics – Linguistic Philosophy – Sense – Reference – Modality – Kinship – Claude Lévi-Strauss – Roman Jakobson

Much has been written about artists and intellectuals in exile, in particular during the 1940s in New York when individuals who may or may not have known of each other back home on the Continent – now under the siege of totalitarian terror and the horrors of yet another world war–would meet, and meet their American counterparts. As far as my protagonists are concerned, several of these encounters deserve mention: The young Claude Lévi-Strauss met Roman Jakobson at the *Ecole Libre* in New York where he sat in on his lectures.[2] Jakobson, the seasoned scholar, had arrived in 1941 after an arduous journey from Brno via Prague and then Copenhagen to Uppsala. At this point, in addition to his work in poetics, Jakobson brought to the lectern his and Trubetzkoy's work on phonology and the theory of distinctive features as well as his initial foray into aphasia and language acquisition. It is important to underscore this since it is the three – poetics, distinctive feature analysis and cognition – that will, together integrated into a universalistic model of language, define one aspect of Roman Jakobson's contribution to linguistics, the side that I for convenience sake characterize as internalist and contrast to his decisive contribution to grammatical pragmatics. It is the internalist view of language that defines Lévi-Strauss's structuralism and, by extension, a question I wish to address here, namely, what metaphysics of language does his approach imply? It is also a question about epistemology and addressing it, at least partially, is to gain insight on how language as a model and tool figure in his structuralist methodology.

Claude Lévi-Strauss arrived in New York the same year a converted anthropologist spent several months exploring the native populations of Brazil, an experience that would define his interests as well as his primary data set for the rest of his career. It is worth recalling that on the

[1] An earlier draft of this paper was first presented at the American Anthropological Association meetings in San Francisco, November 14, 2012.

[2] Roman Jakobson, *Six Lectures on Sound and Meaning; With a Preface by Claude Lévi-Strauss*, trans. John Mepham (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1978).

boat from Marseille he met and befriended the surrealist André Breton and that it was through his meeting with Jakobson that he met important figures (and his heroes) of American anthropology, including Franz Boas. Judging by the auto-biographical notes of both Roman Jakobson and Claude Lévi-Strauss, the New York years were defining moments, a mutual braiding of several strands that met through a remarkable series of coincidences that one cannot but consider fortuitous, in hindsight: linguistics, surrealism, anthropology and, finally, mathematics and biology.[3]

Among the various manifestations of contact and confluence in the development of ideas, it is the purported absences of influence, the "what if" or "why not" counterfactuals of history, that should also call for our attention. Such is the case with the curious lack of mutual interest or crossover between the Anglo-American linguistic philosophers and the structural semioticians. In the case of cultural anthropology, the importance of the "linguistic turn" has certainly received due attention.[4] It is worth remembering, though, that the expression was first suggested by the pragmatist philosopher Richard Rorty in an extensive and critical review of analytical philosophy that had grounded its investigations in the close relationship between the traditional problem of truth and reality in both logic and language. Linguistic philosophy, broadly understood, is usually thought of as a particularly Anglo-American enterprise, a characterization that is only partially correct since some of its key players – notably Carnap and Tarski – were Central European.[5] Certainly, it counts as one of the defining moments in the paradigm shifts that marked the 20th century. Equally important was the development of structural linguistics. In that case, the new conceptual framework traveled, developed and settled down into somewhat different 'local' intellectual traditions and variants. The same could be said of structuralism as a school of thought and methodology; in fact, the two are usually thought of as being intimately linked.

This is certainly the impression given by Claude Lévi-Strauss. His *Structural Anthropology*,[6] a selection of essays spanning the years 1944 to 1957, reads like a manifesto on this topic and reflects directly on his meetings with Roman Jakobson and, through him, on the recent advances in modern linguistics. It is interesting to observe the degree to which his exposure to linguistics, as far as it was foundational and clearly referenced during this period, remains confined to a set of model ideas, notably the Jakobson/Trubetzkoy theory of distinctive features and Saussurean derived models, particularly the work of his contemporary Emile Benveniste.[7] The relevant point worth making here, is the observation that to trace the intellectual trajectory of Claude Lévi-Strauss is to note that where exile opened new vistas, his return to France appears to have limited further contact with developments in linguistic modeling perhaps because he was bent on developing his own theory as his work took on hermetic qualities. With a few exceptions;

[3] For further discussion of the encounters during the war years, see Andrew Lass, "Poetry and Reality: Roman O. Jakobson and Claude Lévi-Strauss," in Artists, *Intellectuals and World War II: The Pontigny Encounters at Mount Holyoke College, 1942–1944*, ed. Christopher Benfey and Karen Remmler (Amherst: Massachusetts University Press, 2006).

[4] Robert C. Ulin, "The Linguistic Turn in Sociocultural Anthropology: Continuity or Epistemological Break?" (Paper presented at the American Anthropological Association meeting in Montreal, November 18, 2011.)

[5] Logical positivism is typically associated with Vienna. The case of Ludwig Wittgenstein, the Vienna born and educated founder of the Cambridge school of ordinary language philosophy, only illustrates the complexity if not futility of matching intellectual genealogies with geographical tracks.

[6] Claude Lévi-Strauss, Structural *Anthropology* (London, Allen Lane: The Penguin Press, 1968). First published in French in 1958, the first English edition, translated by Claire Jacobson, appeared with Basic Books in 1963. All references in the present paper are from the first U.K. edition of 1968.

[7] For a quick review of Jakobson's impact on anthropology, including but not limited to Lévi-Strauss, see my encyclopedia entry "Jakobson, Roman" (Andrew Lass, "Roman Jakobson," in *Theory in Social and Cultural Anthropology*, ed. R. Jon McGee and Richard L. Warms [Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishers, 2013]).

most famously the "Postscript to Ch. III. and IV." in *Structural Anthropology* and the closing chapter of *The Savage Mind*,[8] where he subjected Jean Paul Sartre's work to a scathing criticism. His refusal or disinterest in answering criticisms seemed almost stoic.

He has this to say about linguistics in his first, 1945, paper on structural analysis, "Structural Analysis in Linguistics and in Anthropology"[9]:

"It is not merely a social science like the others, but, rather, the one in which by far the greatest progress has been made. It is probably the only one which can truly claim to be a science and which has achieved both the formulation of an empirical method and an understanding of the nature of data submitted to its analysis."[10] And, speaking of the advent of structural linguistics: "Structural linguistics will certainly play the same renovating role with respect to the social sciences that nuclear physics, for example, has played for the physical sciences."[11]

While the analogy may be somewhat lost on us today, Lévi-Strauss's optimistic insistence on the scientific merit of injecting linguistics into anthropology is not. In this early paper he demonstrates his point by an analysis of kinship, an analysis the re-reading of which reminds us of how methodically and carefully he proceeds in order to avoid drawing a misleading analogy between phonemes and kinship terms, a topic I will discuss below. This initial foray into social analysis only foreshadows his *Elementary Structures of Kinship*,[12] published in France in 1949,[13] which rightfully marks Lévi-Strauss's first in a series of well thought out if rather opaque provocations to social and cultural anthropology.

We may well remember the "structure and sentiment" controversies that would eventually follow and last well into the early seventies. David Landy[14] recalls it in his succinct review of Rodney Needham's *Structure and Sentiment: A Test Case in Social Anthropology.* Speaking of Lévi-Strauss, he writes:

"*Les structures elementaires de la parente* (1949) was generally well received by anthropologists, but in 1955 it became the object of a devastating critique by George C. Homans and David M. Schneider in a slim volume, *Marriage, Authority, and Final Causes: A Study of Unilateral Cross-Cousin Marriage*. Needham requires 135 pages to examine this 64 page critique of a book of 639 pages! The chain reaction continues to trigger new bursts by Britons and Americans; Lévi-Strauss, in print at least, maintains an almost Olympian indifference."[15]

Less often does one remember that the young mathematician and founding member of the so-called Bourbaki group, Andre Weil authored the "Appendix to Part One."[16] In hindsight, the attempt to model Lévi-Strauss' theory of marriage exchange through a mathematical theory of

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[8] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1966).

[9] Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, 31–54.

[10] Ibid., 31.

[11] Ibid., 33.

[12] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structure of Kinship* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1969).

[13] A second, revised edition with a new Preface by the author appeared in French in 1967. The English edition, edited by Rodney Needham, appeared in 1969.

[14] David Landy, "Review of Structure and Sentiment: A Test Case in Social Anthropology by Rodney Needham," Book Reviews, The Sociological Quarterly 5, no. 3 (Summer, 1964).

[15] Ibid., 276.

[16] This chapter (XIV, 221–229) has the title "On the Algebraic Study of Certain Types of Marriage Laws (Murngin System)." Lévi-Strauss recalls the origin of this chapter in Claude Lévi-Strauss and David Eriborn, *Conversations with Claude Lévi-Strauss* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1991), 52–53. See also my paper, cited above (Lass, "Poetry and Reality").

groups serves to remind us that linguistics was not the only 'outside' discipline that he reaches out to in his formative years.[17]

Among the many disciplines and theories that Claude Lévi-Strauss draws on or at least mentions – and his proclivity for cross-disciplinary referencing is legend – the absence of any mention of linguistic philosophy or, specifically, debates within ordinary language philosophy, seems striking. However, this is not altogether surprising given that it is equally absent in North American cultural anthropology as well as Continental structural linguistics.[18] It is also defensible on the grounds that, in so far as 'meaning' is the central theme of both, in the case of linguistic philosophy the interest in language is an offshoot of an interest in logic and therefore in the formal properties of truth claims. Here semantics is truth functional (i.e. extensional), as distinct from anthropology's context-functional interest in language as communication with a broad range of biological, cultural and social properties and functions. A resurgence of interest in the problem of meaning at the turn of the 19th century offers a useful way of presenting the difference in emphasis. The distinction, independently emphasized by Edmund Husserl and Gottlob Frege (and, working off the latter, Bertrand Russell), between *sense* and *reference* as the two components of *meaning,* usefully describe any (meaningful) linguistic act as consisting of two axis. One, the vertical axis, if you will, cuts through the 'sign' to reveal, to the structural linguist, its dual nature and focuses on the relationship between the message (the 'signified') and its vehicle (the 'signifier') and, further, on the combination of signs in a complex of relationships or contexts. In other words, sense is a function of a structure or system of which it is a part. Whereas on the horizontal axis, since a statement or proposition makes a claim 'about' something that lies outside of it, in the world, we can speak of reference. Whether, under what conditions, or even how language can 'pick out' reality, is the philosophers' dilemma.

There are, however, important exceptions to the apparent lack of direct influence or overlap between the linguistics that informed anthropological and structuralist approaches to culture, particularly in the U.S. context, and approaches to language fostered by linguistic philosophy on both sides of the Atlantic. They should all be kept in mind (the last mentioned is most relevant to the present discussion.) Generally speaking, the history of the concerns with the nature of language, its relation to reality or the problem of meaning, have been the subject of intellectual interest as far back as we wish to argue. Many of the positions represented by the two schools claim their roots in Kantian philosophy of the European Enlightenment.[19] With an important qualification: epistemological concerns drive the analytical school first and foremost. In contrast, the phenomenon of emergence, the existence of ideal types (*ürformen*) and a concern with the poetic function of language – notions associated with Lessing, Goethe, Humboldt and Herder –

[17] For one of the very best discussions of Lévi-Strauss's interest in the new developments of the science, particularly those informed by mathematical modeling, see Mauro W. Barbosa de Almeida, "Symmetry and Entropy: Mathematical Metaphors in the Work of Lévi-Strauss," *Current Anthropology* 31, no. 4 (August – October, 1990): 367–385.

[18] Claude Lévi-Strauss had originally trained as a philosopher. As he himself describes it, he was steeped in the Continental philosophy of Descartes and Hegel, drawn to the then current concept of dialectics and, rather dismissive of phenomenology. His comments on the genealogy of his thought can be found, hinted at rather than fully elaborated on, throughout his work. Among them, the semi-autobiographical *Tristes Tropique* (Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Triste Tropique* [New York: Atheneum, 1974]) and his *Conversations with Claude Lévi-Strauss* (Lévi-Strauss and Eriborn, *Conversations with Claude Lévi-Strauss*), noted above, are particularly useful.

[19] For the purpose of brevity and at the cost of oversimplification, I am deliberately ignoring the fact that many of the concerns associated with the German Enlightenment were central themes in the work of the English Romantic poets Shelley and Wordsworth. For an in-depth discussion, see Lubomír Doležel, *Occidental Poetics: Tradition and Progress* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989).

will speak directly to the structuralism of the Prague Linguistic Circle (Jakobson) as well as to the founding of American Anthropology (Boas, Sapir, Benedict, Kroeber, etc.) On the other end of our time line, it was Roman Jakobson who drew renewed attention (in the 1950s) to the work of the American pragmatist, logician and semiotician, Charles Sanders Peirce. An enriched sign typology, the concept of deixis and, most significantly, the expansion of the Bühlerian model of the total communicative act from three to six functions, would further the development of a semiotics of culture, invigorate the interest in social dimensions of linguistic practice and reinforce pragmatic semantics.

As noted earlier, Lévi-Strauss's model building links directly to the former whereas there is no explicit or implied tie to the pragmatics of discourse unless, of course, his admiration for the work of Marcel Mauss and his elaborate use of the concept of exchange took its place. Such an argument would certainly make sense in view of Jakobson's and Lévi-Strauss' reading of the 1940s work on cybernetics, information theory and game theory. However, it is the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis and the idea of linguistic relativism that speak directly to the issue on hand. Without going into a discussion of the hypothesis itself (the literature is overabundant),[20] no one would question the central place it has occupied in speculative as well as empirical research of several fields, including anthropology, analytical philosophy and cognitive psychology. Interestingly, it receives very little attention from Lévi-Strauss who finds the thesis "unsatisfactory" and methodologically flawed:

> Whorf has tried to establish a correlation between certain linguistic structures and certain cultural structures. Why is it that the approach is unsatisfactory? It is, it seems to me, because the linguistic level as he considers it is the result of a rather sophisticated analysis – he is not at all trying to correlate an empirical impression of the language, but, rather, the result of true linguistic work (…) what he is trying to correlate with this linguistic structure is a crude, superficial, empirical view of the culture itself. So he is really trying to correlate things which belong to entirely different levels.[21]

The cultural anthropologists and analytical philosophers who share the interest in the hypothesis do so for the obvious reason that it addresses the problematic relationship of reference, with language, so to speak, positioned and mediating between mind and reality. In the case of anthropology, the issue speaks to the problem of culture and cultural relativism while in the case of analytic philosophy the question is once again epistemological, the ability of language to 'pick out' reality. Of course, it will be the ordinary language philosopher's (notably Ludwig Wittgenstein's "language games") critique of linguistic positivism together with a renewed interest in hermeneutics (Heidegger and Ricoeur) that will inform, in the work of Clifford Geertz and his followers, the critique of both cognitive and structural anthropology in the name of interpretation, textuality and constructivism.[22]

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[20] Briefly, the principle of linguistic relativity, known as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, maintains that the structure of a language influences a native speakers' cognitive processes and world-view. It is often discussed as having two versions; the strong one argues that language determines thought (hence, *linguistic determinism*), whereas the weaker one simply makes the point that linguistic categories and usage have an identifiable effect on thought and associated non-linguistic behavior. For a more recent update on this controversial thesis, see, e.g., John A. Lucy, *Language Diversity and Thought: A Reformulation of the Linguistic Relativity Hypothesis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

[21] Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, 73. He returns to the same point in the "Postscript" to this chapter, mentioned above, (ibid., 85).

[22] Of equal importance, in the development of post war social anthropology, was the influence of ordinary language philosophy on the so-called rationality debates, in particular Peter Winch's 1958 influential discussion of the relevance of Wittgenstein's ideas in Peter Winch, *The Idea of Social Science and its Relation to Philosophy*

As I pointed out above, for Claude Lévi-Strauss – who initially claims his stake on the Jakobson and Trubetzkoy innovations in phonology but who will read, in effect, as more rigidly informed by Saussure and Benveniste – the point of interest is not the relation of language *to* the world (the problem of *reference*) or mind, but rather the internal organization of language, of *langue* (and the syntagmatic and paradigmatic axis of sense), at its deepest level defined as *isomorphic with* the structure of the mind and, finally, with nature. By extending the model beyond ordinary language, our conception of the world is converted and reduced while also presumably opened to a structural analysis. Furthermore, it is at this level, call it 'deep', 'unconscious' or ideal-typical (Goethe's *ürphlanzen*), that he finds the message in the code.

One may be somewhat bewildered that after all the excitement about linguistics as the gateway to a scientific anthropology that dominates the first volume of structural anthropology we find, in his later years, a rather off putting dismissal when he distanced himself from the structuralist vogue and, asked about the key source of his concept of structure as transformation, remarked:

> (…) neither in logic nor linguistics. I found it in a work that played a decisive role for me (…) *On Growth and Form* by D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson (…) [who] interpreted the visible differences between species, or between animal and vegetable organs within the same genera, as transformations. This was an illumination for me, particularly since I was soon to notice that this way of seeing was part of a long tradition: behind Thompson was Goethe's botany, and behind Goethe, Albrecht Dürer and his *Treatise on the Proportions of the Human Body*.[23]

In fact, as others have pointed out, Lévi-Strauss' structuralism remained consistently internalist[24] as well as naturalist while his Cartesian flavored rationalism was seen as mesmerizing in part because of the poetics rather than the empirically grounded clarity of his arguments.[25] In using this term, I wish to highlight the observation that in 'classical' structuralism, and this is particularly the case for Lévi-Strauss, the point of departure as much as the object of analysis is internally driven, initially by the discoverable laws of a code and, ultimately, by the structure of human thought. Like in the case of many theories of language and, by definition, most mathematical modeling, his arguments come across as Kantian at the core.[26] The world as we know it

(London: Routledge, 1958). For insightful discussion of these debates see Robert C. Ulin, *Understanding Cultures: Perspectives in Anthropology and Social Theory* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 2001).

[23] Lévi-Strauss and Eriborn, *Conversations with Claude Lévi-Strauss*, 113. The influence of structural biology and the work of D'Arcy Thompson on Lévi-Strauss's concept of transformation is the topic of a separate work in progress.

[24] The following citation from Wikipedia is helpful: "Internalism and externalism are two opposing ways of explaining various subjects in several areas of philosophy. These include human motivation, knowledge, justification, meaning, and truth. The distinction arises in many areas of debate with similar but distinct meanings. Usually 'internalism' refers to the belief that an explanation can be given of the given subject by pointing to things which are internal to the person or their mind which is considering them. Conversely, externalism holds that it is things about the world which motivate us, justify our beliefs, determine meaning (…)." ("Internalism and externalism," *Wikipedia. The Free Encyclopedia*, accessed September 11, 2015, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internalism_and_externalism).

[25] Most of the serious objections raised against his analysis and, by implication, his methodology, came from anthropologists who, familiar with a particular culture, found Lévi-Strauss's data cursory, his take on them sloppy and therefore often misleading. In reading his oeuvre one does get the impression that the ethnographic material has been simplified and abstracted in order to exemplify ideal types. I address some of this methodological fallacy in Andrew Lass, "Elective Affinities: Roman Jakobson, Claude Lévi-Strauss and his Antropologie Structurale," *Roman O. Jakobson: a Work-in-Progress*, ed. Tomáš Kubíček and Andrew Lass (Olomouc: Palacký University Press, 2014).

[26] Paul Ricoeur, in a pointed criticism of Lévi-Strauss' epistemology, spoke of a "Kantianism without a human subject," a comment that Lévi-Strauss, in turn, dismissed without rejecting it in the 'Overture' to *The Raw and*

is re/employed in symbolic systems, not only within it, as its concrete terms, but also by virtue of the structural limits, the logic of the code. In any case, quasi-mathematical models and an admiration for geological and botanical analogies permeate his work from the very beginning. His later dismissal of his early admiration for linguistics or, for that matter phenomenology, notwithstanding, he remains consistent throughout his life's work in appropriating a *mereological* model, embraced by the Prague Linguistic Circle.

The problem lies elsewhere. The structuralism associated with Lévi-Strauss and others, such as Roland Barthes, more appropriately called French structuralism, comes across in hindsight as static compared to the continuing development in other areas of structural and semiotic theory. Notable was the ongoing work of members of the Prague School during and after the war years that maintained a consistent interest in verbal art, narrative flow, voice, and literature as a total act of discourse. It would be a topic for a separate study to further pursue the possibility that as structuralism was said to have run its course on both sides of the Atlantic, submitted to a harsh review by the deconstructionists, it was the 'French brand' of structuralism rather than structuralist epistemology *per se* that actually ran out of steam. It is also important to note, in the context of the present paper, that the Prague School had very limited impact on cultural and social anthropology beyond the direct influence of Jakobson and his American students, compared to the attention generated by the work of Lévi-Strauss. On the other hand, the forced exiles of prominent scholars from Central and Eastern Europe to the United States and Canada (during WWII and the Cold War), helped establish a strong presence and flourishing of Slavic Studies and, with it, of the continuing development of semiotics and structuralist theory. Again, while it is possible to trace interesting links between these developments and those in North American cultural anthropology, the crossover between the two fields was minimal.[27]

A closer review of the above-mentioned paper "Structural Analysis in Kinship and Anthropology"[28] is, in this regard, instructive as it offers a wealth of insight on the wayward ways Lévi-Strauss played with language. After making the argument for the scientific qualities of modern structural linguistics and the importance of guiding anthropology towards fulfilling its scientific potential, he insists on the necessity of examining: "(…) its consequences and its possible application to the phenomena of another order (…),"[29] of structural linguistics to anthropology. This is to be distinguished from *cooperation* between the two disciplines. In effect, his argument goes, compared to our understanding of language as a tool of communication with culturally specific iterations (languages, dialects, etc.), a specific architecture (e.g. grammar, lexicon) and history (e.g., sound shifts, linguistic borrowing and etymology) – all of which have been the bread and butter of linguistic anthropology and of its cooperation with cultural anthropology and archeology – the discoveries of modern, structural linguistics move much further, to a science that, in the study of language, discovers underlying universal laws that govern all languages and beyond, all symbolic behavior (and therefore by extension, culture.) It is not at all accidental that information theory and the discovery of DNA are often invoked as model examples of the latter developments since both are said to operate on the principle of binary codes.

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the Cooked (Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked* [New York: Harper & Row, 1970], 11), the first volume of his *Mythologies*. I address this exchange more fully in Lass, "Elective Affinities", noted above.

[27] For an in-depth appreciation of the history of poetics, mereology and post war developments in poetics again see Doležel, *Occidental Poetics*. Jindřich Toman, *The Magic of a Common Language: Jakobson, Mathesius, Trubetzkoy, and the Prague Linguistic Circle* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995) offers a thoughtful historical survey of the Prague School. See also Lass, "Roman Jakobson," referenced above.

[28] Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, 31–54.

[29] Ibid., 34.

He proceeds by referencing Trubetzkoy's revolutionary work in phonology when he makes the following analogy:

"Like phonemes, kinship terms are elements of meaning; like phonemes they acquire meaning only if they are integrated into a system. 'Kinship systems' like 'phonemic systems' are built by the mind on the level of unconscious thought" and, after enumerating the other features of kinship systems that match Trubetzkoy's characterization of the linguistic system, he concludes that in both "the observable phenomena result from the action of laws which are general but implicit. (…) although they belong to *another order of reality*, kinship phenomena are *of the same type* as linguistic phenomena."[30]

However, his comparison between kinship terms and phonemes is misleading. If phonemes are elements (I read this as 'building blocks') of meaning, as such they lack both *sense* and *reference*; in contrast, kinship terms do refer (that is, after all, their purpose), while their sense is, of course, to a large extent system driven, the point Lévi-Strauss is making. In that way only are they like phonemes, whose *value* (*not* sense) is also context driven.

Clearly, the two sets differ not only in kind but scale as well. Phonemes could be considered molecular (to draw once again on physics), while kinship terms are cultural categories, they are lexical compounds. That is, they possess both denotative and connotative functionalities. Oddly, Lévi-Strauss criticizes Benjamin Whorf in his brief reference for just that: drawing correlations across different kinds of phenomena. Additionally, the phoneme is an abstracted *concept* that represents one or more allophones, i.e., its actualizations *in situ*. On the other hand, a phoneme can also be broken down further into distinctive features, following the Jakobson-Trubetzkoy model. That is the approach pursued by Lévi-Strauss, for whom it becomes foundational to his own analysis in the work under discussion (and fully elaborated on in his 'culinary triangle' chapter of *The Origin of Table Manners*,[31] the third in the four volume *Mythologique*).[32] Under what circumstances then is the kinship terminology comparable?

He answers this question by way of addressing a potential pitfall: "It is incorrect to equate kinship terms and linguistic phonemes from the viewpoint of their form of treatment."[33] To obtain the underlying, structural laws of language requires breaking down the phoneme further into its distinctive features clustered into sets of oppositional pairs. Similarly, kinship terms themselves could also be described in terms of componential cluster sets. Such was the contribution to the understanding of kinship going back to the American anthropologist Henry Lewis Morgan. However, componential analysis is precisely what Lévi-Strauss objects to. In his view it is inaccurate, fails to simplify, and lacks explanatory power (all features that need to be fulfilled for an analysis to be "truly scientific.")[34] Instead, he makes the argument that kinship systems are made up of two parts: "(…) along with what we propose to call the *system of terminology* (which, strictly speaking, constitutes the vocabulary system), there is another system, both psychological and social in nature, which we shall call the *system of attitudes*." For, after all, as individuals employ the kinship vocabulary they also "feel (or do not feel, as the case may be) bound by prescribed behavior in their relations with one another, such as respect for familiarity, rights or obligations,

[30] Ibid., 34 (emphasis in original).

[31] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Origin of Table Manners* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978).

[32] It was first articulated in "Le Triangle culinaire" in 1965. An English translation appeared in *New Society*, December 1966, 937–940. For an excellent review of this model, see Edmund Leach, *Claude Lévi-Strauss* (New York: Viking Press, 1970).

[33] Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, 35.

[34] Lévi-Strauss gives the following example: "In our own kinship system, for instance, the term *father* has positive connotations with respect to sex, relative age, and generation; but it has a zero value on the dimension of collaterality, and cannot express in an affinal relationship" (ibid., 35).

and affection or hostility."[35] It is these values, experienced at the emotional level but prescribed at the cultural level, that constitute the comparable 'distinctive features' of the 'system of attitudes.' It these that can be grouped into sets of oppositional values, positive or negative, that define a term as a *relationship* of attitudes with other terms. In this way only is it analogical to the distinctive feature analysis of phonemes.

The problem of the 'avunculate' – the importance of the mother's brother in unilineal descent systems – is the test case for Lévi-Strauss' argument in this paper. Comparing the range of possible attitudes to the range of sounds available to any language, in both a very small number is actually used and systematically employed in any specific system. The binary logic of distinctive features behind the two phenomena is the same. By reducing to two values (positive/negative) the variety of attitudes that may exist between the binary pairs that constitute the nuclear unit of kinship (brother/sister, husband/wife, father/son, and mother's brother / sister's son) he claims to demonstrate the structural integrity and even predictability of avuncular types. He formulates the following law: "The relation between maternal uncle and nephew is to the relation between brother and sister as the relation between father and son is to that between husband and wife. Thus if we know one pair of relations, it is always possible to infer the other."[36]

In sum, we can make two important observations: Lévi-Strauss finds a way of employing advances in the understanding of laws that govern linguistic behavior to develop a comparable model of kinship behavior. By implication, kinship systems are like linguistic systems, they are codes that generate meaning in a system of marital exchange.[37] Additionally, in teasing out two systems out of one kinship system, the study of 'systems of attitudes' becomes, perhaps unintentionally, an attempt at describing modality as having a logical structure.[38] In fact, it is one of the central themes that run consistently throughout his work. As an existential state (his classic papers on the Oedipus myth and Zuni origin myths come immediately to mind)[39] interpreted as a unresolvable (binary) dualism that a symbolic system (myth, totemic operator, etc.) is designed to handle, as it transforms and resolves an impossible condition into a third way out. He also employs modality at the analytical level as a feature, a derivative of the idea of arbitrariness, intrinsic to mathematical grid-like models in which distinctive features combine to map out all possible permutations that quantify globally across the spectrum of cultures as if to offer the ethnographer a sort of predictive map.[40] However, his logic of choice is binary while the logic of modality is not, a weak point in the argument that is apparent with the benefit of hindsight. In any case, it offers additional insight on another signature feature of Lévi-Strauss' model of structure, the concept of transformation.

His analysis of kinship terms as 'systems of attitudes' in terms of distinctive features (and +/– valuations), is therefore open to reservations that are relevant to our discussion. First, precisely

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[35] Ibid., 37.

[36] Ibid., 42.

[37] Models of systems of exchange are one of the dominant figures in Lévi-Strauss' *oeuvre*. His admiration for the work of Marcel Mauss will match that for the pioneering work of the structural linguists Jakobson, Trubetzkoy, de Saussure and Benveniste.

[38] For brevity's sake one could define the logic of modality as one that recognizes degrees or types of truth and their conditions according to whether a proposition is contingently, necessarily, possibly or impossibly true or false.

[39] Claude Lévi-Strauss, "The Structural Study of Myth," in Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, 206–231.

[40] That 'modality' is more than an implicit topic but also an explicitly recognized concept is suggested by the following comment in the paper under review: "For insight into the specific problem of the avunculate we should turn to Radcliffe-Brown. His well-known article on the maternal uncle in South Africa was the first attempt to grasp and analyze the modalities of what we might call the 'general principle of attitude qualification'" (ibid., 40).

because kinship terms are meaning bearing and employed in acts of reference, a reduction of implicit attitudes (and their modalities) to a binary valuation forsakes the *possibility* of other behaviors that are implicit to the relationship. In other words, as Lévi-Strauss acknowledges, his analysis models *prescriptive* rules. This results in a questionable assumption that an actual instance of observed behavior is an instantiation of an underlying, prescriptive rule. Second, assuming the Saussurean distinction between *parole* and *langue*, an important dichotomy to Lévi-Strauss' epistemology, it would appear that the aim of his analysis, the structure of kinship as a system of attitudes, is the 'elementary' *langue* of kinship while the terms themselves, employed in action, are its *parole*. We may wonder whether it is possible to focus on the former exclusively; where do his ethnographic examples fit in, given that they are themselves abstracted, ideal types?

Linguistic concepts of structure/phonology become means to the understanding and explanation of kinship structures because the latter, like the former, communicate meaning. While actual ethnographic cases provide examples of possible variations (in this case, of the avunculate), these variations are presented as predictable outcomes, expressions of a law derived from the structural analysis of the distinctive features, rules of combination and their transformation. Accordingly, where phonology is based in the neuro-physiology of sound but its structure reflects a selection and combination that is culturally relative, so kinship, while informed by the biology of reproduction, is also *exo-somatic*, based in cultural dynamics of social relations. The problem is that while sounds may combine into molecular bundles of phonemes that, as minimal units, function to *distinguish between* meanings (they are minimal units of difference not of meaning), kinship terms, while part of a system of differences between terms and attitudes, are meaningful and as such, are both denotative and connotative.

Lévi-Strauss's deployment of a linguistic model and, ultimately, his interpretation of meaning are interesting because the epistemology, the claim it makes on semantical relations, implies seemingly opposite understandings of the nature of language. It is at once an ethnographic source of insight on the ways a particular culture's world is organized (as typified by the analysis of 'native' taxonomies as a 'logic of concrete'), and both a theory and a method for its analysis that is itself claimed as the underlying foundation, presupposed and therefore quantifiable across all domains. This observation, of course, holds for not only the case of Lévi-Strauss and his brand of (French) structuralism. It may provide insight into some other 'semiotic' theories of culture as well. The point here, however, is *not* to contribute to their demise let alone to hasten it,[41] but rather to provide insight on the philosophical underpinnings of linguistic models of culture.

An interpretational framework initiated by linguistic philosophers in the history of logic offers a useful way of distinguishing two essentially opposite ways of understanding language – whether formal or natural – and its relation to the world. Building on a groundbreaking paper by Jean Van Heijenoort,[42] Merrill B. and Jaakko Hintikka, in their book on Wittgenstein,[43] introduce a very productive distinction between various conceptions and philosophies of language. On one side, language is defined as a universal medium (LUM for short) that offers ways of describing the world or translating it into another format but questions the ability of that language to step outside of itself to describe itself or describe the meaning relations that obtain between it and the world (the problem of semantic ineffability). On the other side of the spectrum, language is

[41] Whether or not structuralist approaches in the humanities and, specifically, in anthropology, continue to bear fruit or have long been surpassed by other 'isms,' has been the topic of conversation for years. It is of no concern in the present paper.

[42] Jean Van Heijenoort, "Logic as Calculus and Logic as Language," *Synthese* 17, no. 3 (September, 1967): 324–330.

[43] Jaakko Hintikka and Merrill B. Hintikka, *Investigating Wittgenstein* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986). For an excellent introduction to the topic, see Martin Kusch, "Husserl and Heidegger on Meaning," *Synthese* 77, no. 1 (October, 1988): 99–127.

conceived as a tool akin to a calculus (LAC), re-interpretable and adjustable or replaced in whole or part, but accepting of the possibility that the universe of discourse is not one but many.[44]

What makes this distinction interesting and useful to the history of the "linguistic turn" in philosophy (and, by extension, cultural anthropology)? For one, it helps demonstrate that there are significant affinities between traditions otherwise thought of as separate. As Martin Kusch points out, the Cartesians, for whom the world is knowable but always via a detour, operate with the assumption that there is only one world. On the opposing side, Gottfried W. von Leibniz, the originator of modern calculus and staunch critic of René Descartes, allows for many worlds. Which one of the two is a relativist? Not easy to say. Martin Heidegger turns out to share the same metaphysics of language with Ludwig Wittgenstein, Bertrand Russell and Gottlob Frege where, on the other hand, Edmund Husserl's system of reductions claims access and the ability to refer to transcendental phenomena. While Husserl embraces formalism (in mathematics) and has interesting things to say about metalanguage, he rejects relativism and Kantianism. To sum up a few relevant ingredients of the two takes on language: to view language as a universal medium is to insist on semantic ineffability, accept linguistic relativity and maintain that metalanguage is a misleading use of language. There is, in this view, but one universe of discourse (our own). If, on the other hand, you take language as a flexible tool, an adjustable calculus, then the opposite holds. It is possible to find the underlying cause of semantic relations; relativism is a misguided and avoidable position, while metalanguage is not only possible but a necessary linguistic function. And, so are many possible worlds.

Perhaps this sounds familiar and, without delving into the thorny debates surrounding the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, one can begin to see parallels in the history of cultural anthropology's engagement with language. Obviously, the two positions are described here as clear opposites, as ideal-types where actual arguments will scan the gamut. Accepting linguistic relativity (that a grammatical and lexical structure of a language affects the way we, as speakers, conceptualize the world) may imply cultural relativism (the insistence that beliefs and activities must be understood as relative to the culture of which they are a part), but at a cost. It suggests a conundrum of infinite regress since, on the one hand, we claim to share a single universe (distinct but equal) yet, on the other, it is inaccessible except through educated guesses and methodological detours. Interestingly, Jakobson and the history of the Prague Linguistic Circle claim a direct influence of Husserl, his theory of signs and, in particular, his holism. However, where Lévi-Strauss would embrace Jakobson, on several occasions he had but dismissive things to say about phenomenology and yet, if there is one thing that dominates his methodology, his model building and, indeed, his style, it is a holistic, emergent concept of culture and meaning that connects him, in his own words, to the science and poetics of Goethe.

So how does Claude Lévi-Strauss play with language? I find the above distinction very helpful. Perhaps it will allow us to better frame his apparent vacillations, his epistemological positions as much as the frequently noted mixture of admiration and frustration within his work. I find it interesting to observe that where his interest lies not with reference but with sense—hence his lack of concern about linguistic relativity—his own use of Saussurean linguistics and mathematics as methods that are amenable to adjustment and application to non-linguistic phenomena, calls for qualification. The disregard for his own positionality and linguistic usage while simultaneously

[44] There are numerous consequences to these two approaches as described by the philosophers interested in this topic and several are directly relevant to the present discussion. My present discussion is but cursory. See also Lubomír Doležel, "Crucial Issues in the Theory of Literary Fictions," (paper presented at Lanna conference, Prague, 2014). The author makes a convincing case for the usefulness of the LUM/LAC distinction in his discussion of Saussurean approaches to meaning and their take on semantic relations to reality. I wish to express my thanks to him, personally, for bringing this discussion to my attention.

employing a methodological sleight of hand that turns the tool (language) into the object, could be considered deliberate if it was not characteristic of the positivist epistemology that informed several generations of social science. Linguistics as method, based in and revealing the structure of language, now extends to all cultural phenomena and the mind and nature itself as immanent structures. In the end, Lévi-Strauss's Cartesianism maintains a singular universe with language as a universal medium while simultaneously ignoring the problem of semantic ineffability.

Lévi-Strauss's rejection of Whorf seems to be methodological, he objected to an analysis based on a faulty correlation of different levels, a linguistic analysis of grammatical structure "with a crude, superficial, empirical view of the culture itself." Does that imply that he does not entertain a notion of linguistic relativity? Not necessarily. In fact, his employment of a linguistic model of structure to unpack the structure of symbolic rather than primarily linguistic phenomena presumes – if not at the level of a specific language than certainly at a generalized level of any underlying code – that the laws governing specific institutions (e.g., kinship), are the same structural laws that govern all codes. The hint of determinism is unmistakable. Only the level of correlation is set even further afar as the one, language *qua* linguistics, becomes the tool to explain the other, specific cultural *expressions qua* language: organized by underlying structural laws that are in principal the same as those that govern linguistic expression. Finally, when it comes to the two models of language discussed above, is Lévi-Strauss inadvertently sitting on the fence between them?

While the argument presented here is telegraphic and awaiting further elaboration, several observations seem clear enough. Concerning the structural anthropology of Claude Lévi-Strauss and, by extension, the structuralism inspired by him and others, the predominantly internalist model implies a one sided view of meaning. Radical in its explanation and understanding of language as a dynamic system of contexts, sign structures and relative arbitrariness of signification, it had little interest in the problem of reference, in the relationship between language and the world. By extending it beyond verbal language to culture, in retaining this model of meaning it also implicitly retained one of the key consequences of a limited notion of reference: a singular, one world model. In other words, where meaning refers (as it more often than not does) to *the possible rather than the actual*, the restricted, internalist model of signification confronts its limits. Although, historically speaking, this limitation may be the subliminal inspiration for Lévi-Strauss' concept of transformation. As for an informed intellectual history, the linguistic turn is clearly full of other turns. Perhaps the above analytical distinction offers a refreshing perspective on the rationality debates, on the move from structuralism to hermeneutics or on the reflexive turn that followed. I also think that the expression 'linguistic turn' continues to be appropriate as a cover term for the epistemological shifts in anthropology as well as philosophy and other disciplines. Provided we continue to explore and employ the fascinating if complex networks of bridges—both social and conceptual—between disciplines and paradigms that have claimed separate interests and historical trajectories when actually, as I have tried to suggest here, they also continue to exist between structural anthropology and linguistic philosophy.

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Here, There and/or Anywhere? Minority Religions and their Migration In and Out of Britain

Abstract | Religious beliefs and practices have travelled around the world since time immemorial. This they continue to do, with new inventions, facilitating the exchange of ideas with an ever-increasing speed to an ever-increasing extent. Taking contemporary Britain as an example, the wide variety of both foreign and indigenous minority religions is illustrated. Questions addressed include: "By what means do new religions migrate?" "What kind of a demand might there be for the movements and how negotiable are their beliefs and practices?" "What role is played by variables such as the social/political situation (state regulation, anti-cult sentiment, media reception et cetera)?"

Keywords | New Religious Movements – Cults – Britain – Minority Religions – Migration

1 The diversity of the contemporary religious scene

For much of the twentieth century, the primary concept employed in the description of religious processes throughout the world tended to be "secularisation". If we were to have asked where religion was going, it would have been assumed that there would be little left to migrate beyond a scepticism of, or total disregard for, religious beliefs and practices. That is, our question "here, there, or anywhere?" could have been answered simply: "nowhere".

However, towards the end of the century it was becoming increasingly obvious that "diversification" was a more appropriate concept for describing contemporary religious processes. It had become evident that in many parts of the world religion was not disappearing but, on the contrary, increasing in its strength and influence on world affairs. The traditional religions could still claim the adherence of the vast majority of the world's population and various kinds of new religions were emerging within, without and across their boundaries.

Of course, various kinds of secularising processes had undoubtedly been taking place. On the one hand, we had observed the more or less gradual secularisation that accompanied much of the industrialisation, urbanisation, rationalisation and individualisation that had been taking place since the nineteenth century or earlier, especially in Europe; on the other hand, there was the state-imposed secularism that followed revolutions such as those leading to the Soviet Union or the Chinese People's Republic. Bryan Wilson gave us one of the most widely accepted definitions of secularisation in the sociology of religion when he wrote that it was "a process whereby religious thinking, practice and institutions lose social significance."[1] But it would be difficult to look at the contemporary Middle East, or follow a US Presidential election, and claim that religion had lost its social significance.

[1] Bryan R. Wilson, *Religion in Secular Society* (London: Watts, 1966), 14.

At the individual level it is possible to detect a wide variety of ways in which secularisms are experienced. There is the "hard secularism" of state-imposed Marxism and Maoism, or the "new atheism" associated with people like Richard Dawkins.[2] This position is sometimes seen as cult-like on account of the somewhat intransigent and fundamentalist character of its anti-religious beliefs. Then there is what might be termed "apathetic secularism", which is arguably the only real secularism, being utterly unconcerned about religious or spiritual questions, yet possibly celebrating "para-cultic" functional equivalents such as Manchester United Football Club or pigeon fancying. A third kind of secularism, "soft secularism", might equally well be called "soft religion". This differs from apathetic secularism in that soft secularists may well say they believe in some kind of supernatural power, but they are unlikely to "do" religion, rarely going to church except, perhaps, to observe rites of passage associated with birth, marriage and death from cultural rather than from religious motives. However, unlike the negative opposition of hard secularists or the indifference of apathetic secularists, soft secularists are quite likely to consider religion "a good thing" insofar as it is an activity performed by other people – a phenomenon that Grace Davie has termed "vicarious religion".[3]

But despite, possibly sometimes because of, these various manifestations of secularism, there have emerged innumerable new types of religion, ranging from fundamentalist beliefs and practices at one extreme to, at the other extreme, the New Age and "the new spirituality" which eschews traditional religious organisations, authority and dogma in favour of discovering "the god within" and stressing personal experience and responsibility. And, to be found along various dimensions between these two poles, there are literally thousands of "cults", "sects", and/or "new religious movements" (NRMs).

2 Methods of transmission of religious movements

Throughout history and throughout the world, there have always been new religious movements. Some have been new to a particular social environment, although they may have existed in other places for hundreds or even thousands of years. The manner in which the beliefs and practices of one geographical region have become new religions in another have long been the result of human mobility, be it by way of trade routes, such as the silk roads of antiquity; military crusades and other conquests; the spread and the collapse of empires and republics; slave trafficking; missionary zeal; or various patterns of migration and other forms of travel. Such movements have been progressively facilitated first by animals (horses or camels), then by carriages (wagons, chariots or broughams), steam engines, bicycles, motorcars, electric trains or, now, by aeroplanes.

There has also been the development of technical means of communication, independent of face-to-face contact, for spreading "The Word". Initially there were various forms of calligraphy and other scripts; then came the introduction of printing; the radio; the telephone; satellite television; and, most recently, the Internet, followed by the World Wide Web and the ever-more-popular employment of contemporary forms of "social media".

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[2] Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006).

[3] Grace Davie, "Vicarious Religion: A Methodological Challenge," in *Everyday Religion: Observing Modern Religious Lives*, ed. Nancy Ammerman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 21–36.

3 How new are NRMs?

New religious movements (NRMs) are not necessarily from "elsewhere", however. They could have come into being as the result of a sectarian schism from an older religion.[4] Thus, Christianity was a sect within the Judaic tradition; Islam a sect within the Abrahamic tradition; Methodism a sect within Protestant Christianity; Hizb ut Tahrir and al Qaida are sects that claim to represent the true Islam; The International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) is a branch of Vaishnava Hinduism; and Soka Gakkai is a movement within the Nichiren Buddhist tradition. Some religions have been more prone to schism than others; there have been thousands of divisions within Christianity; and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the Mormons), and the Worldwide Church of God are both said to have given rise to more than 400 sects.[5]

Other movements are the result not of a split but, conversely, of a syncretistic combination of various aspects of two or more different traditions. Examples would include Damanhur, an Italian spiritual community that draws on a wide variety of sources that include Egyptian gods, new age and ecological beliefs, spiritual rituals and sacred art.[6] Candomblé and Santeria, in their own ways, combine Yoruba orishas with Jesus, the Virgin Mary and various other Catholic saints. Sometimes previous divisions within mainstream religions merge: English Presbyterians and Congregationalists came together to form the "new" United Reformed Church in 1972. It is not unusual to find those who report that they are Christians also reporting that they believe in reincarnation;[7] and there has been a recent growth of Christian Buddhists and Jewish Buddhists (JuBus). For some individuals, and, indeed, for some groups, it would seem that "anything goes". "Sheilaism", an eclectic assortment of beliefs and practices selected by individuals themselves from the metaphorical spiritual supermarket, appears to have become increasingly prevalent.[8]

One of the most all-embracing NRMs is the Universal Life Church,[9] which proclaims itself to be open to people of all faiths. Founded by Kirby J. Hensley, since the 1960s the ULC has been offering all and sundry the religious freedom to become ordained ministers on line and to practice their beliefs as they wish. Its website claims that by 2015 there were over 20 million ULC ministers throughout the world, several of whom frequently perform wedding ceremonies that can be designed to fit with the couple's own wishes.[10] Then, straddling the line between the religious and the secular, one can find agnostic and atheist "churches" that do not believe any religious belief is necessary. There have been atheist and agnostic Unitarian Universalists for

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[4] Here "sect" is being used as a technical, non-pejorative concept, see Bryan R. Wilson, *Sects and Society: A Sociological Study of Three Religious Groups in Britain* (London: Heinemann, 1961).

[5] David V. Barrett, *The Fragmentation of a Sect: Schism in the Worldwide Church of God* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Newell G. Bringhurst and John C. Hamer et al., *Scattering of the Saints: Schism within Mormonism* (Independence, MO: John Whitmer, 2007).

[6] Jeff Merrifield, *Damanhur: The Real Dream* (London: Thorsons, 1998).

[7] Tony Walter and Helen Waterhouse, "A Very Private Belief: Reincarnation in Contemporary England," *Sociology of Religion* 60, no. 2 (1999): 187–197.

[8] This concept derives from a nurse named Sheila Larson, who described her private faith as "Sheilaism. Just my own little voice". See Robert N. Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 221.

[9] Dusty Hoesly, "'We Do Not Stand Between You and Your God': The Universal Life Church as a New Religious Movement" (paper presented at the annual conference of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Boston, Massachusetts, November 8–10, 2013).

[10] "Universal Life Church Monastery," accessed August 4, 2015, ttp://www.themonastery.org/.

some time,[11] but, more recently, the Sunday Assembly was formed in London in January 2013 as a "congregation for atheists and non-believers".[12]

There are movements that might deny that they are religious, but draw on psychological and psychoanalytic theories, including much of the Human Potential Movement, or at special large-group seminars such as those organised by the Landmark Forum, a development of *est*.[13] It ought to be noted that the Landmark Forum insists it is not a religion; however, Professor Paul Heelas has referred to such components of the Human Potential Movement as "self-religions" in that they search for "the god within",[14] and they are frequently included in broad understandings of NRMs. A search for "the god within" can also be found in courses and seminars on offer at places such as Findhorn[15] or Esalen, which has been referred to as "the religion of no religion".[16]

Although at least some old ideas are almost bound to be found in any new religion, there are NRMs that can indubitably be seen as innovative. One example could be that provided by L. Ron Hubbard (1911–86), a science fiction writer who introduced the theory of Dianetics,[17] together with an elaborate set of beliefs and practices. These evolved into the Church of Scientology in 1954, embracing techniques such as auditing, whereby the Thetan (one's spiritual being) "clears" itself of engrams (blockages) that have arisen in this and previous lives, thereby enabling progress to be made along "the road to total freedom".[18] Perhaps not surprisingly, given Hubbard's prowess as a science fiction writer, much of the higher gnosis of Scientology theology involves accounts of happenings in other galaxies and spaceships.[19]

Numerous "UFO-cults" include the Aetherius Society,[20] Unarius,[21] and the Raelians.[22] Novel types of religion, which simply could not have existed as recently as half a century ago, are the scores of "virtual religions" that have appeared on the World Wide Web. These include such

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[11] "Atheist and Agnostic Unitarian Universalist," Unitarian Universalist Association, accessed August 4, 2015, http://www.uua.org/beliefs/who-we-are/people-many-beliefs/atheist-agnostic/.

[12] "Sunday Assembly," accessed August 4, 2015, https://sundayassembly.com/.

[13] Stephen M. Tipton, *EST and Ethics: The Moral Logic of the Human Potential Movement* (Atlanta, GA: Emory Univ., 1981); Sefi Melchior and Stephen Sharot, "Landmark in Israel: Recruitment and Maintenance of Clients in a Human Potential Organization," *Nova Religio* 13, no. 4 (2010): 61–83.

[14] Paul Heelas, "Californian Self Religions and Socializing the Subjective," in *New Religious Movements: A Perspective for Understanding Society*, ed. Eileen Barker (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1982), 69–85.

[15] Raymond Akhurst, *My Life and the Findhorn Community* (Falmouth: Trelawney Press, 1992); Paul Hawken, *The Magic of Findhorn* (Glasgow: William Collins Sons & Co, 1975); Bill Metcalf, *The Findhorn Book of Community Living* (Forres, Scotland: Findhorn Press, 2004).

[16] Jeffrey J. Kripal, *Esalen: America and the Religion of No Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

[17] L. Ron Hubbard, *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health* (Copenhagen: New Era Publications, 1950).

[18] Roy Wallis, *The Road to Total Freedom: A Sociological Analysis of Scientology* (London: Heinemann, 1976).

[19] Hugh B. Urban, *The Church of Scientology: A History of a New Religion* (Princeton: University of Princeton Press, 2011).

[20] George King and Kevin Quinn Avery, *The Age of Aetherius* (Los Angeles: The Aetherius Society, 1982); George King and Richard Lawrence, *Contacts with the Gods from Space: Pathway to the New Millennium* (Hollywood: The Aetherius Society, 1996); Roy Wallis, "The Aetherius Society: A Case Study in the Formation of a Mystagogic Congregation," in *Sectarianism: Analysis of Religious and Non-Religious Sects*, ed. Roy Wallis (London: Peter Owen, 1975), 17–34.

[21] Ruth Norman, *Preparation for the Landing* (El Cajon, CA: Unarius Educational Foundation, 1987); Diana G. Tumminia, *When Prophecy Never Fails: Myth and Reality in a Flying-Saucer Group* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

[22] Susan J. Palmer, *Aliens Adored: Raël's UFO Religion* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004).

diverse movements as the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster,[23] Discordianism;[24] and Thee Church of Moo,[25] most of whose "members" rarely meet in the flesh but relate to each other as participants in global communities located in the ether. In addition to, and overlapping with, the arrival of "virtual religions", there is a growth in movements such as Jediism[26] and Matrixism,[27] The Church of All Worlds;[28] the Church of the SubGenius (which offers eternal spiritual salvation or triple your money back).[29] These are the so-called "invented" or "hyper-real" NRMs that cannot be traced to divine intervention but are explicitly products of the human imagination.[30]

4 Britain: A Case Study

Britain has long been a country playing host to religions that are new both in the sense that they have come from other countries, and in the sense that they are introducing a set of beliefs, practices and worldviews which differ from those that already existed. One important innovation in the religious history of England was the rejection of the Church of Rome and establishment of the Church of England in the sixteenth century. At that time there were some Jews and a very few Muslims; then, over the next four centuries, several Non-Conformist religions, such as Quakers, Baptists and Methodists, appeared. During the nineteenth century there emerged a number of sects. Some, such as the Jehovah's Witnesses, Christadelphians, Salvation Army and Plymouth Brethren originated in the United Kingdom; others, such as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), and the Seventh-day Adventists were imported from the United States. Towards the end of the century, Madame Blavatsky was promoting Eastern thought and a mixture of esoteric ideas by way of Theosophy, and further Eastern ideas came to Britain with, for example, the teachings of Vedanta. But for all intents and purposes, Britain was an almost exclusively Christian nation until well into the twentieth century. Between the wars, a few practitioners of Subud, an Indonesian spiritual movement, appeared on the scene, but it was following World War II, in the 1950s and 1960s, that new religions were to hit Britain with an unprecedented force.

Inform, an educational charity that provides information about minority religions, has several thousands of NRMs from around the world on its files.[31] Of these, over a thousand became visible in Britain after the Second World War and are active there at the time of writing (2015). The vast majority are imports, but some are indigenous, and these can be divided into (a) those that have confined themselves to Britain, (b) those that have exported their religion overseas

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[23] Bobby Henderson, *The Gospel of the Flying Spaghetti Monster* (London: HarperCollins, 2006).

[24] Danielle Kirby, "Occultural Bricolage and Popular Culture: Remix and Art in Discordianism, the Church of the SubGenius, and the Temple of Psychick Youth," in Handbook of Hyper-real Religions, ed. Adam Possamai (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 39–58; Carole M. Cusack, Invented Religions: Imagination, Fiction and Faith (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2010), 27–53.

[25] "The Grate Book of Moo," accessed August 4, 2015, http://www.churchofmoo.com/bookmoo/Book_MOO.txt/.

[26] Debbie McCormack, "The Sanctification of Star Wars: From Fans to Followers," in *Handbook of Hyper-real Religions*, ed. Adam Possamai (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 165–184.

[27] Cusack, *Invented Religions: Imagination, Fiction and Faith*, 113–141.

[28] Oberon Zell and Luke Moonoak (forthcoming), "The Church of All Worlds", in *Fiction, Invention, and Hyper-reality: From Popular Culture to Religion*, ed. Carole M. Cusack and Pavol Kosnáč (Farnham: Ashgate).

[29] Cusack, *Invented Religions: Imagination, Fiction and Faith*, 83–113.

[30] Cusack, Invented Religions: *Imagination, Fiction and Faith*; Adam Possamai, ed., *Handbook of Hyper-real Religions* (Leiden: Brill, 2012); Carole M. Cusack and Pavol Kosnáč, eds., *Fiction, Invention, and Hyper-reality: From Popular Culture to Religion* (Farnham: Ashgate, forthcoming).

[31] "INFORM. The Information Network on Religious Movements," accessed August 4, 2015, http"//www.inform.ac/.

and (c) those that, while confining their physical presence to England, Scotland and/or Wales, have influenced other NRMs or spiritual communities elsewhere and/or drawn individuals to the British Isles as either temporary or long-term visitors.

4.1 Indigenous NRMs

An example of the first category (indigenous NRMs confined to Britain) is the Jesus Fellowship, sometimes known as the Jesus Army.[32] This started in the late 1960s as a breakaway Baptist church, whose members, following their pastor, Noel Stanton (1926–2009), formed "The New Creation Christian Community". Theologically, there is little to differentiate the Jesus Army from most evangelical religions, but there have been disagreements with both the Baptist Union and the Evangelical Alliance in the past. As the twenty-first century progressed, however, the community has become a generally respected part of the evangelical scene, with a farm, several businesses and the provision of help for local immigrants and the needy. Unlike many other NRMs, the Jesus Army has attracted a very broad spectrum of members from all classes of society, targeting the unemployed and those with addiction problems, whilst also appealing to a range of middle-class professionals. It is situated mainly in the Midlands, but has several centres throughout England and has welcomed visiting preachers from parts of Africa.

The second category (indigenous NRMs which have exported their religion overseas) includes the Aetherius Society, founded in 1955 by George King (1919–1997), a London taxi-driver who received a message from Cosmic Beings ordering him: "Prepare yourself! You are to become the voice of Interplanetary Parliament". Members believe that they "become part of a team of terrestrial co-operators with Cosmic Forces, playing an essential role in the Cosmic Plan at this vital stage in its unfoldment prior to the New Age upon earth."[33] The Aetherius Society has another centre in California, and a few branches elsewhere. The Emin,[34] a home-grown esoteric movement, was founded in 1971 by Raymond Armin (1924–2002), known as Leo. Emin beliefs and practices have been taken up in a variety of ways throughout the world, with a thriving Emin kibbutz in northern Israel.[35]

An example of an NRM that was founded in Britain, but is based largely on a "foreign" tradition, is the Triratna Buddhist Order (formerly the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order).[36] It was started in 1967 in Britain by Sangharakshita (born in 1925 as Dennis Lingwood). The Triratna Community consists of men and women trying to live in contemporary society according to Buddhist precepts. The movement offers teaching in Buddhist philosophy and meditation, especially "mindfulness", and has centres throughout the world. These, interestingly enough, are mostly in India. As mentioned above, a more recent movement that was started in London and that some refer to as an NRM is the Sunday Assembly, which now has branches in other parts of Europe, North America and Australia.[37]

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[32] Simon Cooper and Mike Farrant, *Fire in our Hearts: The Story of the Jesus Fellowship/Jesus Army* (Nether Heyford, Northampton: Multiply Publications, 1997).

[33] *The Aetherius Society: Some Basic Principles included in its Teachings*, leaflet (1988), 22.

[34] William Shaw, *Spying in Guru Land: Inside Britain's Cults* (London: Fourth Estate, 1994).

[35] Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi, *Despair and Deliverance* (Albany: State University of New York, 1992).

[36] Stephen Batchelor, *The Awakening of the West: The Encounter of Buddhism and Western Culture* (London: Aquarian, 1994); Vessantara, *The Friends of the Western Buddhist Order: an introduction* (Birmingham: Windhorse Publications, 1996); Vishvapani, *Introducing the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order* (Birmingham: Windhorse Publications, 2001).

[37] "Sunday Assembly," accessed August 4, 2015, https://sundayassembly.com/.

The third category of NRMs (originating and staying in Britain, but attracting visitors and networking with movements in other countries) includes a spiritual community, the Findhorn Foundation,[38] which began in the 1960s when Peter Caddy (1917–1994), his wife Eileen (1917–2006) and Dorothy Maclean (1920) moved to the north of Scotland.[39] Soon the community began to grow, becoming renowned for the size of the vegetables that were grown on its land. With the passage of time it expanded, and New Age seekers now come from around the world to take part in one or more of the many courses and workshops it offers, some of them staying to take up permanent residence. Although the core of the Foundation remains in Scotland, there is a constant exchange of New Age speakers and spiritual teachers with other centres such as Somerset's Glastonbury[40] and California's Esalen Institute.[41]

4.2 Imported NRMs

Most of the NRMs in Britain are not indigenous, however. They came, directly or indirectly from all over the world, particularly from the United States, though many of these had themselves been imports from elsewhere. A notable example is ISKCON, which arrived in England in 1968, shortly after its founder, Swami A. C. Bhaktivedanta Prabhupada (1896–1977) had established the Society in America, having sailed there as a missionary from India in the mid-1960s.[42] But other NRMs arrived directly from their places of origin, and several of these then went on from Britain to America and other countries around the world.

Among the better-known American movements is the Church of Scientology, which for some time had its founder, L. Ron Hubbard, living at Saint Hill Manor in East Grinstead, about 30 miles south of London. The Children of God (later known as The Family International),[43] which was started by David Berg (1919–1994) as part of the Californian Jesus Movement in the 1960s, also had its founder living in England for a while. Another offspring of the Jesus Movement, started in the early 1970s by Eugene Spriggs (known as Yoneq), is The Twelve Tribes or Messianic Community,[44] which has a farm with a bakery and tea-room in the south-east of England.

Indicating briefly the wide range of countries from which NRMS have migrated to Britain, examples include: al-Muhajiroun from Saudi Arabia; Asatru from Norway; the Brahma Kumaris and Sahaja Yoga from India; Breatharianism from Australia; Cao Dai from Vietnam; Cherubim

[38] Metcalf, *The Findhorn Book of Community Living*.

[39] Richard J. Coates, "Findhorn Foundation Community," in *Encyclopedia of Community: From the Village to the Virtual World*, ed. K. Christensen and D. Levinson (Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi: Sage, 2003).

[40] Marion Bowman, "More of the Same? Christianity, Vernacular Religion and Alternative Spirituality in Glastonbury," in *Beyond New Age: Exploring Alternative Spirituality*, ed. Steven Sutcliffe and Marion Bowman (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 83–104; Kathy Jones, *The Goddess of Glastonbury* (Glastonbury: Ariadne, 1990).

[41] Jeffrey J. Kripal, *Esalen: America and the Religion of No Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); Marion Goldman, *The American Soul Rush: Esalen and the Rise of Spiritual Privilege* (New York: New York University Press, 2012).

[42] Kim Knott, *My Sweet Lord: The Hare Krishna Movement* (Wellingborough: Aquarian Press, 1986); Burke E. Rochford, *Hare Krishna in America* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1985).

[43] William S. Bainbridge, *The Endtime Family: Children of God* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002); James R. Lewis and J. Gordon Melton, eds., *Sex, Slander, and Salvation: Investigating The Family/Children of God* (Stanford, CA: Center for Academic Publications, 1994); Gordon Shepherd and Gary Shepherd, *Talking with the Children of God: Prophecy and Transformation in a Radical Religious Group* (Urbana, Chicago and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2010).

[44] Susan J. Palmer, "The Twelve Tribes. Preparing the Bride for Yahshua's Return," *Nova Religio* 13, no. 3 (2010): 59–80.

and Seraphim from Nigeria; Diamond Way Buddhism from Denmark; Falun Gong from China; the Fellowship of Isis from Ireland; Focolare from Italy; Hizb ut-Tahrir from Israel; the Hizmet Movement (the Dialogue Society) from Turkey; the Legionnaires of Christ from Mexico; Opus Dei from Spain; the Raelians from France; Rastafarianism from Jamaica; Santo Daime from Brazil; Soka Gakkai and Tenrikyo from Japan; Subud from Indonesia; Tzu Chi from Taiwan; the Unification Church from Korea.

4.3 Supply, Demand, Adaptation and Globalization

An obvious enough fact, but one which is sometimes forgotten, is that for religions to migrate, there must be both a supply of and a demand for the movements in the country to which they are migrating. NRMs are usually (though not always) anxious to share their message and to gain as many converts as possible. The supply of NRMs can be more or less calculated by those wanting to export their movement, or, alternatively, more or less fortuitous, being, for example, the result of the economic migration of believers. Furthermore, proselytizing can be more or less targeted or, conversely, more or less haphazard. Not surprisingly, those NRMs that have been the most visible are among those that wish to offer their wares as widely and publicly as possible. Nonetheless, while the vast majority of evangelising religions have been interested in amassing an international following, a movement such as the Jesus Fellowship, although relatively successful in attracting new members, has confined its missionising activities to Britain.

But even if there is a plentiful supply of missionaries and/or information about a particular NRM, it does not follow that there will be a demand for it. History and anthropology have taught us that what is taken for granted in one social context can be unthinkable in another, and whilst an NRM may try to establish itself in a new country, there is no guarantee that its voice will be heard. This is likely to be more of a problem if the immigrating religion has little or no resonances with the natives' culture. By far the largest numbers of NRMs in Britain are Christian based (even if the traditional churches do not accept them as "real Christians"). A movement that originated in the Near, Middle or Far East is, ceteris paribus, more likely to be able to establish a rapport with people who were themselves migrants or the children of migrants from the main tradition of the NRM. This is not to say that the exotic cannot be attractive, but it will have to be presented in a way that makes it acceptable to at least some members of the host community. To do this, some adaptations may be considered necessary, and some beliefs and practices will be more negotiable than others. Krishna devotees would not be prepared to eat meat in any part of the world, but the Children of God, were prepared to adjust their appearance (and alter the cartoon-type literature that they distributed) so that the women were more appropriately dressed, not wearing short skirts and displaying shapely figures as they had been wont to do in the West – especially during the period when Berg was enjoining them to engage in "flirty fishing".[45]

Skilful missionaries may persuade potential converts to feel a need for something that their NRM has to offer when the target had previously been unaware that s/he had such a need or even wish – but only up to a point. Despite stories abounding in the popular press about the brainwashing or mind control techniques employed by NRMs, research has demonstrated over

[45] Flirty fishing was a practice adopted by the movement for a period (but discontinued in the late 1980s) when attractive young members would missionize by showing potential converts (and/or donors) how much Jesus loved them by being prepared to have sexual relations with them. See: James D. Chancellor, *Life in The Family: An Oral History of the Children of God* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2000); Lewis and Melton, *Sex, Slander, and Salvation: Investigating The Family/Children of God*; Miriam Williams, *Heaven's Harlots: My Fifteen Years as a Sacred Prostitute in the Children of God Cult* (New York: Eagle Brook, 1998).

and over again that such techniques have their limitations and not only are many of those subjected to them perfectly capable of resisting, but the majority of those who have joined an NRM have later left it of their own free will.[46] This is not to say that some of the movements would not like to employ such techniques, nor is it to deny that several put considerable pressure on those they are trying to recruit; but it is to say that the techniques are not nearly as effective as the movements' opponents would have us believe.[47] Generally speaking, there needs to be some kind of fit or resonance with the converts' character and past experience if they are going to join and stay in a new religion.

Soka Gakkai, the most successful Japanese NRM in Britain, arrived after a British business man, Richard Causton, was converted by his Japanese wife and brought the movement to England. Causton, who was clearly English in appearance and manner was undoubtedly largely responsible for making Nichiren Buddhism, which might otherwise have been rejected as a foreign import, appear far more acceptable than the other, less successful Japanese NRMs in Britain.[48] Roughly half the 6,000 or so membership in Britain is British and half Japanese, and the movement now owns a number of properties including an imposing mansion, Taplow Court, in the English countryside. Conversely, Tenrikyo, a successful movement in Japan,[49] has as its UK headquarters a modest private house in North London, and can claim no more than a score or so converts in Britain, nearly all of whom are Japanese.[50]

Apart from purely cultural stumbling blocks, language can play a role in an NRM's success if it wishes to migrate. Missionaries from the Far East face almost insuperable barriers unless they have a reasonable command of English if they want to acquire converts in Britain or North America. Most of the NRMs that have been successful in the West have tended to have English as their lingua franca, which has sometimes led to the children of converts in European countries being unable to speak their parent's mother tongue. However, NRMs originating in French-speaking areas are more likely to preserve French as the main, or at least an important

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[46] Dick Anthony, "Religious Movements and Brainwashing Litigation: Evaluating Key Testimony," in In *Gods We Trust: New Patterns of Religious Pluralism in America (2nd edition)*, ed. Thomas Robbins (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1990), 295–344; Dick Anthony, Thomas Robbins, and Steven Barrie-Anthony, "Cult and Anticult Totalism: Reciprocal Escalation and Violence," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 14, no. 1 (2002): 211–239; Eileen Barker, *The Making of a Moonie: Brainwashing or Choice?* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984); David G. Bromley and James T. Richardson, eds., *The Brainwashing/Deprogramming Controversy: Sociological, Psychological, Legal and Historical Perspectives, Vol. V, Studies in Religion and Society* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1983); James T. Richardson, "A Critique of 'Brainwashing' Claims About New Religious Movements," in *Cults in Context: Readings in the Study of New Religious Movements*, ed. Lorne L. Dawson (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 1996), 217–227; Thomas Robbins and Dick Anthony, "Deprogramming, Brainwashing and the Medicalization of New Religious Movements," *Social Problems* 29, no. 3 (1982): 283–297.

[47] In May 1987, the American Psychological Association rejected the *Report of the Task Force on Deceptive and Indirect Techniques of Persuasion and Control*, submitted in 1986 by Margaret Thaler Singer et al.

[48] Bryan R. Wilson and Karel Dobbelaere, *A Time to Chant: The Soka Gakkai Buddhists in Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994); Richard Causton, *Hidden Splendour: Buddhist Perspectives on Achieving Human Harmony in a Culturally Diverse and Ever-changing World* (Richmond, Surrey: Nichiren Shoshu of the United Kingdom, 1987); Richard Causton, *Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism: An Introduction* (London: Rider, 1988).

[49] Tenrikyo Kaigai Denobu, *Tenrikyo: The Path to Joyousness* (Tenri, Nara: Tenrikyo Overseas Mission Department, 1988).

[50] It is interesting to note that Japanese migrants to Latin America have taken their religions with them, and the kami (or deities) that are considered to be tied to the Japanese land, seem to have resettled quite happily in Brazil. See Robert T. Carpenter and Wade Clark Roof, "The Transplanting of Seicho-no-ie from Japan to Brazil: Moving Beyond the Ethnic Enclave," *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 10, no. 1 (1995): 41–54; Peter B. Clarke, "Japanese *New Religious Movements in Brazil: from ethnic to 'universal' religions*," in New Religious Movements: Challenges and Response, ed. Bryan R. Wilson and Jamie Cresswell (London: Routledge, 1999), 197–210.

means of communication, which in part explains why the Raelians have had more success in France and French-speaking Quebec than in England or the USA.

Whilst individual missionaries by themselves can certainly establish the basis for an NRM to take off in a new country (Prabhupada is a case in point), it is only once a critical mass is reached that imported religions are likely to attract more than a few individuals. The Unification Church originally sent lone missionaries to Britain and America, but it was when they sent teams of members from various countries on missions such as "the One World Crusade", that they were able to gather significant numbers of converts.[51] The Children of God established missionaries in countries throughout the world whose task it was to go to public places where they would engage in "litnessing" – that is, distributing literature for donations and witnessing to potential converts.[52] ISKCON devotees became a familiar sight dancing and chanting on the streets and handing out literature and records.[53] But while the Krishna devotees, thanks to their behaviour and colourful appearance, were very obviously an NRM; Unificationists often concealed their identity (sometimes relying on "Heavenly Deception", although less so in Britain than in California, where they achieved their greatest success); and the Children of God were an underground movement for several years, offering little in the way of clues as to who they were apart from saying that they were Christian missionaries.

All three of these movements focussed mainly, though by no means exclusively, on middle-class youth. Indeed, most of the NRMs that received public attention (which was commonly of a negative nature)[54] in the 1970s and 1980s in the West targeted, and were disproportionately successful in their appeal to, white middle-class youth. Among noticeable exceptions would be the Rastafarians, who have confined themselves almost exclusively to young men in the black communities initially founded by émigrés that came to England from the West Indies in the 1950s.[55] Hizb ut-Tahrir, on the other hand, has tended to target students originating from the Asian communities in Greater London and the urban conurbations of the Midlands.[56]

Among the fastest growing new religions in the UK are the various Pagan groups, which do very little active proselytising. What information they supply to potential converts tends to be in books or, more recently, the Internet.[57] Although many of the British Pagans' beliefs and

[51] Barker, T*he Making of a Moonie: Brainwashing or Choice?*; Michael L. Mickler, *A History of the Unification Church in America, 1959–1974: Emergence of a National Movement* (New York: Garland, 1980); John Lofland, *Doomsday Cult: A Study of Conversion, Proselytization, and Maintenance of Faith* (New York, London: Irvington, 1977).

[52] David E. van Zandt, *Living in the Children of God* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

[53] Knott, *My Sweet Lord: The Hare Krishna Movement*.

[54] Anson D. Shupe and David G. Bromley, *The New Vigilantes: Deprogrammers Anti-Cultists, and the New Religions* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1980); Anson D. Shupe and David G. Bromley, eds., *Anti-Cult Movements in Cross-Cultural Perspective* (New York: Garland, 1994); Eileen Barker, "Watching for Violence: A Comparative Analysis of the Roles of Five Cult-Watching Groups," in *Cults, Religion and Violence*, ed. David G. Bromley and J. Gordon Melton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 123–148; James Beckford, *Cult Controversies: The Societal Response to the New Religious Movements* (London: Tavistock, 1985).

[55] Ernest Ellis, *The Rastafarian Movement in England* (London: Unwin, 1983); Barry Chevannes, *Rastafari and Other African-Caribbean Worldviews* (London: MacMillan Press Ltd., 1998).

[56] Shiraz Maher, "Change and Continuity: Hizb ut Tahrir's Strategy and Ideology in Britain," in *Revisionism and Diversification in New Religious Movements*, ed. Eileen Barker (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 155–170; Ameer Ali, "Tabligh Jama'at and Hizbul Tahrir: Divergent Paths to Convergent Goals, Education to Counter Extremism," *Dialogue & Alliance* 20, no. 2 (2006): 51–66; Sophie Gilliat-Ray, *Muslims in Britain: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Philip Lewis, *Young, British and Muslim* (London, New York: Continuum, 2007).

[57] Graham Harvey, "Coming Home and Coming Out Pagan (but not converting)," in *Religious Conversion: Contemporary Practices and Controversies*, ed. Christopher Lamb and M. Darrol Bryant (London: Cassell, 1999), 233–246; Graham Harvey and Charlotte Hardman, eds., *Paganism Today: Wiccans, Druids, the Goddess and*

rituals are rooted in Britain, which is rich in myth and lore, there is a significant amount of communication of ideas with European paganism (especially from Scandinavia and the Baltic region). It is also interesting that North Americans have adopted many Celtic beliefs that have migrated across the Atlantic.[58]

One might question whether "migration" is an appropriate concept with which to describe the spread of the predominantly virtual religions. A supply of these are "out there" in the ether, but although anyone on the web can have access to them, they are not all that likely to reach many people who are not actually looking for them – or something like them.[59]

In many ways it might seem that the process of increasing globalisation that has been occurring over the past half-century would result in an increase in potential for the spread of beliefs in any particular society. It is difficult not to be at least aware that there are alternative ways of looking at the world if one attends the same school or work place, or lives next door to an immigrant with a different religion from one's own, and, it can be assumed, the spread of electronic media has become an even greater factor in opening up alternative perspectives. At the very least, it is likely that people's religious beliefs and practices have become increasingly relativized as but one world view among many. In other words, it could be hypothesized that the relationship between religion and migration has its own internal dynamic: the more migrating religion there is, the more there is likely to be.

It is likely that considerable empirical evidence could be provided in support of such a hypothesis. However, there are some countervailing forces that need to be taken into account. The arrival of new religions can lead to an increased localization. Barriers may be erected and/or reinforced to protect the existing religion and ward off alternatives. To some extent this can describe the situation in the mid-1990s in Russia and parts of Eastern Europe. When the Berlin Wall fell in 1989 and the Soviet Union collapsed soon thereafter, the immediate reaction was for scores of NRMs and other religions that had been suppressed to enter those countries which had been under an atheist regime for two or more generations. At first, nearly all religions were welcomed and a sizable minority of the population both explored and embraced one or other of the new spiritual goods on offer. It was not long, however, before the honeymoon was over and, encouraged by the countries' traditional religions, the media and the states (many of which

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Ancient Earth Traditions for the Twenty-First Century (London: Thorsons, 1995); Vivanne Crowley, *Wicca: The Old Religion in the New Millennium* (London: Thorsons, 1996); Chas S. Clifton and Graham Harvey, eds., *The Paganism Reader* (London: Routledge, 2004); Ronald Hutton, "The roots of modern Paganism," in *Belief Beyond Boundaries: Wicca, Celtic Spirituality and the New Age*, ed. Joanne Pearson (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 225–237; Douglas E. Cowan, *Cyberhenge: Modern Pagans on the Internet* (New York and London: Routledge, 2005); Helen A. Berger and Douglas Ezzy, *Teenage Witches: Magical Youth and the Search for the Self* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2007).

[58] Joanne Pearson, ed., *Belief Beyond Boundaries: Wicca, Celtic Spirituality and the New Age* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002); Miranda J. Green, ed., *The Celtic World* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995).

[59] Lorne L. Dawson and Jenna Hennebry, "New Religions and the Internet: Recruiting in a New Public Space," in *Cults and New Religious Movements. A Reader*, ed. Lorne L. Dawson (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 271–291; Christopher Helland, "Online Religion/Religion Online and Virtual Communitas," in *Religion on the Internet: Research Prospects and Promises*, ed. Jeffrey K. Hadden and D. E. Cowan (Amsterdam, London: JAI, 2000), 205–224; Jean-François Mayer, "Religion and the Internet: the global marketplace," in *Challenging Religion: Essays in Honour of Eileen Barker*, ed. James A. Beckford and James T. Richardson (London: Routledge, 2003), 36–46; Lorne L. Dawson, "New Religions in Cyberspace: The Promise and Perils of a New Public Space," in *Frontier Religions in Public Space*, ed. Pauline Côté (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2001), 35–56; Douglas E. Cowan, "Religion on the Internet," in *The Sage Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*, ed. James A. Beckford and N. Jay Demerath, III (London: Sage, 2007), 357–376; Heidi Campbell, "Religion and the Internet," *Research Trends: Centre for the Study of Communication and Culture* 25, no.1 (2006): 1–24; Gwilym Beckerlegge, *From Sacred Text to Internet* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001).

had introduced new constitutions welcoming religious freedom for all in the early 1990s) began to denounce the "foreign" religions (which could include some indigenous NRMs, such as Vissarion's Church of the Last Testament). To belong to any religion other than the country's traditional religion was seen not merely as heresy, but as treason.[60]

In most countries it is likely that both globalising and localising factors are present. Britain and the United States are among those that are more likely to be found at the globalizing end of the continuum. While not exactly welcoming the new religions, there is little evidence that the established Church of England, as an institution, makes any effort to suppress NRMs, and it positively engages with representatives of the older traditions, such as Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, as well as having cordial relations with other Christian communities, such as Roman Catholics, Methodists, Presbyterians and Baptists.

Other variables that ought to be mentioned, but which there is little space to explore in this paper, include the material and human resources available to the movement, and the willingness of members to mobilise such resources and expend the energy required to attract new members. As already indicated, the popular media are unlikely to be helpful as they are usually highly selective in their reporting, and tend to report sensational and/or negative stories – for them "bad news is good news".[61] On the other hand, there would appear to be some NRMs who, wanting to advertise themselves, are of the opinion that "any news is good news".

So far as the Internet is concerned, it is doubtless true that there are many ways in which it can help to promote the profile of an NRM, not only through its website, which can make the movements' teachings and other possible attractions widely available, but also through such inventions as email, which can facilitate instant communication between headquarters in one country and members in another, possibly thousands of miles away. The Internet can, however, have its drawbacks. The movements' opponents are likely to have critical websites that question or deny the content of the movements' own websites, and which can add further information that condemns the movement and its practices. The Internet can, moreover enable the production of networks of the disaffected who can reinforce each other's dissatisfactions. There are also ways in which the very existence of the web can undermine the authority of a controlling, hierarchical leadership.[62]

Another important variable that can affect the fortunes of an NRM is the political environment. Obviously enough, NRMs are unlikely to prosper in countries such as North Korea or Saudi Arabia. Less obviously, but none the less crucially, countries such as Russia or France, that have laws which focus on unpopular NRMs will not be as inviting as those in which there is relatively little legislation targeting either particular NRMs (such as has been the case with Falun Gong in China or, albeit less vehemently, the Church of Scientology in Germany), or sects

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[60] Eileen Barker, "But Who's Going to Win? National and Minority Religions in Post-Communist Society," in *New Religious Phenomena in Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. Irena Borowik and Grzegorz Babinski (Kraków: Nomos, 1997), 25–62.

[61] Barend van Driel and James T. Richardson, "Print Media Coverage of New Religious Movements: A Longitudinal Study," *Journal of Communication* 38, no. 3 (1988): 37–61; James A. Beckford, "The Mass Media and New Religious Movements," in *New Religious Movements: Challenge and Response*, ed. Bryan R. Wilson and Jamie Cresswell (London: Routledge, 1999), 103–119; Eileen Barker, "The Scientific Study of Religion? You Must be Joking!," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 34, no. 3 (1995): 287–310.

[62] Eileen Barker, "Crossing the Boundary: New Challenges to Authority and Control as a Consequence of Access to the Internet," in *Religion and Cyberspace*, ed. Morten T. Højsgaard and Margit Warburg (London: Routledge, 2005), 67–85.

in general, as in France or Belgium.[63] Furthermore, it can be difficult for an NRM to register and have a legal status in some countries if there are criteria that incidentally, if not overtly, disadvantage NRMs. Some countries require a presence in the country for a minimum number of years; another criterion can be the number of native members – the requirement in Slovakia, for example, is 20,000, which clearly militates against NRMs.[64]

5 Concluding remarks

This paper has tried to indicate the unprecedented geographical mobility that has occurred among NRMs since the Second World War, illustrating the variety with special reference to Britain. It has suggested some of the ways in which the migration of the movements has been both facilitated and hindered by a number of variables that are both internal and external to the movements.

New religions can now be found in almost every country throughout the world. A few are content to confine themselves to their place of origin, but many have become an integral part of the globalization process. Much more work could be done, however, on exploring the variables that encourage or discourage the movements, and on discovering the social, cultural, theological, political, technological and other reasons why some movements are more likely to settle "here", others to settle "there", and yet others to settle both "here" and "there". But few will manage to settle "anywhere".

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[63] Willy Fautré, Alain Garay and Yves Nidegger, "The Sect Issue in the European Francophone Sphere," in *Facilitating Freedom of Religion or Belief: A Deskbook*, ed.Tore Lindholm, W. Cole Durham and Bahia G. Tahzib-Lie (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 2004), 595–618.

[64] *Javier Martinez-Torrón and W. Cole Durham, Jr., eds.,* Religion and the Secular State: National Reports (Madrid, Provo: Universidad Complutense de Madrid in Cooperation with the International Center for Law and Religious Studies, Brigham Young University, 2015); Eileen Barker, "Why the Cults? New Religions and Freedom of Religion and Beliefs," in *Facilitating Freedom of Religion or Belief: A Deskbook*, ed. Tore Lindholm, W. Cole Durham and Bahia G. Tahzib-Lie (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 571–593; Michaela Moravčíková, ed., *State-Church Relations in Europe: Contemporary Issues and Trends at the Beginning of the 21st century* (Bratislava: Institute for State-Church Relations, 2008); James T. Richardson, ed., *Regulating Religion: Case Studies from Around the Globe* (New York & Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic/Plenum, 2004); James T. Richardson and François Bellanger, eds., *Legal Cases, New Religious Movements, and Minority Faiths* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2014); David M. Kirkham, ed., *State Responses to Minority Religions* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2013).

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Worldwide *Kami*, Global Shinto: the Invention and Spread of a "Nature Religion"

Abstract | Shinto is generally perceived as a uniquely Japanese affair, intimately connected with the Japanese nation and physical environment. In recent years, however, Shinto has been reinvented as some sort of Eastern "nature spirituality" with global significance, and acquired popularity outside Japan. Shinto shrines have been established in several countries, and communities of self-declared Shinto practitioners have become active in Facebook groups and on other social media. Meanwhile in Japan, there are several developments suggesting an increasing "internationalization" of Shinto. This article provides an overview of the invention of Shinto as a "nature religion" and, correspondingly, its international popularization. It consists of four parts: a discussion of the emergence and development of the "Shinto environmentalist paradigm"; a short historical sketch of earlier universalistic tendencies within Shinto; an overview of existing Shinto shrines outside Japan; and an explorative discussion of certain online "Shinto" communities. The article concludes by suggesting that the international popularization of Shinto has been made possible by the reinvention of Shinto as a "nature religion", which has led to its discursive depoliticization, as well as by associations with Japanese popular culture. Thus far, "global Shinto" remains limited in scope; nevertheless, it constitutes an interesting new phenomenon, which may lead to transformations in the tradition as a whole.

Keywords | Shinto – globalization – Japanese religions abroad – Shinto environmentalist paradigm – online religiosity

1 Introduction

Often described as Japan's "indigenous" worship tradition, Shinto is generally perceived as a uniquely Japanese affair. According to most Shinto scholars and priests, their tradition is a foundational aspect of Japanese culture, closely intertwined with the country's physical landscape, social structures, morality, agricultural traditions and, perhaps most importantly, its imperial family. Thus, they typically describe Shinto as the "ethnic religion" (*minzoku shūkyō*) of the Japanese nation, which took shape in tandem with the ancient Japanese state and has continued to influence national history ever since.[1] The unique national character of Shinto is often asserted in introductory textbooks, works of a popular-scientific nature, and mass media texts. Here one regularly comes across the statement that Shinto is fundamentally different from so-called "world religions", as it is said to have "no dogma, no sacred scripture, and no founder"; likewise, it is

[1] E.g. Minoru Sonoda, *Dare demo no shintō: Shūkyō no Nihonteki kanōsei* (Tokyo: Kōbundō, 1998).

usually argued that the term used to refer to Shinto deities, *kami*, is untranslatable.[2] Accordingly, some priests refer to Shinto as an "intuitive religion" (*chokkan shūkyō*), the essence of which can only be grasped experientially, something which most "rational" Westerners supposedly are not capable of. Others evade the term "religion" altogether, suggesting that Shinto is the essence of Japan's "traditional culture" (*dentō bunka*), which functions to establish and maintain local as well as national community bonds – and, as such, has a profoundly public character.[3] In sum, in most *emic* discourse Shinto and the Japanese nation are seen as deeply interconnected, and Shinto is described as a unique Japanese tradition that is difficult to comprehend for foreigners coming from different cultural and religious backgrounds.

To many Shinto actors, therefore, the idea of a "global Shinto" would appear as an oxymoron. Likewise, until recently few non-Japanese took part in shrine rituals or professed a personal interest in Shinto spirituality; there were few (if any) non-Japanese practitioners. Correspondingly, Shinto received little international scholarly attention. In recent years, however, this has changed. Outside Japan, Shinto practices and beliefs are increasingly dissociated from their imperialist past, and reinvented as some sort of Eastern "nature spirituality" with global significance. Non-Japanese priests have established Shinto shrines in the United States and the Netherlands, and similar initiatives are undertaken elsewhere. Moreover, in recent years, communities of self-declared Shinto practitioners have become active in Facebook groups and on other social media, where they discuss their personal interpretations and adaptations of Shinto. Meanwhile, in Japan, there are several developments apparently pointing to an increasing "internationalisation" of Shinto, ranging from institutional cooperation to international shrine tourism, and even the organisation of spiritual trainings such as *misogi* (an ascetic practice, consisting of purification by standing under a cold waterfall) for visitors from abroad.[4] Although still strongly associated with Japanese culture – arguably, this Japanese character is part of its current global appeal – Shinto is gradually "opening up", to the point that more and more non-Japanese people are expressing an interest in studying and/or practising it. Thus, although by no means a "world religion" (yet), the notion of Shinto as a worship tradition only practiced and comprehended by Japanese people no longer corresponds to reality.

In this article, I will discuss the development of something we might tentatively call "global Shinto": the recent popularization of Shinto (or aspects thereof) outside Japan, as well as the increasing influence of global trends on shrine Shinto within the country. I will provide an overview of this development, giving several examples of ways in which Shinto is appropriated by non-Japanese actors, focusing primarily on developments outside Japan. As I will argue, there are four factors which have contributed to Shinto's recent international popularization: the proliferation of the "Shinto environmentalist paradigm" (see below) both in Japan and the West, which has led to the reinvention of Shinto as an idealized Eastern "nature spirituality"; Shinto's discursive depoliticization, and its dissociation (for better or worse) from wartime imperialism; the prevalence of pseudo-religious elements in *manga* and *anime*, which have acquired significant popularity among young people worldwide; and, last but not least, the spread of social media, which has facilitated the emergence of new transnational networks of religious practitioners, neither controlled nor sanctioned by clergy or missionaries.

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[2] E.g. Sokyō Ono, Shinto: The Kami Way (Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 1962); "Soul of Japan: An Introduction to Shinto and Ise Jingu," in *Public Affairs Headquarters for Shikinen-Sengu* (Tokyo: Public Affairs Headquarters for Shikinen-Sengu, 2013).

[3] Tsunekiyo Tanaka, *Shintō no chikara* (Tokyo: Gakken publishing, 2011).

[4] "Seiyōjin ga misogi: Nihon bunka ni fureru kenshū," *Jinja shinpō*, November 7, 2011.

Following the above, this article consists of four parts. First, I will briefly discuss the emergence of the "Shinto environmentalist paradigm" in recent years, as I believe this is crucial for understanding contemporary interpretations and adaptations of Shinto. The second part then provides a short historical overview of universalistic tendencies within Shinto, showing that although contemporary practices are innovative, they are not altogether unprecedented. Third, I will move on to describe some Shinto shrines outside Japan, and discuss their possible significance. In particular, I will look at San Marino Jinja, the Japanese Dutch Shinzen Foundation, and the Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America. The last section explores the topic of "worldwide *kami*": the emergence of networks of self-declared Shinto practitioners and other Shinto aficionados on the Internet. Thus, as mentioned, in this article the focus lies primarily on the spread of Shinto *outside* Japan. It should be pointed out that shrine Shinto *within* Japan has also undergone some significant transformations in recent years, which have been influenced by transnational connections and global trends as much as domestic issues, but a discussion of these is beyond the scope of the present text.[5]

2 The Shinto environmentalist paradigm

The question "what is Shinto" is notoriously difficult to answer. In *emic* discourse, it is commonly conceptualised as "Japan's indigenous worship tradition", supposedly going back to prehistorical times, during which it arose "spontaneously" in response to the physical environment of the Japanese isles.[6] The notion that Shinto is "indigenous" Japanese – in contrast to Buddhism, Confucianism and Christianity, which are perceived as "foreign", despite their long histories of acculturation and transformation in Japan – and predates the introduction of any "foreign" elements is persistent, despite the fact that it is historically problematic. As recent research has shown, Shinto is shaped by Buddhist and Daoist elements as much as by local traditions of *kami* worship.[7] Moreover, contrary to popular understanding, Shinto is not an ancient religion. Although some shrines go back to pre-Buddhist times, there was no such thing as a unified "Shinto" (conceptualized as a single tradition, differentiated from other ritual traditions both discursively and institutionally) until early modern times.[8] Despite such recent insights, however, the notion of continuity from prehistorical times to the present remains a central part of Shinto self-definitions and historical narratives, which typically assert the transhistorical and existential intertwinement of shrine worship, Japanese "traditional culture", and the physical environment of the Japanese archipelago.

Yet even among those who adhere to the notion of Shinto as the primordial indigenous worship tradition of Japan, there is significant disagreement concerning its core essence, purpose,

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[5] For a concise overview of recent trends and developments in Japanese shrine Shinto, see Aike P. Rots, "Shinto's Modern Transformations: From Imperial Cult to Nature Worship," in *Routledge Handbook of Religions in Asia*, ed. Bryan S. Turner and Oscar Salemink (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), 125–143. For a more elaborate, theoretically informed discussion of the impact of globalisation on Japanese religions (including but not limited to Shinto), see Ugo Dessì, *Japanese Religions and Globalization* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013).

[6] E.g. Ono, Shinto; Sonoda, *Dare demo no shintō*.

[7] E.g. Mark Teeuwen and Fabio Rambelli, eds., *Buddhas and Kami in Japan: Honji Suijaku as a Combinatory Paradigm* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003); Mark Teeuwen, "The Laŏzĭ and the emergence of Shintō at Ise," in *Daoism in Japan: Chinese Traditions and Their Influence on Japanese Religious Culture*, ed. Jeffrey L. Richey (Abingdon: Routledge), 103–126.

[8] Toshio Kuroda, "Shinto in the History of Japanese Religion," trans. James C. Dobbins and Suzanne Gay, *Journal of Japanese Studies* 7, no. 1 (1981): 1–21; John Breen and Mark Teeuwen, *A New History of Shinto* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

and defining features. As I have outlined elsewhere,[9] in the course of modern Japanese history, different paradigms have emerged according to which Shinto has been conceptualized. I have distinguished between the *imperial paradigm*, which goes back to the Meiji period and lingers today, and which stipulates that Shinto is a non-religious ritual tradition fundamentally concerned with the continuity of the divine imperial institution; the *ethnic paradigm*, which was the dominant conservative view in the post-war period, and which is based on a belief in the fundamental intertwinement between Shinto and the Japanese nation (as described in the introduction); the *local paradigm*, which draws on Romantic notions of nationhood as best preserved in rural "folk" traditions, and which is based on notions of Shinto as a tradition characterized by diverse local *matsuri*, myths and popular beliefs; the *universal paradigm*, which conceives of Shinto as a potential world religion (see below); and the *spiritual paradigm*, represented by a number of popular post-war public intellectuals with a strong nationalist orientation, who argue that the essence of Shinto lies in its unique Japanese spirituality.

Drawing on these earlier conceptualizations, as well as the global trend to associate religion with environmental issues,[10] a new paradigm emerged in the 1990s. I have referred to this as the "Shinto environmentalist paradigm".[11] Today, Shinto is increasingly conceptualized as, essentially, an ancient tradition of nature worship (sometimes referred to as "animistic"), supposedly grounded in an awareness of the interdependence between human and non-human beings, and a corresponding gratitude to nature. Proponents of this view often assert that Shinto offers valuable suggestions for human-nature coexistence, which provide solutions for the environmental problems of today. This view has been put forward by contemporary Shinto scholars such as Sonoda Minoru[12] and Ueda Masaaki,[13] and advocated by organizations such as the International Shinto Foundation[14] and Shasō Gakkai ("Sacred Forest Study Association").[15] Central to their discourse is the notion of *chinju no mori*: the sacred groves surrounding many shrines in Japan, which are said to be of ecological importance, and which have come to represent physical as well as cultural continuity between the present and the ancient past.[16] In recent years, the symbolic significance of these *chinju no mori* has come to be extended beyond environmental issues: the National Association of Shinto Shrines (Jinja Honchō) has embraced the notion, reframing it as a core symbol of Japanese community life and "harmony with nature".[17] Thus, although still

[9] Aike P. Rots, "Forests of the Gods: Shinto, Nature, and Sacred Space in Contemporary Japan." PhD diss., University of Oslo, 2013, 126–190; Rots, "Shinto's Modern Transformations."

[10] Poul Pedersen, "Nature, Religion and Cultural Identity: The Religious Environmentalist Paradigm," in *Asian Perceptions of Nature: A Critical Approach*, ed. Ole Bruun and Arne Kalland (Surrey: Curzon Press, 1995), 258–276; Arne Kalland, "Det religiøse miljøparadigmet og de Andre," *Norsk Antropologisk Tidsskrift* 19, no. 2–3 (2008): 94–107.

[11] Rots, *Forests of the Gods*; Aike P. Rots, "Sacred Forests, Sacred Nation: The Shinto Environmentalist Paradigm and the Rediscovery of Chinju no Mori," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 42, no. 2 (2015): 205–233.

[12] Sonoda, *Dare demo no shintō*; Minoru Sonoda, "Shinto and the Natural Environment," in *Shinto in History: Ways of the Kami*, ed. John Breen and Mark Teeuwen (Richmond: Curzon Press, 2000), 32–40.

[13] Masaaki Ueda, "Mori to Nihonjin no kokoro: Shizen to ningen no kyōsei no ba, chinju no mori no saisei e," *Culture, Energy and Life* 95 (2011): 3–8.

[14] International Shinto Foundation, ed., *The Kyoto Protocol, The Environment and Shinto: International Symposium Commemorating the Accreditation as NGO of the United Nations* (Tokyo: International Shinto Foundation, 2000).

[15] Masaaki Ueda and Atsushi Ueda, eds., *Chinju no mori wa yomigaeru: Shasōgaku koto hajime* (Kyoto: Shibunkaku shuppan, 2001).

[16] Rots, *Forests of the Gods*; Rots, "Sacred Forests, Sacred Nation."

[17] E.g. Tanaka, *Shintō no chikara*.

associated with conservative nationalist politics (and justifiably so),[18] Jinja Honchō has jumped on the environmental bandwagon: not only has it appropriated natural symbols and expressed an interest in nature conservation, it also collaborates with international organizations such as the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC).[19]

It should be pointed out, however, that the formation and popularization of the Shinto environmentalist paradigm has not been a solely Japanese affair. Japanese authors advocating notions of Shinto as a tradition concerned with the environment often draw on the work of Western authors such as Lynn White, Jr., who was one of the first to contribute environmental destruction to the Judeo-Christian world-view stipulating the domination of nature by man.[20] In addition, there are many English-language texts on Shinto that assert the fundamental intertwinement of Shinto and "nature", suggesting that Shinto offers useful ecological insights.[21] Such ideas have spread beyond academia, and are often found in popular texts and online media, as I will illustrate below.[22] As a result, the idea that Shinto is some sort of Japanese "nature spirituality" has become commonplace, perhaps even more so outside Japan than within the country.

In summary, the Shinto environmentalist paradigm has significantly altered understandings of Shinto, in Japan as well as internationally. Shinto has by no means lost its imperialist and nationalist elements, but it is no longer primarily associated with such ideologies. Despite the ongoing controversy surrounding Yasukuni Jinja,[23] it appears as if Shinto as a whole is increasingly associated with positive things such as respect for the environment, natural beauty, notions of "sacred nature" and so on. As we shall see, it is precisely this association that has facilitated the popularization of Shinto outside Japan – even though, paradoxically, the Shinto environmentalist paradigm is grounded in notions of sacred *Japanese* land,[24] rather than a universalistic understanding of nature as intrinsically sacred. Such nuances, however, are not necessarily understood by non-Japanese Shinto practitioners, who selectively adopt those elements from the tradition to

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[18] See Thierry Guthmann, *Shintô et politique dans le Japon contemporain* (Paris: Éditions L'Harmattan, 2010); Mark R. Mullins, "Secularization, Deprivatization, and the Reappearance of 'Public Religion' in Japanese Society," *Journal of Religion in Japan* 1 (2012): 61–82.

[19] Kōshitsu henshūbu, ed., *Chinju no mori ga sekai o sukuu* (Tokyo: Fusōsha, 2014); Rots, "Sacred Forests, Sacred Nation." The ARC defines itself as "a secular body that helps the major religions of the world to develop their own environmental programmes, based on their own core teachings, beliefs and practices" ("About ARC," accessed June 23, 2015, http://www.arcworld.org/about_ARC.asp). Among other things, Jinja Honchō has been involved with the establishment of a global, interreligious "Green Pilgrimage Network," which has been set up with the purpose of "helping pilgrim places and routes become cleaner and greener" ("Green Pilgrimage Network," accessed June 26, 2015, http://greenpilgrimage.net/).

[20] Lynn White, "The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis," *Science* 155, no. 3767 (1967): 1203–1207; cf. Ken'ichi Fujimura, "Nihon ni okeru kirisutokyō/bukkyō/shintō no shizenkan no hensen: Gendai no kankyō mondai to no kanren kara," *Rekishi chirigaku* 52–5, 252 (2010): 1–23.

[21] E.g. John Clammer, "Practical Spirituality and Engaged Shinto: Ecology, Peace and the Critique of Modernity in Reformed Japanese Religion," *3D: IBA Journal of Management & Leadership* 1, no. 2 (2010): 97–105; Thomas P. Kasulis, *Shinto: The Way Home* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004); Stuart D. B. Picken, *Shinto Meditations for Revering the Earth* (Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 2002); Motohisa Yamakage, "The Essence of Shinto: Japan's Spiritual Heart," eds. Paul de Leeuw and Aidan Rankin, trans. Mineko S. Gillespie, Gerald L. Gillespie and Komuro Yoshitsuge (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 2006).

[22] See for instance the (highly informative) blog *Green Shinto* by John Dougill, which is "dedicated to the promotion of an open, international and environmental Shinto" (John Dougill, "Green Shinto. About," *Green Shinto*, accessed June 24, 2015, http://www.greenshinto.com/wp/about/).

[23] See John Breen, ed., *Yasukuni, the War Dead and the Struggle for Japan's Past* (London: Hurst & Company, 2007).

[24] Rots, "Sacred Forests, Sacred Nation."

which they can personally relate. I will say more about this process of selective adaptation shortly; first, however, I will provide a brief historical overview of earlier attempts to globalize Shinto.

3 "Global Shinto": historical precedents

As pointed out previously, the notion that Shinto is Japan's "indigenous" worship tradition is problematic, if only because shrine practices have been influenced by continental elements throughout history. As a consequence, in modern Shinto, one can find traces of Buddhism, Daoism, Confucianism, Christianity and even Hinduism. Unlike Buddhism or Christianity, however, Shinto has never been a truly transnational religion: it has not spread widely, and it has not been adapted to different cultural contexts, at least not on a large scale. Nor has it ever evolved into a religion with large and prominent diaspora communities, such as Judaism or Hinduism. Nevertheless, as pointed out previously, there have been some attempts at universalizing Shinto and spreading it outside Japan. Roughly speaking, we can divide "global Shinto" into six different categories: overseas imperial Shinto (the establishment of imperial shrines outside Japan during the first half of the 20th century); diaspora Shinto (the construction of shrines by Japanese migrants abroad); "Shinto-derived new religions" establishing sites of worship abroad; non-Japanese actors establishing shrines outside the country; transnational networks of Shinto practitioners, communicating online and worshipping at home; and, last but not least, the "internationalization" of shrine Shinto inside Japan – as illustrated by increasing numbers of foreign visitors, international PR activities, the impact of transnational trends on Japanese practices, and even the emergence of non-Japanese shrine priests. Although this article is primarily concerned with categories four and five, I will briefly describe the first three in order to provide some historical context.

In the pre-war period, a significant number of shrines were built in overseas occupied areas, in particular Korea and Taiwan. Generally speaking, these were closely associated with imperial rule and ideology; i.e., with the ritual-ideological system conventionally known as "State Shinto".[25] According to historian Nakajima Michio, between the 1890s and 1945 a total of 1640 so-called "overseas shrines" (*kaigai jinja*) were built outside mainland Japan.[26] Most of these were in Korea (995), followed by Manchuria (243), Taiwan (184) and Sakhalin (128).[27] Although most *kaigai jinja* were intertwined with the imperial system, and constructed for performing the obligatory rituals associated with the imperial cult, there were also attempts to develop Shinto into a "world religion" by accommodating various non-Japanese ritual traditions. This, for example, was the intention of Shinto scholar and missionary Ogasawara Shōzō (1892–1970),[28] whose ideas on the universal applicability of Shinto world-views echoed contemporary notions of Japan's "civilizing mission". Nevertheless, after the war, Shinto virtually disappeared from Japan's former colonies; the vast majority of these shrines were either demolished or converted into temples for other deities. Today, there is hardly any Shinto presence left in either Taiwan or Korea.[29]

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[25] Shigeyoshi Murakami, *Kokka shintō* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1970).

[26] Michio Nakajima, "Shinto Deities that Crossed the Sea: Japan's 'Overseas Shrines', 1868–1945" *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 37, no. 1 (2010): 22.

[27] Ibid., 27–28.

[28] Kōji Suga, "A Concept of 'Overseas Shinto Shrines': A Pantheistic Attempt by Ogasawara Shōzō and Its Limitations" *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 37, no. 1 (2010): 47–74.

[29] Interestingly, however, in 2007 Kyodo News noticed a growing interest in Shinto weddings on the part of Taiwanese couples (Ella Lu, January 5, 2007, "Shinto weddings become attractive to Taiwan couples," *Kyodo News*, accessed June 23, 2015, http://keika.myweb.hinet.net/new_page_7.htm). Reportedly, a Taiwanese travel agency offered all-inclusive weddings at Japanese locations, including shrines. Judging from the article, those who chose

Not all *kaigai jinja* were built in the colonies, however. In the Meiji period (1868–1912), sizeable groups of migrants left Japan to settle in Hawaii, North America and South America. Several shrines were built in those areas, some of which are still used today. Hawaii, for instance, has a number of functioning shrines.[30] It has been argued that "Shinto in Hawaii requires consideration as a new American religion rather than as Japanese Shinto in diaspora",[31] but the fact remains that most of these shrine communities self-identify as Shinto. In any case, the boundaries between "Shinto" and "new religions" are blurred, not only in Hawaii but also in Brazil. Perhaps the most prominent shrine in this country, Hokkoku Dai Jingū (also known as Iwato Jinja), is officially a branch shrine of Ise Jingū; however, it also contains elements typical of Japanese new religions, including neo-shamanistic medium practices and other so-called "syncretistic" elements (e.g., subshrines devoted to popular Brazilian saints).[32] Considering the difficulty of establishing an authoritative definition of "Shinto" and the normativity inherent in any such attempt, I suggest that the primary criterion for classifying groups should be self-definition. Hence, in my opinion these shrines all deserve to be called "Shinto", if that is how they define themselves.

This is not necessarily the case for all Japanese new religious movements active overseas, despite the fact that some of them do retain elements of *kami* worship and are sometimes classified as "Shinto". Indeed, well-known groups such as Tenrikyō, Konkōkyō, Kurozumikyō and Ōmoto – all of which are active in missions abroad, to varying degrees – are (or were) classified as "Sect Shinto": Edo- or Meiji-period religious groups which incorporated elements of shrine worship, yet have never been involved with "State Shinto" or affiliated with Jinja Honchō.[33] In addition to these older movements, there are several new religions established in the post-war period which have also incorporated some elements of Shinto; hence, they are sometimes referred to by scholars as "Shinto-derived new religions" (*shintōkei shinshūkyō*).[34] Most of these belong to the "Ōmoto lineage": a diffuse group of post-war religions drawing upon the beliefs and practices of Ōmoto. Several of these groups claim to possess secret knowledge going back to ancient times, referred to as *koshintō* ("old Shinto"). They typically combine promises of spiritual salvation and millenarian regeneration with a variety of praying and healing practices, as well as social activism (e.g., development projects carried out in the global South), organic agriculture, investment in "traditional" Japanese arts, and outspoken opposition to organ transplantation. Examples include Sekai Kyūseikyō, Seichō no Ie, Ananaikyō and Worldmate. Whether or not all these movements should be categorized as "Shinto" may be subject to debate; in any case, there is a large, diffuse variety of organizations that, while being significantly different from "standard" shrines (but then, who decides the standard), lay claim to the "true" Shinto tradition as much as Jinja Honchō does. In summary, the boundaries of the category Shinto remain as unclear and contested as ever.

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to get married at a Shinto shrine did not associate it with the imperial past. I have not (yet) come across other reports of non-Japanese Asian couples getting married at Shinto shrines, however.

[30] Jakub Havlíček, "Kami Way Overseas: Shinto Shrines in the Hawaiian Island of O'ahu" (paper presented at the International Conference "Migration, Religion and Asia," Palacký University, Olomouc, November 27, 2014).

[31] Wilburn Hansen, "Examining Prewar Tōgō Worship in Hawaii: Toward Rethinking Hawaiian Shinto as a New Religion in America," *Nova Religio* 14, no. 1 (2010): 67.

[32] Peter B. Clarke, "Japanese New Religious Movements in Brazil: From Ethnic to 'Universal' Religions," in *New Religious Movements: Challenge and Response*, ed. Bryan Wilson and Jamie Cresswell (London: Routledge, 1999): 205–206.

[33] For a discussion of the formation of the category "Sect Shinto," see Nobutaka Inoue, "The Formation of Sect Shintō in Modernizing Japan," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 29, no. 3–4 (2002): 405–427.

[34] Nobutaka Inoue, "Shinto-Derived Religions," *Encyclopedia of Shinto*, accessed June 24, 2015, http://eos.kokugakuin.ac.jp/modules/xwords/entry.php?entryID=354.

It is precisely in these "borderlands" of Shinto, among these religious movements, that the universal paradigm has been at its most pronounced. Already in the pre-war period, some of them established overseas mission activities and founded shrines. "Sect Shinto" movement Izumo Ōyashirokyō, for instance, founded a shrine and mission organization in Hawaii in 1906. Religions such as Tenrikyō, Konkōkyō, Ōmoto, Seichō no Ie and Sekai Kyūseikyō have all employed foreign mission activities. The latter two groups are well-known for having attracted significant numbers of followers in Brazil; others have been active in Europe, the US, Australia, Southeast Asia and Africa, with varying degrees of success.[35] Significantly, some of them have also been active in disseminating knowledge about Shinto abroad. The International Shinto Foundation, for instance, was founded and financed by Fukami Tōshū, leader of the "Shinto-derived new religion" Worldmate.[36] Among its various activities, this organisation has sponsored international conferences, Shinto essay contests, and an academic chair in Shinto studies. Significantly, it has also actively promoted the image of Shinto as a religion with a strong environmental orientation.[37]

4 San Marino Jinja

As we have seen, the vast majority of pre-war shrines constructed in the Asia-Pacific region and the Americas were founded by Japanese people (colonial administrators, migrants and/or missionaries). Likewise, most shrines in Hawaii and Brazil cater to the descendants of Japanese migrants, even though a handful of non-Japanese may occasionally visit the shrine and take part in rituals.[38] There are also shrines founded by non-Japanese people, however. Few in number though they are, they have drawn the attention of Shinto practitioners and aficionados worldwide, and may well have set a precedent that will be followed by others. Not counting ordinary *kamidana* house altars (which no doubt have found their way to many different countries), I have come across reports of Shinto shrines established in France, San Marino, the Netherlands, the US and Canada.[39] The shrine in France, Wako Jinja, is fairly small, consisting of a *hokora* (a miniature shrine) and a wooden *torii* (shrine gate). It is associated with a Shingon Buddhist temple named Kōmyō-in near the city of Auxerre (Bourgogne), and was donated by Mizuya Jinja, a shrine in Matsusaka (Mie prefecture). The shrine is dedicated to the sun goddess Amaterasu, who is seen by Shingon Buddhists as an incarnation of the cosmic Buddha Mahāvairocana (J. Dainichi Nyōrai).[40] Thus, this is an interesting and rare case of *shinbutsu shūgō* (Shinto-Buddhist combinatory beliefs and practices) that has been transplanted into a European country.

The Shinto shrine in San Marino, San Marino Jinja, is slightly bigger. It consists of a small wooden shrine building placed on a large stone, inside which is the jewel that serves as *shintai* ("divine body": the physical object seen as manifestation of the *kami*).[41] The shrine is surrounded by a large *torii* gate, stone lanterns, and cherry trees, and was inaugurated in the spring of 2014. Like other Shinto shrines, it appears to have a ritual function, reportedly offering Shinto wed-

[35] Peter B. Clarke, ed., *Japanese New Religions in Global Perspective* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 2000).
[36] Inken Prohl, *Religiöse Innovationen: Die Shintō-Organisation World Mate in Japan* (Berlin: Reimer, 2006).
[37] International Shinto Foundation, *The Kyoto Protocol*.
[38] Havlíček, "Kami Way Overseas"; Clarke, "Japanese New Religious Movements in Brazil."
[39] Cf. the list of shrines on the blog *Green Shinto* (John Dougill, "List of shrines outside Japan," *Green Shinto*, accessed June 24, 2015, http://www.greenshinto.com/wp/2011/07/18/list-of-shrines-outside-japan/).
[40] "Association Shingon de France," accessed June 24, 2015, http://komyoin.free.fr/komyo-site/shintoindex.htm.
[41] For a description of the jewel, see "Especially for the construction of San Marino Shrine," accessed June 24, 2015, http://www.sanmarinojinja.com/EN/images/gioiello_shinto.pdf.

dings.[42] In addition, it also serves as a memorial monument for the victims of the earthquake and tsunami that hit the Tōhoku region in 2011.[43] San Marino Jinja is served by shrine priest Francesco Brigante, a former hotel manager who apparently has been approved by Jinja Honchō.[44] Not surprisingly, Brigante describes Shinto as an ecological tradition, whose way of thinking has to be "exported" outside Japan.[45]

In local media, San Marino Jinja has been described as "the first Shinto shrine in Europe",[46] which is not technically correct since there has been a shrine in Amsterdam for many years (see below). In contrast to the Dutch shrine, however, San Marino Jinja is officially sanctioned by Jinja Honchō – an indication of the latter organisation's increasing international orientation, but also of the shrine's conservative profile. Significantly, one of the main people involved with the project of constructing the shrine is Kase Hideaki, founder of the Japan-San Marino Friendship Society (Associazione di Amicizia Nippo-Sammarinese), which goes back to 2001 and counts over 1000 members today.[47] The website of San Marino Jinja contains a short essay by Kase, in which he argues that "Shinto is the world's new religion of ecology"[48] – thus, Kase is clearly aware of the legitimacy provided by the Shinto environmentalist paradigm. However, he is also one of the most outspoken right-wing intellectuals in contemporary Japan: a prominent member of the ultra-nationalist organization Nippon Kaigi as well as chairman of the "Society for the Dissemination of Historical Fact", he has spent his entire career denying the historical reality of Japanese war crimes such as the Nanking Massacre, and supporting the production of historical revisionist films.

Apparently, this did not deter the San Marinese authorities from allowing and supporting the construction of a shrine in San Marino by this organization. Quite the contrary: the ambassador of San Marino to Japan, Manlio Cadelo, has long been interested in Japan and its culture, and has been one of the driving forces behind the establishment of the shrine (not surprisingly, he is also a personal friend of Brigante). The fact that San Marino Jinja has been sanctioned by conservative circles in Japan – the first foreign shrine to have been granted that honor since the end of World War II, apparently – is illustrated by the fact that the inauguration ceremony was attended by the mothers of both Prime Minister Abe Shinzō (a proud member of Nippon Kaigi, who is actively trying to amend the post-war democratic Constitution) and Jinja Honchō president Tanaka Tsunekiyo, in addition to many members of the Japan-San Marino Friendship Society.[49]

There are still many questions about this shrine that have to be answered in order to get a complete picture of its history, political involvement, and ritual practices. Why is it, for instance, that Jinja Honchō has chosen to approve this shrine, contrary to other shrines abroad – even allowing a foreign shrine priest to conduct rituals, despite the fact that he (presumably) has not

[42] "San Marino: inaugurato il primo tempio shintoista d'Europa," accessed June 24, 2015, http://www.smtvsanmarino.sm/video/attualita/san-marino-inaugurato-primo-tempio-shintoista-europa-22-06-2014.

[43] See "Japan – San Marino friendship society, Associazione di Amicizia Nippo-Sammarinese," accessed June 24, 2015, http://www.sanmarinofixing.com/smfixing/san-marino/15655-japan-san-marino-friendship-society-associazione-di-amicizia-nippo-sammarinese.html.

[44] I have not yet been able to find out what sort of training Brigante has received, and what sort of rituals he conducts at the shrine. This will be subject to further research conducted at the shrine itself, including personal interviews with the priest and other actors involved.

[45] "Francesco Brigante, First Shinto Priest in San Marino," accessed June 24, 2015 http://www.ubraintv.com/watch.php?id=910.

[46] E.g. "San Marino: inaugurato il primo tempio shintoista d'Europa."

[47] See "Japan – San Marino friendship society."

[48] See "Shintō is the Wolrd's New Religion of Ecology," accessed June 24, 2015, http://www.sanmarinojinja.com/EN/Testo_Hideaki_Kase_en.pdf.

[49] "San Marino: inaugurato il primo tempio shintoista d'Europa."

followed the official Jinja Honchō-approved study programme for shrine priests at one of the two Japanese Shinto universities? Who are the people worshipping at the shrine: local people interested in Shinto, Japanese tourists, or nobody at all? What exactly is the involvement of the historical revisionist Kase, and why is it that nationalist ideologues associated with Nippon Kaigi suddenly have become interested in promoting the image of "ecological Shinto" internationally? These are all questions that will hopefully be addressed in a future study. For now, let me point out that the significance of San Marino Jinja lies not primarily in the fact that it is located outside Japan – as we have seen, this is not unprecedented – but that it is the first foreign shrine since 1945 that has received the blessing (no pun intended) of the conservative shrine establishment. Until recently, Jinja Honchō was not interested in advocating Shinto internationally, let alone endorsing the construction of a shrine in Europe; in this respect, it has changed completely.

5 A Dutch *kami*

In contrast to San Marino Jinja, Jinja Honchō most certainly has not supported or endorsed the Japanese Dutch Shinzen Foundation, a Shinto organisation and shrine located in Amsterdam. Founded as early as 1981, the Japanese Dutch Shinzen Foundation defines itself as "the home of Shinto in Europe", offering "practical wisdom for the modern world".[50] It is run by Paul de Leeuw, a former actor who received his religious training at the Yamakage Shinto centre in Aichi prefecture, where he was inaugurated as the first non-Japanese Yamakage priest. Yamakage Shinto is considered by scholars as one of the so-called "Shinto-derived new religions",[51] but it claims to possess esoteric *koshintō* knowledge said to have been transmitted orally since ancient times. Indeed, as Paul de Leeuw confirmed,[52] Yamakage believes that in medieval times its priests served as secret advisors to the Emperor, a position they lost in modern times as a result of the political machinations resulting in the construction of "State Shinto". There are no historical sources suggesting that Yamakage priests were indeed imperial advisors – but then, the argument goes, they were "secret", so no sources could have mentioned them. In any case, small though the group is (it reportedly has a membership of 9,300)[53] it has gained some wider recognition, mainly because of the work of the former leader, Yamakage Motohisa, who was a prolific writer.

Yamakage is also known outside Japan, thanks to the fact that his best-known book, *Shintō no Shinpi* ("The Mysteries of Shinto"), has been adapted and translated into four languages, including English.[54] Reportedly, it has also been translated into Portuguese, French and Arabic.[55] The English version is entitled *The Essence of Shinto*, and was published partly thanks to Paul de Leeuw's efforts.[56] Interestingly, if you go to Amazon.com and search for a book on "Shinto", this is the second title on the list. The book contains general information on shrine practices and *kami*, but also esoteric spiritual theories and a treatise on spirit healing, which have little to do with common shrine practices. More problematic is Yamakage's conviction that there is a large

[50] "Japanese Dutch Shinzen Foundation," accessed June 24, 2015, http://www.shinto.nl.

[51] Hirofumi Tsushiro, "Yamakage Shinto," *Encyclopedia of Shinto*, accessed June 24, 2015, http://eos.kokugakuin.ac.jp/modules/xwords/entry.php?entryID=686.

[52] Paul de Leeuw, interview by Aike P. Rots, Amsterdam, September 12, 2014.

[53] Tsushiro, "Yamakage Shinto."

[54] Yamakage, "The Essence of Shinto."

[55] Paul de Leeuw, "Japanese Dutch Shinzen Foundation electronic newsletter" (e-mail newsletter), June 2015.

[56] Yamakage, "The Essence of Shinto."

Jewish conspiracy for world domination, as outlined in his anti-Semitic writings[57] – perhaps unsurprisingly, those ideas have not been translated in English. When I asked Paul de Leeuw about this aspect of Yamakage Motohisa's thought, he answered that he did not approve of it, but that this was Yamakage's "personal opinion", completely independent from his knowledge of spiritual matters. Still, the association of Yamakage with anti-Semitism reportedly was one of the reasons why De Leeuw initially did not refer to his own centre by that name. Now that Yamakage Motohisa has passed away, however, it has been renamed Holland Yamakage Shinto Shrine.[58]

Not surprisingly, considering the global appeal of the Shinto environmentalist paradigm, Yamakage's work also asserts the relevance of Shinto for environmental issues. Thus, he suggests that the

> practical task of responding to the ecological crisis is given an ethical underpinning by Shinto, which from ancient times has seen it as the principal duty of human beings to care for and preserve their environment – to live within nature rather than attempting to dominate or destroy it. (…) From earliest times, Japan has endeavoured to preserve and nurture its abundant forests. Yet at times of upheaval and change, the forests have been damaged recklessly. Whenever this has happened, Shinto leaders have been at the forefront of campaigns to restore the forests, recognizing that they are the lungs of the nation and indeed the world.[59]

Whether or not Shinto leaders have always been "at the forefront of campaigns" to save and restore forests is questionable. Japan has experienced periods of large-scale deforestation – including, significantly, at Ise, the "sacred heart" of the nation supposedly characterized by a unique nature-cultural equilibrium but in fact characterized by centuries of resource depletion due to mass pilgrimages, logging for shrine buildings, and poor forest management.[60] Thus, some historians have nuanced the image of Shinto as a religion concerned with nature preservation, showing that shrines have historically been concerned with political power, with attracting paying visitors, and with controlling access to natural resources, at least as much as with preserving trees.[61] Nevertheless, whether historically accurate or not, arguments such as the one above have no doubt contributed to the gradual popularization of Shinto outside Japan.

Paul de Leeuw refers to himself as *kannushi*, a Japanese term used for Shinto priests in general. He is regularly hired by Japanese companies and other Japanese organizations in Europe to perform Shinto-style purification ceremonies. For instance, in the autumn of 2014 he officiated in a tree-planting ceremony at a British boarding school, organized by a Japanese former student. He also takes part in various Japanese cultural events, in the Netherlands as well as elsewhere in Western Europe. In addition, De Leeuw regularly conducts seasonal rituals such as *hatsumōde* (New Year ceremony), spring and summer ceremonies and so on. These take place either at a special location (e.g., the Okura Hotel in Amsterdam) or at his shrine: a *dōjō*-type room with a Shinto altar, located in a house in a residential area in Amsterdam. A significant proportion of the people attending these events are Japanese expats, but there are also some non-Japanese participants.

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[57] Motohisa Yamakage, *Yudaya no sekai shihai senryoku: Miezaru sekai seifu no kyōi* (Tokyo: Manejimento sha: 1985).

[58] Paul de Leeuw.

[59] Yamakage, "The Essence of Shinto," 14.

[60] Rots, *Forests of the Gods*, 329–351.

[61] Gaudenz Domenig, "Sacred groves in modern Japan: Notes on the variety and history of Shintō shrine forests," *Asiatische Studien: Zeitschrift der Schweizerischen Asiengesellschaft* 51 (1997): 91–121; Fabio Rambelli, *Buddhist Materiality: A Cultural History of Objects in Japanese Buddhism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 129–171.

Furthermore, in contrast to ordinary Japanese shrine priests, De Leeuw also offers courses on "Shinto practice": spiritual exercises involving meditation and breathing techniques, which are said to contribute to an "enhanced awareness of nature".[62] Reportedly, these courses mainly attract non-Japanese people. Thus, De Leeuw is a priest who not only conducts rituals, but also sees it as his mission to teach and disseminate spiritual knowledge. Not surprisingly, then, he expresses a strong interest in spiritual matters. For instance, he told me the story of how he found the location of the *kami* of Holland (reportedly, there is only one), something which he could feel intuitively.[63] He has asked me not to disclose the location, however, as he does not want too many people to visit the place. Similarly, although certainly interested in sharing his ideas on Shinto and attracting more participants, De Leeuw was somewhat reluctant when I asked him whether he would want Shinto to spread widely internationally. The most important thing, according to him, is that people find spiritual harmony within themselves, as well as harmony with nature – more than, say, growing numbers of Shinto believers. Thus, although he wants to share information and spiritual skills, he does not seem very eager to proselytize. As a result, his organization remains small, and he does not have many "followers" in the conventional sense of the word.

6 Shinto and Mother Nature

Perhaps the best-known Shinto shrine outside Japan is the Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America, located in Granite Falls, Washington. It is a branch shrine of Tsubaki Ōkami Yashiro in Suzuka (Mie prefecture), and devoted to the same deities, Sarutahiko-no-Ōkami and his spouse Ame-no-Uzume-no-Mikoto. In addition, several other *kami* are enshrined here, including the popular deity Inari, the protector deity of North America, and the founder-turned-*kami* of aikido, who was deified and enshrined at Tsubaki Ōkami Yashiro after his death.[64] Correspondingly, judging from the website and Facebook site, the Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America is particularly popular among aikido practitioners.[65] The first Tsubaki shrine in the US was built in Stockton, California, in 1986; the shrine in Washington was built in 1992 by the current head priest, Lawrence Koichi Barrish, who called it Kannagara Jinja. Following the donation of a large piece of land, the two shrines reportedly merged in 2001, after which the shrine in Washington came to be known as Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America.[66] Today, the shrine offers private purification rituals, coming-of-age ceremonies, wedding services and other ceremonies typical of Japanese shrine Shinto. In addition, it also offers various spiritual training programmes involving *misogi* and aikido.

As with the shrines in San Marino and Amsterdam, nature and ecology play a central part in the self-definition of the Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America, perhaps even more strongly. For instance, the website states that:

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[62] De Leeuw, "Japanese Dutch Shinzen Foundation electronic newsletter."

[63] Paul de Leeuw.

[64] "Questions and Answers," *Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America*, accessed June 25, 2015, http://www.tsubakishrine.org/qanda/index.html.

[65] Aikido is a Japanese martial art with strong spiritual elements, founded by Ueshiba Morihei (1883–1969), a follower of the "Shinto-derived new religion" Ōmoto. See "Tsubaki Kannagara Aikido," *Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America*, accessed June 25, 2015, http://www.tsubakishrine.org/aikido/index.html; "SHINTO/Tsubaki America Grand Shrine," accessed June 25, 2015, https://www.facebook.com/groups/TsubakiShintoShrine/?fref=ts.

[66] "Shrine History," *Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America*, accessed June 25, 2015, http://www.tsubakishrine.org/history/index.html.

> Shinto emerged and developed spontaneously as an expression of the deep intuitive connection with Divine Nature enjoyed by human beings in ancient Japan. Shinto as *natural spirituality* is based on this harmonious primal relationship with the 'infinite restless movement of Great Nature', rather than on the written or revealed teachings of human beings. Realizing that each single component within Nature possesses Divine Spirit giving us joy and benefit, we renew our close ties to Mother Nature and pray for renewal and refreshed life. (…) Shinto is simple, bright and sincere and is the practice of the philosophy of proceeding in harmony with and gratitude to Divine Nature.[67]

Clearly, such descriptions of Shinto as a way to "renew our close ties to Mother Nature" resemble contemporary neo-pagan ideas, deep ecology and other "nature spiritualities" more than, say, classical Japanese reflections upon the role of *kami*.[68] When formulated in such terms, it is not difficult to see why some non-Japanese are attracted to it, especially those who feel disillusioned with some aspects of Western culture and are looking for alternative world-views based on notions of nature as divine and enchanted. It should be pointed out, moreover, that the Tsubaki Grand Shrine is not only a *physical* location, visited by local people who are interested in Shinto and/or aikido; it also has a significant online presence. In particular, its Facebook group has turned into a prime tool for communication between Koichi Barrish and his followers, in the region as well as elsewhere (at the time of writing, it had as many as 3,684 members). In addition to announcements of ritual ceremonies taking place at the shrine, the Facebook site contains pictures, reflections upon "Divine Nature", and practical tips for worshipping *kami* at home altars.[69] Thus, it arguably has contributed to the spread of Shinto outside Japan, if only because it confirms the recently popular notions that Shinto worship can be carried out anywhere, not only at shrines, and that nature is divine, not only in Japan.

Finally, before moving on to discuss the proliferation of Shinto in cyberspace in more detail, let me briefly mention the shrine in Canada. Until a few years ago, there was a shrine in British Columbia known as Kinomori Jinja (part of Bright Woods Spiritual Centre), which was affiliated with the Tsubaki shrines in Japan and the US.[70] The shrine was led by Ann Llewellyn Evans, a female priest who has published a book containing English-language Shinto prayers (*norito*) (2001),[71] which is quite popular among Anglo-Saxon Shinto practitioners. Its website is no longer updated, however, and judging from the little information that is available online, it appears as if the shrine no longer exists. But the full story of Kinomori Jinja – its founding and, possibly, decline – remains to be told some other time.

7 Worldwide *kami*

In the last part of this article, I will discuss another recent development: the emergence of online networks of people interested in Shinto and *kami*, some of whom self-identify as Shinto practitioners. Before exploring this topic, let me point out that this trend is very recent indeed, dating from the last couple of years. It remains to be seen whether the practices and beliefs described by the people involved with these groups will materialize into some sort of larger transnational religious movement, or whether they will remain individual affairs. I should emphasise that the online research I have conducted so far is by no means conclusive, and has not yet been combined

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[67] "Questions and Answers." My emphasis.

[68] Cf. Bron Taylor, *Dark Green Religion: Nature Spirituality and the Planetary Future* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).

[69] "SHINTO/Tsubaki America Grand Shrine."

[70] "Bright Woods Spiritual Centre," accessed June 25, 2015, http://www.brightwoods.org/.

[71] Ann Llewellyn Evans, *Shinto Norito: A Book of Prayers* (Victoria: Trafford Publishing, 2001).

with interviews or offline ethnographic research. But then, online networks constitute social environments that are arguably worth investigating ethnographically in their own right, as long as we bear in mind that people active on social media always have multiple identities (online as well as offline) and share information selectively, in ways that may be different from other social settings involving different ways of communication.[72] While recognizing these limitations of virtual ethnography, online networks may still be considered interesting and relevant social fields, especially because they bring together people with similar interests who live in different parts of the world, thus offering new opportunities for transnational communication and cultural hybridization.[73]

As mentioned above, Koichi Barrish is very active on social media, regularly posting on the Facebook page of the Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America. Without exception, his posts receive many "likes" and comments, nearly all of which are positive. Thus, the page is informative, but there is not much space for discussion or disagreement.[74] By contrast, two other English-language Facebook groups have been set up for discussing Shinto belief and practice. These have a more open character, providing space for various people interested in Shinto to ask questions, share experiences, and discuss personal interpretations. The first of these is called "Shinto, Religion of the Forest" and has 1,292 members.[75] Not all of these are practitioners, of course: among the members, there is undoubtedly a large number of people who may be interested in Shinto without actually worshipping *kami*, and who do not actively participate in online conversations. Nevertheless, having followed this group for quite some time, it appears that the number of people who occasionally ask questions and post links is quite large, even if there is a small core group of "regulars" who answer most of the questions.

Although many group members are interested in Shinto without actively practicing it, a sizeable proportion of those involved with the group do appear to have a *kamidana* (Shinto home altar), purchased either in Japan or online (or, in some cases, home-made), where they make offerings and recite *norito*. Accordingly, several conversations in the group concern the proper use of *kamidana*: what sort of spiritual objects can one place there (e.g., are Shinto practitioners allowed to place a Buddha statue on their altar and worship it – opinions differ, but the general attitude is one of tolerance towards this sort of combinatory worship), what sort of offerings can one make, when does one open or close the little doors, what sort of prayers does one recite in a particular situation, how does one choose which *kami* to worship, and so on. Those answering the questions are group members as well; typically those who have more experience with Shinto (or present themselves as such). In addition, some people post pictures of their *kamidana*, which range from the typical wooden altars found at Japanese homes to elaborate idiosyncratic constructions, in some cases including non-Shinto objects ranging from Buddha statues to neo-pagan objects, personal items and *manga* pictures.

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[72] John Postill and Sarah Pink, "Social Media Ethnography: The Digital Researcher in a Messy Web," *Media International Australia* 145 (2012): 123–134.

[73] It should be pointed out that these groups are not anonymous. The first one I will discuss is a closed group, the second one is public, but this difference does not seem to affect the contents much. In both cases, people share their questions, ideas and pictures with strangers whom they have never met, based on the assumption that other group members have a similar interest in Shinto. Since Facebook encourages its users to use their real names, many of the members in these groups do so, even though some may use a pseudonym. For reasons of anonymity, therefore, this article only contains general observations; I will not discuss any individual members or comments.

[74] Cf. "SHINTO/Tsubaki America Grand Shrine."

[75] "Shinto, Religion of the Forest," accessed June 25, 2015, https://www.facebook.com/groups/224216070927645/?fref=ts.

Judging from the online conversations, not all members have a *kamidana*, however. Some argue that it is not necessary to have an altar in order to live in accordance with Shinto principles. Others express an interest in Shinto without self-identifying as a practitioner. Some members ask for information about offline Shinto groups in the area where they live, in order to study and practice the tradition together with others; in some cases, they set up such groups themselves. Many others simply use the Facebook group as a place where they can share their travel photos or blogposts on Japan, or ask basic questions about Shinto ("what are *tengu*", "how does Shinto relate to Shugendō", etc.). Thus, the group is used differently by different members: to some, it is a meeting place where one can get in touch with other non-Japanese who want to worship *kami* in their own lives, while for others it is more a convenient source of information. But then, as Shinto is not a membership-based religion (with the exception of some new religious movements), the boundaries between active practitioners and people who are merely "interested" in the tradition are not usually clear anyway.

In any case, this group appears quite egalitarian in the sense that any member can post and comment, regardless of their reasons for joining, which are quite diverse. While some members may silently disapprove of the eclectic practices of others, there are remarkably few comments of a dogmatic nature, and few people deny others the right to incorporate Shinto practices into their individual hybrid spirituality. Overall, the consensus seems to be that "Shinto is a religion without doctrine", and, hence, nobody has the authority to tell others what to do. There are hardly any priests active in the group (indeed, few Japanese people in general); although a handful of them have joined this group, they keep a fairly low profile.[76]

In summary, "Shinto, Religion of the Forest" is a very active Facebook group, bringing together a wide variety of people. Some of these actively practice Shinto, while others are merely interested in learning more about the tradition. The group is not affiliated with a particular religious organization (although some individual members are), and there is little missionary zeal among the members. Whereas some group members may eventually meet offline (e.g., to set up a Shinto study and prayer group), the main purpose of the group is the online exchange of information. As such, it is quite different from another active English-language Facebook group, even though many of the discussion topics are similar. This group is called "Inari Faith International" (*Inari shinkō kokusai kyōkai*). It is described as "a group for devotees of Inari Ōkami around the world. (…) [Its aim is] to bring about greater accessibility to the Inari tradition through education, community among fellow devotees, and support of Inari shrines internationally".[77]

Inari Faith International was set up in April 2014 by Gary Cox, a young American with a strong personal interest in Shinto, especially Inari worship. It currently has 273 members. As the name suggests, its main focus is the *kami* Inari: a popular androgynous deity going back to at least the 8th century,[78] who is probably a combination of several older deities, historically associated with the rice harvest and, in recent times, with success in business. Inari shrines in Japan are easily recognizable because they tend to have tunnels made up of red *torii* gates, and are usually flanked by statues of foxes, which are believed to be the god's messengers. Contrary to more official types of Shinto practice, Inari worship is diverse and idiosyncratic, ranging from

[76] The same, incidentally, applies to more academically inclined group members (including myself) – they do not typically interfere with or challenge other members' interpretations of Shinto, even if these do not always correspond to accounts of a more scholarly nature.

[77] "Inari Faith International," accessed June 25, 2015, https://www.facebook.com/groups/inarifaith/?fref=ts.

[78] Karen A. Smyers, *The Fox and the Jewel: Shared and Private Meanings in Contemporary Japanese Inari Worship* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1998), 1.

corporate ritual ceremonies to mediumship practices.[79] Significantly, the Inari shrines constitute the largest group of shrines not affiliated with Jinja Honchō.

In contrast to "Shinto, Religion of the Forest", the Inari Faith International Facebook group is not only an online environment where people interested in Shinto and nature worship can meet and exchange ideas. It is also a tool to spread Inari worship internationally, which should eventually lead to the establishment of various shrines devoted to this deity worldwide. As Cox explained to John Dougill, the author of the *Green Shinto* blog:

> It is our hope that Inari faith may continue to grow and become more recognized around the world. Just as Shinto as a whole is growing steadily internationally, it would be great to see Inari Ōkami sparking interest in individuals even outside of Japan. (…) I believe it's important that Shinto as a whole, not just Inari faith, develop around the world together. In this way, the whole, rich and diverse spirituality of Shinto, and the balance of *Daishizen* (Great Nature) as a whole, can be preserved and shared all over. So it would be wonderful to see a proliferation of international Inari shrines in 50 years' time. But truthfully, I think the wider hope should be to see Shinto shrines of all kinds, with healthy communities of believers (*shinja*), helping each other to develop their faith and to live in harmony with nature.[80]

Thus, although Inari Faith International has started as a transnational online community, it has been established with the intention to facilitate the construction of Inari shrines not only in cyberspace but also in the physical world, which is seen as part of the global spread of Shinto. For the time being, the construction of a complete shrine is not yet feasible; accordingly, initial fundraising activities have been concerned with raising money for the construction of a second *torii* gate at the small Inari shrine located on the complex of the Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America (following the example of Inari shrines in Japan, which are known for their long tunnels of red *torii*, donated by corporate and private sponsors).

Meanwhile, in the Facebook group similar topics are discussed as in the "Shinto, Religion of the Forest" group, but with a more outspoken focus on Inari. The practices discussed appear slightly less eclectic, even if they also constitute personal attempts at adopting and adapting Japanese practices in ways that would not necessarily be approved by Japanese shrine authorities. Thus, members ask each other how to set up private shrines or altars, where to purchase Inari *o-fuda* (amulets), what sort of *norito* to recite, what kind of flowers to offer to Inari, and so on. These questions are answered by fellow group members – not only by Cox, but also by a handful of other group members who are knowledgeable about the deity. While stating clearly that they are not authorities themselves, they guide newly converted Inari worshippers by sharing their own opinions and interpretations.

In addition to practical questions concerned with setting up personal worship places and conducting rituals, there are also some questions of a more spiritual nature, for instance concerning personal experiences of the *kami*'s divine presence. However, there are perhaps not as many posts on such topics as one would expect in a group that has "faith" in its title. In fact, the majority of posts in the group are pictures and videos of Inari shrines in Japan, fox statues, *matsuri* and so on. Interestingly, there have also been some posts recently concerning the proposed repeal of the fox hunting ban in the UK – as foxes are considered sacred animals associated with Inari, it is perhaps not very surprising that some group members actively oppose such a repeal. Other than that, however, topics of a political nature are not normally discussed, neither here nor in the other two Shinto Facebook groups.

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[79] Ibid.

[80] John Dougill, May 27, 2014, "International Inari," *Green Shinto*, accessed June 25, 2015, http://www.green-shinto.com/wp/2014/05/27/international-inari/.

8 Conclusion

Judging from the posts in these groups, one could easily get the impression that Shinto is a religion deeply connected with nature, yet utterly detached from politics and ideology – the post on the fox hunting ban in the UK constitutes a rare exception to this rule. The lack of political debate is perhaps understandable, as such discussions do not typically contribute to mutual respect and a positive atmosphere, especially in an online environment where people engage in conversation with strangers whom they have never met. But it is also remarkable, given the attention paid to issues such as the Yasukuni Jinja controversy in global media – in these online groups, by contrast, Yasukuni is barely mentioned at all. It is of course possible that posts on controversial topics are deleted by the moderators, but I have no evidence of this. The alternative explanation is that members of these groups simply are not interested in discussing such issues, as they do not correspond to their personal understandings of what "Shinto" is (or should be).

In any case, considering the increasing involvement of conservative Shinto lobby organizations in Japanese politics,[81] images of Shinto as an apolitical nature religion are arguably misleading. It is likely, however, that the popularization of Shinto outside Japan – as illustrated by the conversations in these online communities – has been made possible by exactly this: the successful discursive depoliticization of Shinto in recent years. Through the association with "divine nature", in the minds of many (at least in the West) Shinto has come to be detached from the issues with which it was previously associated: the imperial family, wartime revisionism, and nationalism. Thus, the Shinto environmentalist paradigm clearly has contributed to the increasing popularization of Shinto outside Japan, limited in scope though this may be.

As mentioned in the introduction, there are four factors which have contributed to Shinto's recent international popularization: the proliferation of the Shinto environmentalist paradigm, Shinto's discursive depoliticization, the spread of social media, and the international popularity of Japanese consumer culture. I have addressed the first three topics, but I have not discussed the fourth topic in detail. It is worth mentioning that there are some indications that many of those who become interested in Shinto are introduced to Japanese culture by means of *manga* and *anime*, which often contain pseudo-religious elements.[82] The best-known of these are of course the films of Miyazaki Hayao (*My Neighbor Totoro*, *Spirited Away* and so on), but there are many others. Whether or not such fictional texts classify as "Shinto" or not may be subject to debate; in any case, they do appear to have contributed to an interest in "traditional" Japanese spirituality on the part of groups of young Western fans. To what extent young Shinto practitioners such as those active in the Facebook groups discussed in this article have become interested in Shinto as a result of such popular media texts will be the subject of future offline research (both qualitative and quantitative). This is certainly a hypothesis that deserves to be investigated further.

Many of the developments discussed in this article are very recent, and subject to change. It is hard to predict what will happen to some of the initiatives I have discussed. Will the emergence of online communities consisting of individual Shinto worshippers (and others interested in the tradition) lead to the establishment of more offline Shinto communities and shrines outside Japan, or will they remain restricted to cyberspace? Will Jinja Honchō support the construction of more shrines on foreign soil, as it has done in San Marino, or was this a one-time occurrence? As illustrated by the case of the Canadian shrine, not all initiatives to spread Shinto internationally are successful – in many cases, they depend upon the work of a single individual.

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[81] Guthmann, Shintô et politique; Mullins, "Secularization, Deprivatization."

[82] See Jolyon Baraka Thomas, *Drawing on Tradition: Manga, Anime, and Religion in Contemporary Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2012).

Of course, setting up a shrine is no easy task, and fundraising is a perpetual challenge even for shrines that are fairly well established, such as those in the US and the Netherlands. How can a shrine assure a regular income if it does not have members, in a country where people are not used to paying a significant amount of money for, say, a car purification ceremony? And, more fundamentally, how do you attract paying visitors to a shrine that is part of a religious tradition unknown to them?

Considering these difficulties, it remains to be seen whether many new Shinto shrines will be built outside Japan in the near future. That does not mean, however, that the tradition is not achieving popularity outside Japan. Although small in number compared to other Asian religions, there is a growing, active group of individuals who engage in individual acts of *kami* worship, and whose main congregation hall is the Internet. Thus far, there appears to have been little interaction between them and their Japanese peers – partly because of the language barrier – and their practices are not approved or supported by Japanese Shintoists. Indeed, when asked for their opinion, many Japanese shrine priests and Shinto leaders express skepticism regarding the possibility of an "international Shinto", stating that *kami* are fundamentally connected with the land of Japan. However, such nationalist understandings of Shinto do not seem to deter those who have become enchanted by its rituals, aesthetics, and views of nature as "sacred". Although they may not follow Japanese shrine regulations, they do worship *kami* at personal home altars, and self-identify as Shinto practitioners. Thus, they represent the newly emerging "global Shinto": grounded in Japanese beliefs and practices, but reshaped in a transnational context.

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Touch and Art in the Context of Visual Anthropology

Abstract | The paper deals with the importance of touch in the development of human species and especially in the area of visual art. The author aims to find out how the sensitivity to touch was conditioned by cultural changes in history. The paper investigates what the causes of not considering touch an important aesthetic sense were, and which visual art theoreticians and what kind of praxis of its exhibiting led to this conclusion, especially with regard to the area of painting and sculpture. The analysis of historical development of the relation between touch and visual arts starts with Ancient mythological story of Pygmalion, followed by examination of touch as the theme of artworks, exemplified especially on the Baroque and Surrealism artworks. The author also pays attention to aestheticians supporting the idea of importance of touch in the area of art in the past (Edmund Burke, Johann Gottfried Herder). The paper ends with recent initiatives of artists to make touch an important topic of their artworks (Jan Švankmajer, Rosalyn Driscoll, Roy Nachum), as well as theoreticians (Luce Irigaray) and curators to incorporate touch into the process of experiencing artworks. The author supports the idea that touch plays a significant role not only in contacts between human beings but also in the process of aesthetic experience; however, she also points to the problems of implementing this idea into praxis.

Key words | aesthetic experience – Aristotle – Edmund Burke – human senses – Jan Švankmajer – Johann Gottfried Herder – Luce Irigaray – Rosalyn Driscoll – Roy Nachum – touch – visual art

1 Introduction

The paper deals with the place of touch in the area of the European visual arts with the aim to find out how the sensitivity to touch is conditioned by theoretical concepts and cultural changes in European history. When setting this target, an important question arises: What is the appropriate scientific field to place such kind of study in? We put it under the label Visual Anthropology, for the reason that an open, interdisciplinary and unstable content of this field[1] enables us to move within this territory quite freely. Moreover, Visual Anthropology itself sees its future in closer cooperation with another sub-discipline of Cultural/Social Anthropology; that is Anthropology of the Senses.[2] Though the main concern of anthropological research is oriented towards the non-western cultures, we can also study our own visual culture as something

[1] See Jay Ruby, "Visual Anthropology," *Encyclopedia of Cultural Anthropology, vol. 4*, ed. David Levinson and Melvin Ember (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1996), 1345–1351.

[2] See Sarah Pink, *The Future of Visual Anthropology: Engaging the Senses* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2006). Concerning Anthropology of the Senses, see David Howes et al., *The Varieties of Sensory Experience: A Sourcebook in the Anthropology of the Senses* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991); Constance Classen, "Foundations

unknown and in need of interpretation. It might enable us to find its new or forgotten aspects, such as the importance of touch and tactility in human contacts with world and other human beings in general, and in visual art in particular. To understand the fact that sensory experience is partly a product of particular modes of knowledge and culture,[3] we investigate what were the causes of not considering touch an important aesthetic sense in European cultural context. The analysis of historical development of the relation between touch and visual arts starts with Ancient mythological story of Pygmalion and Aristotelian concept of the senses. The selection of the artworks with touch as their main theme is conditioned by the aim not only to represent cultural epochs in European history which were sensitive to touch, but also to represent different types of touch as such. To support the idea of importance of touch in the area of visual arts, we take into consideration conceptions of theoreticians from the past, such as Edmund Burke and Johann Gottfried Herder. Recently, we have witnessed the growing interest in touch among theoreticians from different scientific fields, which can be understood as a part of criticism of modernity and its "culture of enlightenment". The tendency to upgrade touch and make its way into area of visibility can be also traced in the works of contemporary artists, such as Rosalind Driscoll and Roy Nachum. However, the process in question is not without problems, both in the theory and praxis, and we also mention them in this paper.

2 The Myth of Pygmalion

In the story known especially from Ovid's Metamorphoses, Pygmalion was a Greek sculptor from Cyprus. After becoming disgusted by some local prostitutes, he lost all interest in women and completely avoided their company. He dedicated himself to his work and soon created a statue of beautiful woman; more beautiful than any woman that had ever lived or been carved in stone. After finishing the statue he deeply fell in love with it. He caressed it, kissed it, talked to it every day, and even took it to his bed. During Venus' holidays, Pygmalion went to her temple, offered her some gifts and prayed: "If you can give all things, O gods, I pray my wife may be — (He almost said, *My ivory girl*, but dared not) — one like my ivory girl."[4] Venus understood his wish and gave him a sign; the flames shot up three times. When Pygmalion went home, he ran to his statue, lied beside it and embraced it, having feeling that the stone seems warm to his touch this time. When kissing her, her lips seemed soft. Pygmalion's mind oscillated between doubt and joy, and "Plays lover again, and over and over touches the body with his hand. It is a body!"[5] The veins when pressed yielded to the finger and again resumed their roundness. She was alive! Finally Pygmalion and the woman he had created (later named Galatea)[6] were wed, and Pygmalion never forgot to thank Venus for the gift she had given him.

This story explicitly points to the touch as being responsible not only for creation of the statue, but also for transforming the dead stone into living flesh. It inspires us to set a question: What is the function of touch in our life, culture, and in the area of visual arts especially?

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for an anthropology of the senses," *International Social Science Journal*, 49, no. 153 (1997): 401–412; David Howes and Constance Classen, *Ways of Sensing: Understanding the Senses and Society* (London: Routledge, 2014).

[3] "The fundamental premiss underlying the concept of an 'anthropology of the senses' is that perception is a cultural, as well as a physical, act." Classen, "Foundations," 401.

[4] Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 10, trans. Rolfe Humphries (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1960), 242.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Although the name "Galatea" has become firmly associated with Pygmalion's statue, its use in connection with Pygmalion originated with a post-classical writer. No extant ancient text mentions the statue's name. According to Meyer Reinhold, the name "Galatea" was first given wide circulation in the Jean-Jacques Rousseau's scène lyrique of 1762, *Pygmalion*, accessed February 15, 2015, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Galatea_(mythology).

3 The Sense of Touch

While the four human senses: eyes, ears, mouth, and nose are sited specifically, i.e. they are located on particular parts of human body, the sense of touch is not so easy to locate. It was the problem even for Aristotle, who dealt with the senses in detail. Aristotle stated that the senses function in solidarity with the teleological structure of the cosmos. He identified five of them and ordered them hierarchically. Touch, according to him, gives us truthful access to the essences of extra mental things. He called it the "sense of nourishment" since the animal feeds on the base of discriminating what is hot or cold, dry or moist, that is on what possesses qualities that manifest themselves immediately to the flesh. Therefore, touch is the primordial sense of immediacy located on the whole surface of skin. Touch touches what touches it. The author of the book *Skin,* Nina Jablonski, calls touch the mother of all senses. She describes the human development out of the ancient primates thanks to their growing capacity of grasping by their feet and hands. She indicates the lips, fingers and external genitalia as the most touch sensitive parts of human body which "allows the physical intimacy that leads to sexual intercourse and reproduction. Evolution does not get much more fundamental than that."[7] Underlying the positive effects of touching, she stresses the importance of touch for human well-being.[8] However, we do not need to forget that touch can also be "death-giving" because of its ability to harm and to destroy things or even put human beings to death.

On the other hand, Aristotle connected touch also with knowledge; he understood touch as a threshold of our cognitive quest because it gives us "bodily" to ourselves and thus constitutes us as potential epistemological subjects. Without touch we would have no consciousness and would know nothing.[9] The essence of sense is to discriminate, and human touch has the highest discriminatory power among all the animals.[10] Jablonski adds that this capacity is located especially at the top of our fingers: she calls them "digital pads" housing sensory nerve endings and receptors that are connected with special corpuscles in our brain, which can register light touch, constant pressure, deep pressure and vibrations, temperature, and pain.[11] According to Aristotle, a person whose flesh is tenderer and whose skin is more delicate will perceive a more nuanced variety of tangible qualities and will more easily reach *theoria.* Aristotle went even so far as thinking of touch in aesthetic terms: because human excellence grows from aesthetic overabundance of the power of senses, that is in case of touch going over and beyond nutritive

[7] Nina G. Jablonski, *Skin: a natural history* (Beverly: University of California Press, 2006), 103.

[8] "Primates who are involving in greater amounts of social touching experience less stress and grow faster (if they are young)." Ibid., 103.

[9] "The organ that pursues generativity in the darkness, the organ of touch, Aristotle says, 'consists of earth'. Touch provides the root experience of the concrete, of solidity, of corporeity. The implications are vast, since the lowest degree of sentience is also the initiatory test of sensorial veracity. If touch deceived us, we would suffer irreparable betrayal before even embarking on our quest. We would lack our very selves and all firm ground upon which to build understanding progressively." Anne A. Davenport, "Aristotle and Descartes on Touch," *The New Arcadia Review: Love and Its Concretions* 2 (2004), accessed May 20, 2013, http://www.bc.edu/publications/newarcadia/archives/2/aristotledescartes/. See also Pascal Massie, "Touching, Thinking, Being: The Sense of Touch in Aristotle's *De anima* and Its Implications," *Minerva – An Internet Journal of Philosophy* 17 (2013): 74–101.

[10] "For man, the sense which is most discriminating is that of touch. With respect to the other senses, man is far inferior to the other animals; but with respect to the sense of touch he excels by far in discrimination over the other animals. This is why man is the most intelligent [*phronimōtaton*] of animals. A sign of this is the fact that, even within the human race, it is by virtue of this sense organ and of no other that some are well-gifted or poorly gifted by nature; for those with hard flesh [*sklērosarkoi*] are poorly gifted for thought [*dianoian*] by nature, while those with soft flesh are well gifted." Iamblichus, *De anima*, (Leiden: Brill 37, 2002), 421a20–26, cited from Pascal Massie, "Touching, Thinking, Being", 84.

[11] Jablonski, *Skin*, 98.

goods, he could imagine that touch would rise to touching things for their own sake, out of curiosity and for the pleasure of it, in view of knowing and understanding.

Aristotle used close kinship between touch and body in his theory of human crafts (calling them the "arts of making"), especially sculpture. Artists act manually, that is with their hands, ("efficient" cause) to transform clay or stone or metal ("material cause") into a work of art ("formal" cause) for the sake of beauty ("final" cause). Touch has a power to make tangible icons for the spiritual nurture of human being: to generate a work of art is to bring to perfection the human touch by orienting it towards eternity. The special appeal of "things made" by the human hand for the sake of contemplation is that they symbolically survive not only the artist but all of us, like offspring. Good artists, Aristotle says, are those who create works "without defect or excess," by which he means works that "etch in stone" or clay or wood or bronze the notion of just proportions and therefore symbolize moral excellence within the realm of earthly substance. A good work of art, in short, delights us by revealing that excellence is "fully" possible in the sub-lunar realm. Touch is most immediately the immediate sense of our human faith in the essential *goodness* of geo-centricity: sculptors are the sacred hermeneuts of our Mothering Earth.[12]

While touch, to Aristotle, is the most *basic* sense, the sense without which no sensitivity and intelligence is possible, sight is understood as the *supreme* sense, offering the "purest" pleasure. Sight, according to him, is the sense that contributes to science the best. Vision in its purity reveals the ethereal realm to us, the beauty (*cosmos*) of the uni–verse.[13] It is especially this part of Aristotelian theory, e.g. placing the sight at the top of sense hierarchy, which influenced thinking about the senses in the European history for a long time.[14]

Our attitude towards touch, an appropriation and acceptance of tactile human contacts differs not only in the relation to the particular theory and its interpretation, as we see in the case of Aristotle, but also in the relation to the different cultural contexts. Nina Jablonski refers to Ashley Montagu[15] who distinguished "contact" and "noncontact" societies in accordance to their attitude toward touching. "In highly touch-oriented cultures, infants are liberally held, fondled, and massaged by mothers and other caregivers. (…) In touch-averse cultures, by contrast, babies are often deprived of maternal and human contact except small fractions of the day when such behaviour is socially sanctioned."[16] As an example of those two kinds of culture, she indicates African culture as touch-oriented, and modern American culture as touch-averse. Nina Jablonski even states, that "From the point of view of comparative primatology, touch-averse cultures are an anomaly, and bouts of depression, anxiety, and more serious forms of social pathology among individuals who live in them are entirely predictable."[17]

According to the recent results of scientific research in the area of the senses, we gather enormous amounts of information through our skin and especially through our hands. Francesca Bacci writes:

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[12] Davenport, "Aristotle and Descartes on Touch."

[13] "The Aristotelian ideal of contemplative happiness, *theoria*, takes its name from *theorein*—to see, to observe. If the cosmos first announces its essential knowability through touch and in the darkling emotion of the flesh, it displays its divinity in an ultimate way to human being by presenting itself to sight as a *spectacle*." Anne A. Davenport, "Aristotle and Descartes on Touch."

[14] See more about the history of senses in Mark M. Smith, *Sensory History* (Oxford, New York: Berg, 2007).

[15] She is referring to the book Ashley Montagu, *Touching: The Human Significance of the Skin* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971).

[16] Jablonski, *Skin*, 109.

[17] Ibid., 110.

> What is commonly referred to as 'touch' is a complex combination of the information coming from different receptors, including pressure on the skin and proprioception (which is the feeling of where our muscles and joints are in space). Touch is a sensorimotor activity, since it involves and interaction between a toucher and a touched one that goes beyond the physical aspect of nerve endings transmitting a signal to our brain."[18]

Touch informs us not only about temperature, texture and weight of the object, but also about its effects on us: pleasure or pain, for example.

4 Touch as an Aesthetic Sense

Rosalyn Driscoll defines aesthetic touch as follows:

> *Aesthetic touch* is conscious, inquiring touch that explores form, material, and spaces for their qualities, their effects, and their meanings. (…) Like aesthetic sight, aesthetic touch involves a departure from habitual recognition and functional use; attention to formal elements such as shape, space and pattern; transformation of the object or situation into alternative structures, concepts, or meanings; and openness to the emotional implications of what we perceive.[19]

However, touch was not very often considered as an aesthetic sense. The priority was given to sight and hearing which were understood as "higher" senses because of their detachments from the object seen or heard providing an aesthetic distance necessary for production of beauty and art.[20] Touch does not meet these criteria, as the act of touching is "an ambiguous set-up in which (…) the roles of 'touching' and being 'touched' can alternate."[21]

In the European history, however, several authors stressed the importance of touch for Aesthetics. We mention just two of them: Edmund Burke and Johann Gottfried Herder. In his book *A Philosophical Inquiry into The Origin of Our Ideas of The Sublime and Beautiful*, Burke gave a special attention to tactility.[22] He defines beauty as pleasure caused by soft, smooth, sensual bodies; that is beautiful bodies evidently associated with femininity and touch. According to Burke, touch receives pleasure from softness, which is not originally an object for sight. Elio Franzini even claims that Burke "designs his entire aesthetic theory of beauty around sensory qualities that are mainly tactile".[23] He summarizes Burke's theory as follows: "In sum, touch is the true sense of beauty, the one that defines its kind of pleasure and also, through sex, its social usefulness."[24]

Johann Gottfried Herder elaborated his notion about touch especially in connection with the sculpture in his book *Sculpture: Some Observations on Shape and Form from Pygmalion's Creative*

[18] Francesca Bacci, "Sculpture and Touch," in *Art and the Senses*, ed. Francesca Bacci and David Melcher (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 133–134. See also Charles Spence, "The Multisensory Perception of Touch," in ibid., 85–106.

[19] Rosalyn Driscoll, "Aesthetic Touch," in *Art and the Senses*, ed. by Francesca Bacci and David Melcher, 107.

[20] See more about touch, smell, and taste in the European aesthetic thinking and contemporary art in Mădălina Diaconu,"Reflections on an Aesthetics of Touch, Smell and Taste," *Contemporary Aesthetics* 4 (2006), accessed February 15, 2015, http://www.contempaesthetics.org.

[21] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), 93.

[22] See Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Inquiry into the origin of our ideas of The Sublime and Beautiful with an introductory discourse concerning Taste, and several other additions*, accessed February 15, 2015, http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/b/burke/edmund/sublime/index.html.

[23] Elio Franzini, "Rendering the Sensory World Semantic," in *Art and the Senses*, ed. by Francesca Bacci and David Melcher, 120.

[24] Ibid.

Dream.[25] Here, he made tactility the essence of the sculpture claiming that touch confronts us with the third dimension which identifies the aesthetic of sculpture. "Body" (object that is present in space through its three dimensions) can be represented only by sculpture and "is such because it is in tactile contact with *our* body, that is to say, with a body that can really make one 'feel' the form, its 'impenetrability, hardness, softness, smoothness, form, figure, roundness'."[26] Herder not only added the complementary role of touch to the epistemological centrality of sight but challenged the principles of classifying arts primarily according to sight and hearing. "To these senses one now needs to add touch, since it does not limit itself to perceiving what is 'outside' of it (sight), and does not put one object 'next' to the other, but can perceive them 'one in the other', thus offering not only surfaces or sounds but also forms."[27]

5 Touch in the History of Visual Art

In the European art, we can detect some epoch and styles when the touch was quite often addressed by artists as a theme of their artworks, explicit or implicit, in the form of a self-touch or the touch of others. Baroque sculpture and painting, and surrealist art can be seen as representing touch-oriented styles.

Before Baroque, however, the discussion about supremacy of touch or sight within the area of visual art was very hot within the context of Early Modern Italian art and art theory. It was connected with the aim to establish hierarchy between sculptures and paintings and to decide which one is more "noble". As Geraldine A. Johnson writes, "Writers who favoured sculpture often saw tactility as one of this art's most positive attributes, while advocates of painting repeatedly used sculpture's tactile qualities as evidence of its lower status, especially in comparison to vision."[28] Leonardo da Vinci claimed that painting is nobler than sculpture because "(…) the painter sits in front of his work at perfect ease. He is well dressed and moves a very light brush dipped in delicate colour (…) his home is clean (…) and he often is accompanied by music or by the reading of various beautiful works to which he can listen with great pleasure without interference of hammering and other noises."[29] There were other important arguments against tactility of sculpture as for example that painting can imitate the very material of sculpture itself, and that painting uses colours to be able to imitate nature's most ephemeral effects. On the other hand, Michelangelo was on the side of tactility. He even went so far as claiming that painting was the best the more it resembles sculptural relief, while sculpture was worse the more it resembles painting. Michelangelo's interest in touch and tactility is evident not only in his statues and paintings, but also in his poetry. Hands are the theme of many of his artworks, most famous being the depiction of God reaching out to touch Adam into life in his *The Creation of Adam* in Sistine Chapel [**Fig. 1, detail**].[30]

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[25] See Johann Gottfried Herder, *Sculpture: Some observations on shape and form from Pygmalion's creative dream* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).
[26] Franzini, "Rendering," 121.
[27] Ibid., 122.
[28] See more in Geraldine A. Johnson, "The Art of Touch in Early Modern Italy", in *Art and the Senses*, ed. by Francesca Bacci and David Melcher, 69.
[29] Leonardo da Vinci, *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, ed. I. A. Richter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952), 330.
[30] For detailed interpretation of this fresco, see Marjorie O'Rourke Boyle, *Senses of Touch. Human Dignity and Deformity from Michelangelo to Calvin* (Brill: Leiden, Boston, Köln, 1998).

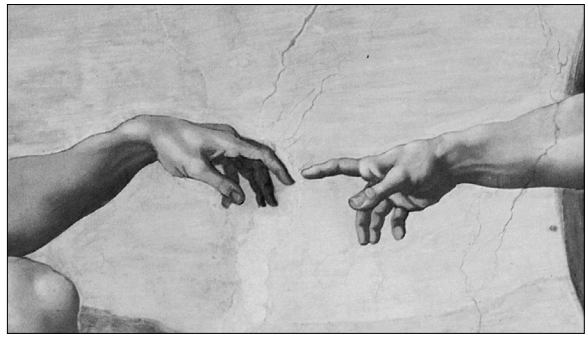

Fig. 1

In Baroque art especially, touch became very popular and explicit theme of sculpture and painting; *The Sense of Touch* painted by J. de Ribera being one example of them. Touch is presented here as the only sense of a blind person handling a sculptured head in his hands to have an access to it, e.g. to know and to aesthetically experience it **[Fig. 2]**.

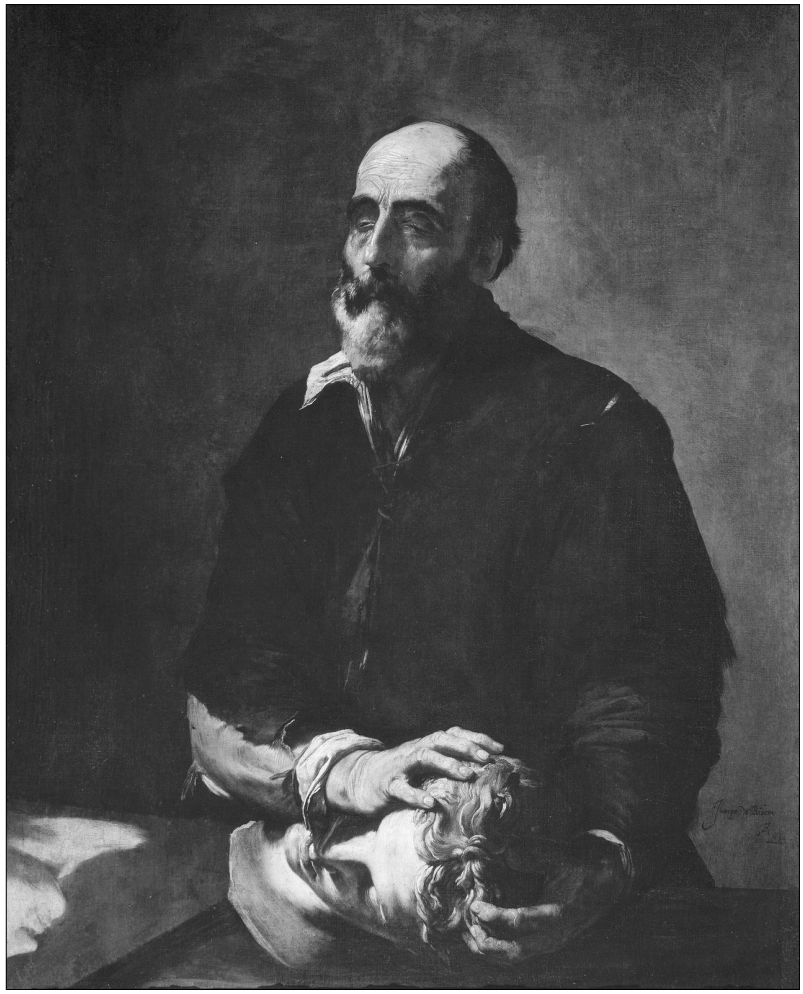

Fig. 2

In a painting with the same title, created by Jan Brueghel the Elder, [**Fig. 3**] the author stresses the intimate and tactile bond of mother and child, portrayed as an isle of love and life (it is the lightest part of the painting). We can feel the softness and warmth of the mother's and child's skin, especially in contrast with their surroundings: dark, cold and hard metal armours. Touch is portrayed here in its creative as well as destructive possibilities; there are even some artworks involved in the contents of the painting, depicting both – life-giving and death-bringing aspect of touch.

Fig. 3

We can see not only at this painting that touch was often connected with women, especially in the context of mother and child relationship when woman gently touched her offspring. Out of that context, touch as an action actively directed towards the world and others was mostly associate with men, while women were seen as something to be touched; metaphorically by men's eyes, that is objects to be-looked-at, but also more literally as passive objects for physical, real touch. In the European history of visual art, especially from the post-renaissance period when the genre of female nude became widespread, there has been plenty of evidence for the first, metaphorical sense of man "touching by eyes" representation of woman. The connection between metaphorical and "real" touching might be quite close; we can find paintings depicting man (mostly dressed) touching (mostly naked) woman as for example on the painting created by Luis de Silvestre: *The Sense of Touch: A Youth Kissing an Unclad Young Woman* [**Fig. 4**].

An erotic and loving touch seen on this painting can change to more aggressive touch of the rape, as we can see on Gian Lorenzo Bernini's statue *The Rape of Proserpina* [**Fig. 5, detail**]. The Greek mythological heroine Persephone who was raped by Hades (Pluto) while collecting flowers on the meadow is here displayed under her Roman name Proserpina. Hades-Pluto is depicted in the moment when having caught Proserpina trying to escape. We can see his hands holding her hip and cestus firmly and hardly, with fingers plunging into her skin.

Fig. 4

Fig. 5

Next example of Lorenzo Bernini'work, the statue *Beata Ludovica Albertoni* [**Fig. 6**] is based on equation of two different kinds of experience: erotic and mystic. The ecstasy of Beata Ludovica Albertoni comes from self-touch, however, without possibility to distinguish erotic pleasure from religious ecstasy coming from (metaphorically) "being touched by God".

Fig. 6

This statue might also be seen as supporting a theory of feminist philosopher and psychoanalyst Luce Irigaray claiming that "Woman takes pleasure more from touching than looking".[31] According to her, women are (unconsciously) constantly touching themselves because of their self-touching labia enabling their unmediated auto-eroticism. In contrary, men need something to be mediated with to receive a pleasure, that is requires an instrument: hand or woman's body. Constance Classen even thinks that especially "women can challenge the traditional visualism of Western art by drawing on their particular aesthetic experience to develop a non-visual or multisensory aesthetics".[32] Fiona Candlin claims that "the conjunction between touch and women's art and experience have continued to provide a rich ground of enquiry within art history and other disciplines".[33] Although we can find strong evidence for close association of touch with femininity in Western philosophy and culture, art theory and particular artworks, touch is important not for women only, as we will document later.

From another touch-oriented style, e.g. surrealism, we chose a Frida Kahlo painting entitled *What the Water Gave Me* [**Fig. 7**].We can see, or better not see her body immersed in the "body" of water in her bath-tub. Water touches her skin and we cannot in fact discern who is touching and who is being touched. This feeling probably incites her imagination, as she can see different "objects" and "situations" emerging out of the water. These objects and situations are to be found on particular artworks she has painted. Thus, we can interpret this image as dealing with the

[31] Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), 25.

[32] Constance Classen, *The Color of Angels: Cosmology, gender and the aesthetic imagination* (London: Routledge, 1998), 155.

[33] Fiona Candlin, *Art, Museums and Touch* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), 28.

relation between body and imagination, touch playing the role of the starting impulse to creative artistic process.

Fig. 7

In René Magritte's painting *The Red Model* **[Fig. 8]**, the touch of the ground by the bare feet is stressed. René Magritte shows our feet, in civilized world usually covered by shoes, touching grinned surface of the earth seemingly not very pleasurable for walking on it. Each kind of material depicted on the painting: wood, surface of the ground and shoe-skin evoke very tactile feelings in the viewer. By showing only feet Magritte might remind us that we are firmly connected with the earth; we touch it at every moment we walk and cannot walk without touching it. We often forget this very simple and basic fact because the shoes, which we put on, can make touch sensations caused by the surface under our feet "untouchable". René Magritte directs our attention to the fact that the shoes are in fact our second skin; in the painting they are made from our own skin, in fact they are often made from the skin of our animal neighbours – their death enables us to walk without pain. The painting might convey the message that the loss of feet sensitivity could cause the loss not only of our contact with the "real" world but also of our sensitivity to pain of the others.

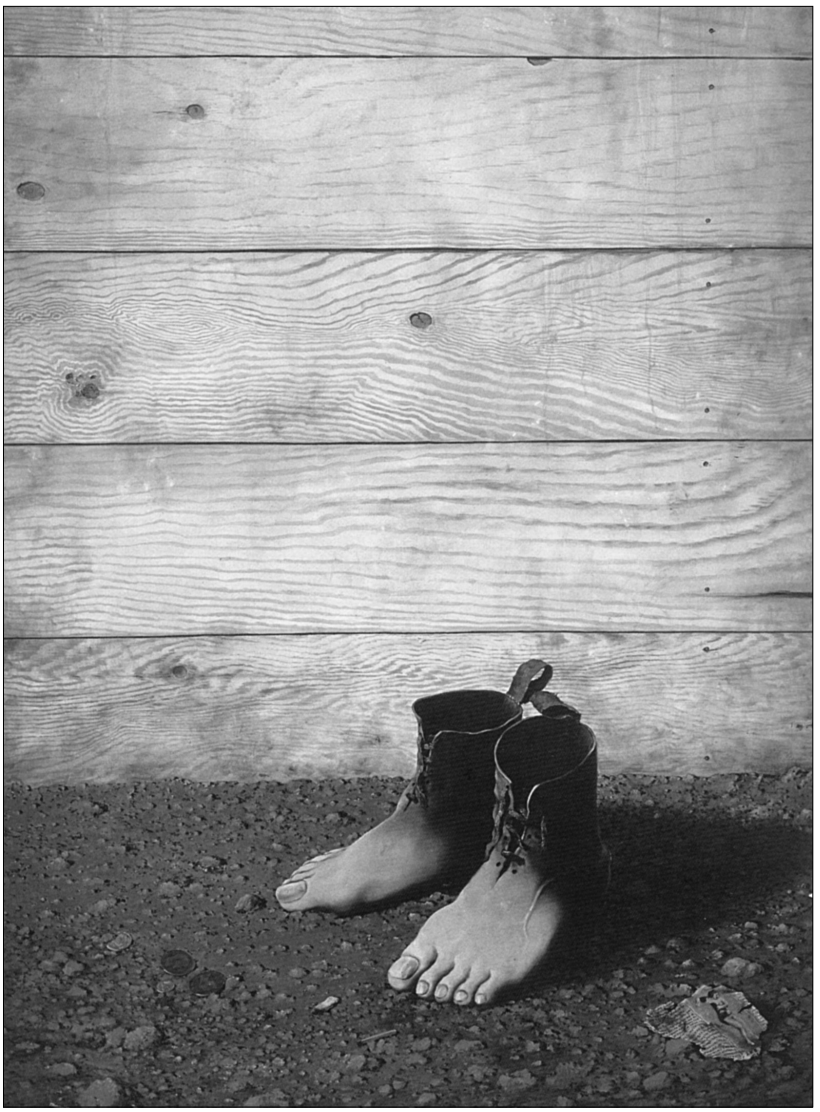

Fig. 8

Another example of a surrealist painting is Salvador Dali's *Metamorphosis of Narcissus* **[Fig. 9]**. In contrast with the original myth of Narcissus, where the sight is the means of giving the reflection of Narcissus beauty seen on the surface of the still water back to him, Dali prefers touch. His Narcissus does not see himself on the surface of water, he touches it. Dali sees touch as a means for the metamorphosis to something and/or someone else. Narcissus' hand plunging into the water of lake and its metamorphosis into the hand handling an egg, from which the flower is coming out, makes this painting an apotheosis of the ability of touch/hand to change things and human beings. There are two Narcissuses according to Dali: the first one on the left side and the second one on the right side (equated by Dali with his wife Gala).

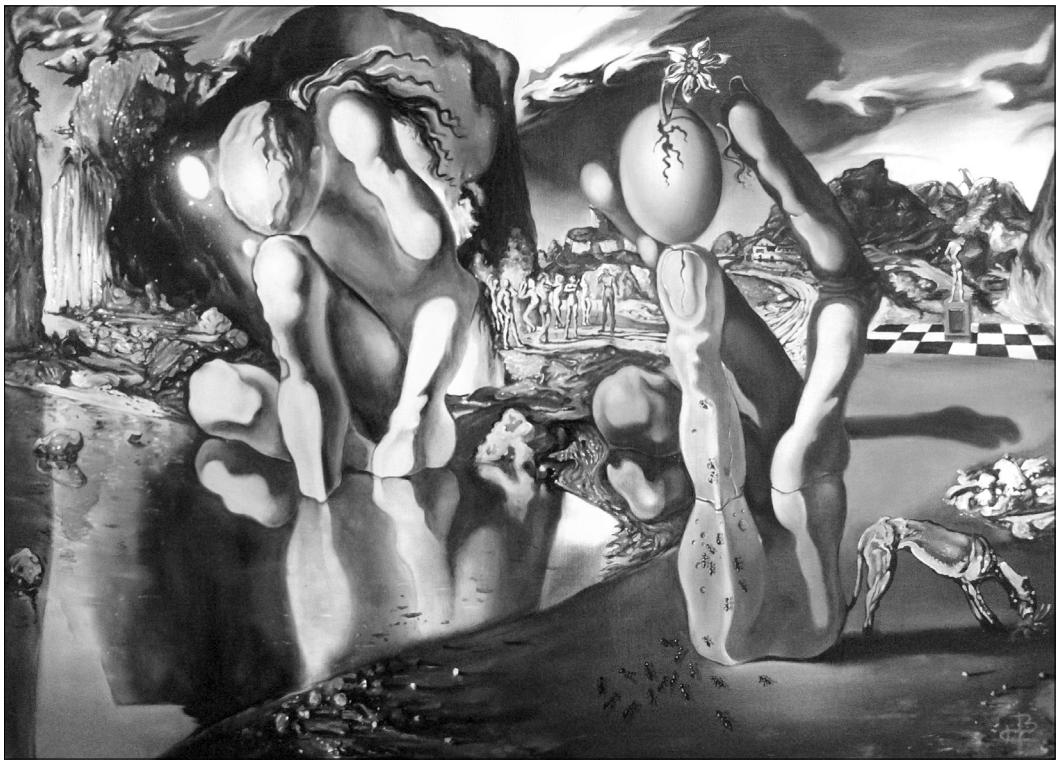

Fig. 9

Narcissus,
in his immobility,
absorbed by his reflection with the digestive slowness of carnivorous plants,
becomes invisible.

There remains of him only the hallucinatingly white oval of his head,
his head again more tender,
his head, chrysalis of hidden biological designs,
his head held up by the tips of the water's fingers,
at the tips of the fingers
of the insensate hand,
of the terrible hand,
of the mortal hand
of his own reflection.

When that head slits
when that head splits
when that head bursts,
it will be the flower,
the new Narcissus,
Gala – my Narcissus.[34]

The importance of touch is shown also by the group of people in the middle of the painting: they are touching themselves while looking at each other. Even the figure-statue on the right side on the pedestal is touching his body. In the poem, Dali describes the head on the hills as "the god of snow" trying to touch the water while "melting with desire".[35]

The Czech surrealist artist Jan Švankmajer works explicitly with touch theoretically and artistically. In his book *Touch and Imagination*, he searches for possibilities of touch in the area of visual art and proposes many haptic experiments, actions and performances with the aim to cultivate our haptic sense. According to him, the way how to develop our touch sensitivity is to "disconnect touch from its utilitarian dependence on other senses, especially on sight."[36] In his artistic experiments, he tries to test the possibilities of touch to evoke imagination that is to connect touch with our memory, stories, etc. Jan Švankmajer is critical to the denigration of touch in our culture; his view is carried out for example by installation *The Possibilities of Dialogue* **[Fig. 10]** where eye on the television screen is accompanied by four hands helplessly trying to reach the viewer. Not only eye and hands are mechanical, but hands have also gloves on them, representing the fear of touch characteristic for contemporary Western culture we discussed earlier. Similarly to feet in René Magritte's work, Jan Švankmajer's hands began to lose their tactile sensitivity and thus blocking the possibility of dialogue.

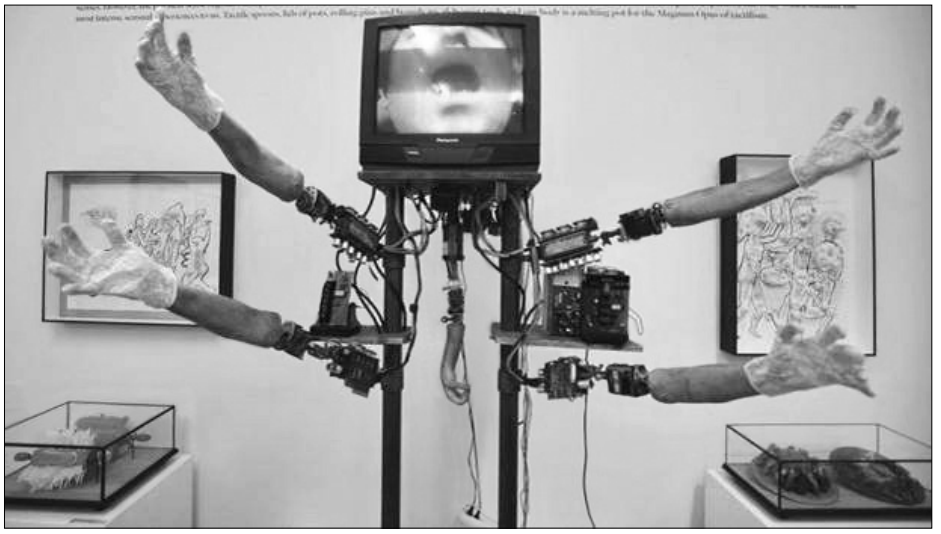

Fig. 10

[34] Salvador Dalí, *Metamorphosis of Narcissus* (New York: Julien Levy Gallery, 1937). This book consists of Dalí's theoretical account of paranoiac-critical method, poem and painting *Metamorphosis of Narcissus*, together creating what Salvador Dalí called the first "complex surrealist work". Dalí's poem accompanied the painting when it was initially exhibited (there is longer version in book).

[35] The whole poem read in Salvador Dalí, *Metamorphosis of Narcissus*.

[36] Jan Švankmajer, *Hmat a imaginace /Úvod do taktilního umění/. Taktilní experimentace 1974–1983 (1994)* (Praha: Kozoroh, 1994), 70.

6 Touch in Presentation, Interpretation and Evaluation of Visual Art

All of us have experience with the sign in galleries and museums "Do not touch!" However, as Fiona Candlin claims, touch has not been prohibited at all times in museums and galleries: "touch was understood as a legitimate and even essential means of engaging with art and artefacts during the eighteenth century, although not everyone had the chance to do so since strictly opening hours, ticketing and tips meant that the working classes, and to some extent even the middle classes did not gain access anywhere near as easily as the elite."[37] So, the possibility of someone to use touch in contact with art relayed not only on the theoretical concept of visual art, the idea of museum understood as an exclusively visual space excluding touch as causing damage to artworks, but also on class status, for example. In this respect, access to touch is also matter of power relations.[38]

According to Fiona Candlin, changes in acceptance of touch contacts in museums and galleries were part of wider cultural changes, we can trace in the theory of visual arts, especially in the works of Alois Riegl, Bernard Berenson, Heinrich Wölfflin and Erwin Panofsky. Fiona Candlin claims that especially these "fathers" of modern art history helped to lift the sense of sight into its superior position in the realm of "visual" arts. Although they have not excluded the touch entirely they saw it as a more primitive, basic, antique, even cannibal sense in comparison to the sight.[39] "Riegl associated actual touch with Egypt and the antique, Berenson with cannibal appetites and the generically non-west, Wölfflin with sixteenth-century European linear style and Panofsky with the classical area".[40] When asking what kind of more general tendency operated behind their views, Fiona Candlin points out to the general modern idea of progress based on rationality and knowledge. "The becoming-optical of art is equated to a rational world view where subjects conceive of themselves to be wholly detached from objects and therefore as being capable of objective, rational understanding. Being a full subject means looking, not touching,"[41] writes Fiona Candlin.

Thus, touch was somehow erased from theoretical account of visual art because it was understood as "more basic perceptual phase" of the development of humankind as such, and the development of visual arts especially. However, now the critique of such kind of the hierarchy of vision and touch occurs more often not only in Aesthetics and visual art theory, but also in philosophy in the form of critique of the modernistic "culture of enlightenment".[42] It is accompanied by new artistic projects considering touch seriously, and changes in the policies of galleries and museums previously based on "non-touching" regime. Touch is increasingly being allowed and advocated in art museums for people who are blind or visually impaired. Rosalyn Driscoll, a member of a group of artists *Art in Touch*, even claims that "Touch is a way for all of us to know art. What we see is not the whole story."[43] She tries to "move touch out of the ghetto of disability into the realm of possibility for everyone."[44] Her deep exploration of aesthetic touch especially in

[37] Fiona Candlin, *Art, Museums and Touch*, 76.

[38] About power and touch see Mark M. Smith, *Sensory History* (Oxford, New York: Berg, 2007) or Laura Growing, *Common Bodies: Women, Touch and Power in Seventeenth-Century England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003).

[39] We can connect their view to Aristotle theory of senses with the superiority of sight.

[40] Candlin, *Art, Museums*, 20–21.

[41] Ibid., 21.

[42] For detailed examination of this tendency, see Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes. The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth–Century French Thought* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1994).

[43] Driscoll, "Aesthetic Touch", 108.

[44] Ibid, 108.

the area of sculpture takes the form of making and exhibiting tactile sculptures, gathering viewer reactions, following research in tactile/haptic perception, working with scientists, engineers, artists and people with disabilities, lecturing and teaching workshops, and writing a manuscript *Whole Body Seeing: Touch in The Visual Arts*. Rosalyn Driscoll often makes her statues directly from dry skin or deals with the skin metaphorically, as seen in video made together with multimedia artist Sarah Bliss entitled *Poetics of Skin* **[Fig. 11]**.[45]

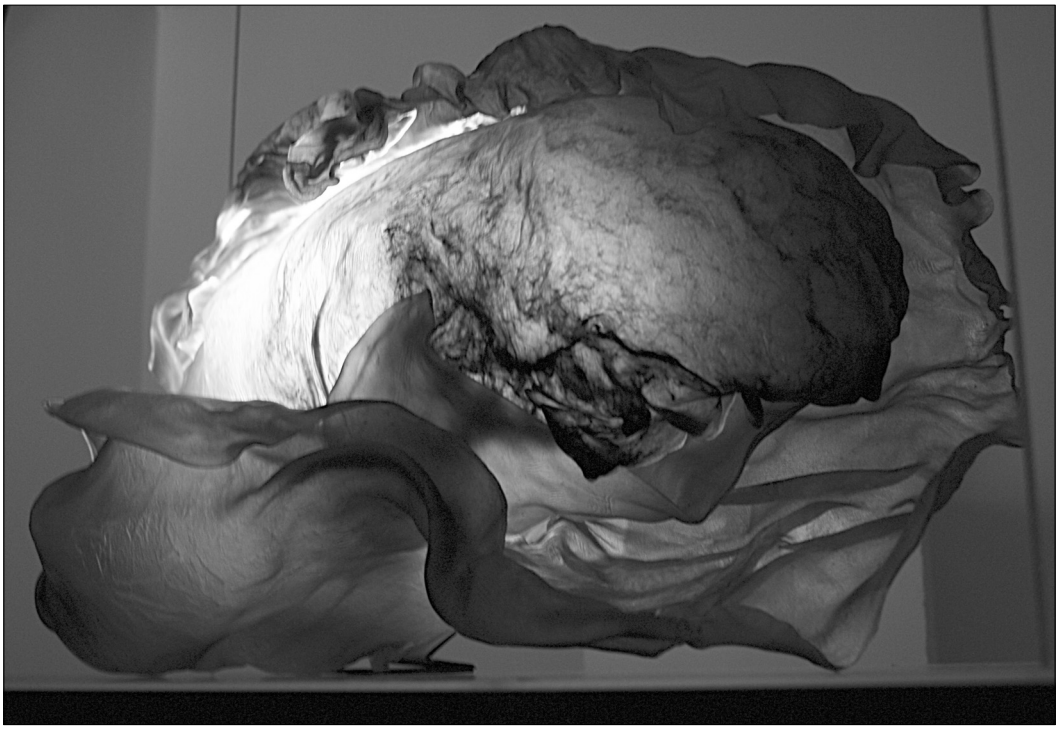

Fig. 11

Contemporary artist Roy Nachum made his *Self-portrait* **[Fig. 12, detail]** inspired by the way how blind people use their hands to know the world. The painted hands seem trying to reach and touch the faces of viewers standing before the artwork, but we can also see their gesture as protecting the mighty face behind them. The painting invites touching, as there is a poem *Self-portrait* written by Braille letters on the surface of the painting, and blind people can read the poem.[46] However, the people who do not know Braille letters become "blind" (in the sense

[45] Read the description given by Rosalyn Driscoll in her homepage: "Working back and forth between the human body and cattle skin (both wet and raw, and also dried as rawhide), Bliss and Driscoll deconstruct the boundaries between one form of matter and another, forefronting the seamlessness between material realities", accessed February 15, 2015, https://vimeo.com/58102788.

[46] Roy Nachum said about his work in an interview: "With this piece I decided to paint my hands instead of my face. I live and work in New York, the busiest city in the world. So many people, so many faces, so many different kind of faces and I ask myself what makes one face better than another? Other than what we think we see? For a blind person their hands are their eyes, and in order to touch someone else's face they would need to become very personal with that person, they would ultimately get to know that person on a deeper level rather than just judging them based on their face." Lauren Del Vecchio, "Open Your Eyes// Roy Nachum Talks To Yatzer," *Exhibitions, Interviews, Art*, June 6, 2012, accessed February 15, 2015, http://www.yatzer.com/open-your-eyes-roy-nachum-yatzer.

that they cannot read the poem); both parties can thus experience the fragile borders between "disability" and "ability", touch and sight.

Fig. 12

7 Conclusion

The sense of touch was mostly neglected in the history of European Aesthetics, theory of visual art and art itself. This is connected with the hierarchization of the senses putting the sight on the top as the most theoretical sense. From Aristotle, sight was praised as the highest, theoretical

sense. According Kant, sight was described as a sense which, because of its distance between subject and object, and detachment from one´s living interests, is able to make aesthetic judgments and create works of art. Although it was the prevailing view of modern visual art theory resulting in the principle Do not touch! the artworks on display in galleries and art museums, it was not the only view. There were some theoreticians as well as artists who were interested in touch regarding its aesthetic possibilities, which analysed and underlined the role of touch in the area of art, especially the visual arts (with more important role in sculpture). This article points out to a few of them.

Nowadays, we can witness a growing interest in touch coming from different directions and inspirations: from scientists working in the area of research of sensory organs and sensations claiming that our sensory organs are not independent of one another, and stressing the multisensorial character of our bodily experiences; from philosophers criticising modernism and culture of enlightenment; from feminist theory and feminist art criticism focusing on the close connection of women and touch; from disability studies, trying to open an experience of visual art to blind or visually impaired people changing the way of how museums and galleries organize their exhibitions;[47] from artists themselves, both women and men. Touch is being re-evaluated as a very important aspect of our relations to the world, to ourselves and to others, and the fear to touch, especially other human beings is detected as one source (among others) of the increasing amount of stress or psychical discomfort in the so-called highly civilized societies.

In the area of Aesthetics, mainly in the process of perception of art, touch is understood as a means of our bodily experience of works of art. Touch can transgress the borders between subjectivity and objectivity and erase distance between a viewer, an artist and a work of visual art, especially statue. More than that, some qualities of artworks are not entirely reachable by sight (texture, weight, sensual qualities of material, volume, shape, etc.). Visual arts are mostly made by hands either working directly with materials from which particular artwork is made or with the mediation of some tool (from pencil to computer or video). In both cases, there is a complicated relation of sight and touch at work.[48]

However, some problems are still to be examined and discussed more deeply: for example, if using touch in the process of interaction with the work of art actually enriches one´s aesthetic experience of painting and statue, or how to protect artworks from devastating effect of repeating touches. Considering the function of touch in the process of perceiving and evaluating visual art seriously would need to reconsider and redefine the Western concept of artwork and the way we display it not as something to be stored and adored (static and durable "thing" preferably without any changes in time) but as something unstable and open to changes, one of them being caused by touching hands of human beings.

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[47] For example, MoMA in New York starts providing Touch Tours for the blind and visually impaired in the early 1970s. See "MoMA Starts: An80's Anniversary Exhibition," accessed February 15, 2015, http://www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/2009/momastarts/. The Tate Gallery (now Tate Britain), London, developed an exhibition that included tactile access to some of its more high profile exhibits in 1976, with touch tours featuring sculptures by Moore, Hepworth and Degas. Simon Hayhoe, "The Philosophical, Political and Religious Roots of Touch Exhibitions in 20th Century British Museums," *Disability Studies Quarterly* 33, no. 3 (2013), accessed February 15, 2015, http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/3760/3273. From January 2015, Madrid's Prado opened an exhibition designed for blind or visually impaired people allowing them to explore copies of six masterpieces with their hands. "Do touch: Madrid's Prado opens expo for blind", *The Local*, January 20, 2015, accessed February 15, 2015, http://www.thelocal.es/20150120/do-touch-madrids-prado-opens-expo-for-blind.

[48] About this problem, see Francesca Bacci, "Sculpture," 133–148. Finish architect Juhani Pallasmaa explores mutual cooperation of sight and touch and calls for taking touch seriously into account in creation and perception of architecture. See Juhani Pallasmaa *The Thinking Hand* (Sussex: Wiley, 2009), and Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses* (Sussex: Wiley, 2012).

List of artworks

1. Michelangelo Buonarotti, *The Creation of Adam*, detail, c. 1511–1512, fresco, Sistine Chapel, Rome, Italy.
2. Jusepe de Ribera, *The Sense of Touch, The Blind Man of Gambassi*, 1632, oil on canvas, Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain.
3. Jan Brueghel, the Elder, *The Sense of Touch*, 1618, oil on panel, Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain.
4. Louis de Silvestre, *The Sense of Touch: A Youth Kissing an Unclad Young Woman*, not dated, oil on canvas laid on panel, private collection.
5. Gian Lorenzo Bernini, *The Rape of Proserpina*, detail, 1621–1622, marble, Galleria Borghese, Rome, Italy.
6. Gian Lorenzo Bernini, *Beata Ludovica Albertoni*, 1671–1674, marble, Church of San Francesco a Ripa, Rome, Italy.
7. Frida Kahlo, *What the Water Gave Me*, 1938, oil on canvas, Collection of Daniel Filipacchi, Paris, France.
8. René Magritte, *The Red Model*, 1934, oil on canvas, Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam, Netherlands.
9. Salvador Dalí, *Metamorphosis of Narcissus*, 1937, oil on canvas, Tate Modern, London, United Kingdom.
10. Jan Švankmajer, *The Possibilities of Dialogue*, not dated, installation.
11. Rosalyn Driscoll and Sarah Bliss, still from *The Poetics of Skin*, 2012, video installation.
12. Roy Nachum, *Self Portrait*, 2008–2009, oil on canvas – detail, courtesy of Roy Nachum.

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Encounters. The "Events": a Post-modern Reality between Society, Culture and Emotions

Abstract | By their very nature (etymological at least) "events" have always remained outside the routines of daily life, Goffman's "everyday life", which "is not at all simple and transparent, but complex and disquieting", and have today become almost a standard feature of daily life itself partly perhaps losing the aura of particular importance that should always and anyway characterise them. Such an invasion of everyday life concerns both real events, and the "eventoids", or those events that have no real consistency except for when they appear in the media, but which can influence social behaviour insofar as being "creators" of reality.

The "events" at present (no longer as "extraordinary occurrences" but as "everyday life facts") represent a highly significant and interesting typology of socio-cultural reality owing to the series of implications which will be highlighted in this essay. Complete post-modern features can be seen in particular in the construction and social appreciation of events, in which "festival" and "traditions", "involvement and extraneousness", "marketing" and "collective participation" are mixed together, and it is quite apparent that the role of the media in all this cannot but forcefully emerge. I will specifically discuss events as "emotional (ephemeral or long term) places" based on the idea of "aesthetization of everyday life" and the logic of the Post-modern cultural industry, either through the forms of interaction that arise during (or maybe also "before"- in terms of expectations and "after"- in terms of effects).

Key words | Events – Collective Emotions – Culture – Post-modern Society

1 Introduction

By their very nature (etymological at least) "events" have always remained outside the routines of daily life, Goffman's "everyday life",[1] which "is not at all simple and transparent, but complex and disquieting",[2] and have today become almost a standard feature of daily life itself partly perhaps losing the aura of particular importance that should always and anyway characterise them. Such an invasion of everyday life concerns both real events, paraphrasing Mailer,[3] and the "eventoids", or those events that have no real consistency except for when they appear in the media, but which can influence social behaviour insofar as being "creators" of reality.

The typology of events is now highly respectable. Apart from the "classical" one for functions (political, religious, cultural in the broad sense, sports and folkloric events, etc.) one can find at present a genuine mapping of events (or even of business linked to the idea of the event) such as show business events, profit/non-profit events, periodic/occasional events, mono/multi-thematic events, local/international events among others, in some way derived and/or left over from the

[1] Erving Goffman, *La vita quotidiana come rappresentazione* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1969).

[2] Pier Paolo Giglioli, ed., *Linguaggio e contesto sociale* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1969), 23.

[3] Norman Mailer, *Marilyn* (Milan: Mondadori, 1982).

above-mentioned ones; nonetheless all of them are to be considered as genuine "systemic sets" of events, functions, protagonists and minor figures or, in other words, a network rather than a "situation" even if a complex one, as the term could originally lead one to think.

Be that as it may, as was stated above, at present the pervasiveness of events is a fact, produced and producer of reality as well as "communication places"[4] and widespread participation or even still "consumer objects" as will be discussed at a later point.

2 Differences, specificities and newness

Fact and event are basically synonymous, or at least that is what the dictionary tells us[5] even if an event, etymologically (*e-venire*) indicates an actual specificity of obviousness. This is not of interest so much as a purely philological question but as a sociological one, insofar as now the event has become something particularly significant from the viewpoint of the study of phenomenologies whether they be macro, meso or micro.

While it is true that in a number of cases, the event label is in all probability given to facts which in themselves are not particularly important or collectively significant (that is owing to economic or political reasons, etc.), this seems possible both owing to a basic devaluation of the word perhaps because of the image and simulacra (it is well known how what could be defined as lovely is now stupendous, what was important is now sensational, etc.) as much as a social construction of reality – increasingly conditioned by the media – in which the absence of planning and great narrations[6] must be compensated for with something, even though by and large ephemeral.

This sort of devaluation seems to begin to concern the event itself: the event of the year or an extraordinary event are recurring expressions which, although not always referring to something actually significant, are perhaps witness to an exasperated/exasperating endless search to arouse Luhmann's irritation by feeding itself.[7]

This is once again the all-important search which is of great interest for the understanding of the reality surrounding us; this is independent of the nature (at least classificatory) of the events themselves:

- from a historiographic point of view, as rightly maintained by Braudel,[8] as history is often made up of events connected with history: the èvènementielle is undoubtedly a constructive part of flows and links as well as developments and causalities, but it is in turn the product of those very developments/causalities, or, in other words, a short time can often be dominating but not necessarily determining;
- from a sociological perspective, the event "is not limited to happening, but reintroduces the difference between before and after and with it the horizons of references to other possibilities";[9]
- with respect to the media theory, it can amplify, deny or simply make an event known as well as construct it in the sense of making it become a fact/event, according to the self-referential

[4] Candida Vivalda, *Il teatro della salute* (Rome: Sassella, 2001).
[5] Decio Cinti, *Dizionario dei sinonimi e dei contrari* (Novara: De Agostini, 1981).
[6] Jean François Lyotard, *La condizione postmoderna* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1987).
[7] Niklas Luhmann, *La realtà dei mass media* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2000).
[8] François Braudel, *Scritti sulla storia* (Milan: Mondadori, 1973).
[9] Claudio Baraldi, Giancarlo Corsi and Elena Esposito, *Glossar zu Niklas Luhmanns Theorie sozialer systeme* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1997), 109.

logic and choices of the media system itself); the media event[10] is a rather particular reality, it also being an interruption of the routine (in this case of programmes): by means of this, the media becomes the grand master of ceremonies of reality, even independently of the actual exceptional nature of the event represented, or at times even naturalising the primary nature (before media representation) of the event itself;
- from an economic perspective (in the wider and more complete sense of the word), the undoubted relevance that the planning, management, realisation and communication of the event has taken on is increasingly evident as something that generates value in often absolutely significant dimensions: the marketing of events[11] demonstrates this in more detail, accounting for a reality that is absolutely significant and consolidated;
- in a purely communicational perspective the "event is communication, or that is, it achieves communication by activating relations"[12] as an actual medium independent of its intrinsic features (a one-off event, recurrent event, continuous event, etc.);
- finally, in a social perspective, events are "places" in which people develop collective emotions through both the rituals of the events themselves.

Lastly, "once upon a time there was (also) the festival" or a question that can be asked in the hypothesis of defining/deepening the sense of many of the events that are organised, is that of whether the same events, and "to what extent" those events can be placed in contemporariness as "new" with respect, for example, to something that traditionally is deeply analogous with many events or "festivals" today:[13]

> In the context of uncertainties, the need for others and the transcendent, the time for institutionalised aggregation and individual and collective reassurance has been expressed from the our origins (…) emotions in the midst of which it is possible to discover a common ethos, one's own identity in that of others, the trust to face tomorrow, the need for recognition.[14]

Is the event a "festival new" or a "new festival"? This question is not only interesting from a semantic and abstract point of view; to try and answer it can be useful to better understand the original problem of the nature of the event and to do this (or at least to attempt to do so) one has to open a (short) parenthesis on the "innovation/creativity" discourse. Tajfel[15] emphasises that there is no point in speaking of "new" without the possibility of referring to something "old" which defines its sense and represents its specific features. Crespi[16] taking up Hirschman[17] in the context of complex reasoning on social action, events and creativity, rightly considers that it can be stated that very often, even in the overall logic of the basically linear relationship with the social structure of reference, the social actor can in certain situations "determine" considerable movements of meaning ("leaps", as Crespi defines them) which in fact make the actions themselves "new" with respect to the past.

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[10] Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz, *Le grandi cerimonie dei media* (Bologna: Baskerville, 1994).
[11] Sonia Ferrari, *Event Marketing* (Padua: Cedam, 2002).
[12] Luigi Argano, ed., *Gli eventi culturali* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2005), 33.
[13] Valerio Valeri, "Festa," in *Enciclopedia Einaudi, Vol. VI* (Turin: Einaudi, 1978).
[14] Vittorio Dini, "Festa," in *Dizionario di sociologia e antropologia culturale* (Assisi: Cittadella, 1984), 225.
[15] Henri Tajfel, *Gruppi umani e categorie sociali* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1985).
[16] Franco Crespi, *Evento e struttura* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1993), 141–144.
[17] Albert O. Hirschman, *The Rhetoric of Reaction: Perversity, Futility, Jeopardy* (Cambridge, MU: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1991).

This is what can be defined, to quote Zolberg,[18] as "traditional" problem finder creativity (the idea and consequent propensity to action, to rediscover needs/issues and represent them – furthermore satisfying them by means of "something new"), an intellectual "game" that embodies various typologies in it[19] and which makes that "leap" in the previously described meaning.

Events, which currently begin "to fill" a major part of our social relations, can in our opinion be conceptually defined as the outcome of a problem finder creativity, as said before:

> (…) events take on the importance of the sense and values that festivals used to have (…) they enable us to see, understand and experiment more. They construct works, images, symbols, memories and expectations for the collective imagination. They do not build society as they used to but they satisfy social demands and needs.[20]

3 The cities as a "stage"

The events can materialize, of course, and can be realized in any territorial situation in which it makes sense to the event itself; but a territory completely privileged at present in this sense is undoubtedly the city in general and large cities in particular. This is not only because at present more than 50% of the world population lives in cities, but mostly because cities have begun to have an increasingly leading role from the point of view of the socio-cultural construction of reality and, consequently, the place where it develops a "cultural market" becomes quantitatively and qualitatively absolutely significant.[21] In other words, at present the city can be seen not only as a natural "stage" for events but also as a place with all the pre-conditions necessary for an event to make sense, when all the conditions for the event itself produces the effects (desired and non-desired) expected.

This is because cities are a kind of complex synthesis of society, social relations and culture; a privileged field of construction, a development and sedimentation of everything (such as reports, processes, structures) a social "group" is able to engage in, and this also in terms of differences and inequalities. As a result, cities are in fact a laboratory of great interest if we want to understand and study the dynamics of fundamental "being-together": ideas, practices, currents of thought in all areas/nature, production and/or distribution of wealth material and symbolic goods (now ephemeral as "mode", now more structuring as "lifestyle"), ordinary social relations (the "everyday life" of ethnomethodology) and extraordinary ("events"), public sphere interactions / private sphere, conflict and consensus: all is revealed in the cities. The city means "modernity" and is somehow synonymous. In this sense the analysis of Simmel[22] which configures just like the "social space" in which precisely the main experiences of modernity itself are localized in all its complexity and contradictions:

- the city lives the experience now, "undocked" now "embedded" into a common feeling, a finalization of the socially shared, albeit through paths or microgroups strongly individualistic, often even "virtual", however "private";
- is characterized by detachment, estrangement, non-involvement of unitary expression of subjective intention and objective; the return to a solo size (particularly after the "great seasons" solidarity of the 1960s and 1970s) can certainly mean the trend exhaustion of certain

[18] Vera Zolberg, *Sociologia dell'arte* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1994), chapter IV.
[19] Renée Caillois, *I giochi e gli uomini* (Milan: Bompiani, 1981).
[20] Argano, *Gli eventi*, 29.
[21] Pietro Scarduelli, *Per una antropologia del XXI secolo* (Rome: Squilibri, 2005).
[22] Georg Simmel, *La città* (Milan: Mondadori, 1995).

structures of modernity, in the broadest sense of the term, or in the process of construction of the world, of social bonds, of ethics, social action in general as well as we know them, because they have only lived socialized to them;
– the city resolves, just attempting to cope with the growing social complexity in the "present" almost like an "absolute" size in which "memory" is not significant and the "future" structurally uncertain. The "present" is in fact close to the social actor in place even through an almost unnatural "use of time", a conditioner and/or binding if not, "colonizing" the experience through the rigid structure and standardization activities in routine and ritualism.

As has been argued, cities are a prileged *cultural bearing milieu*, but now it will be useful to reflect on the important role of the media in the meaning of the events themselves.

4 The event as a social construction: the role of the media

Events become "social" insofar as (sometimes even at a later date) they are recognised as such by society itself.[23] In fact any happening is an event at the moment in which it is established as a genuine cultural object, even if, at least according to a merely quantitative approach, from their "birth" this concerns a reality of collective interest. An attempt will now be made to outline a hypothesis of the "sociability" structure of the event (which goes back in a broad sense to the concept of media newsworthiness).

Culture, the constitutive dimension of our experience of life, "imposes meanings on a universe which is otherwise chaotic and random";[24] the cultural systems transform events and things into cultural objects with specific meanings, explaining how certain phenomenologies of the social world are made important when transformed into cultural objects and/or social problems, while others remain forgotten. If culture can draw attention to certain facts, can it sometimes create the fact itself?

Let us begin by considering how the events that take place can become cultural objects. The creation of a cultural object is in fact similar to the creation of an event, definable as the relationship, created by interpretation, between a fact and a structure. But how can facts become cultural objects defined as events?

According to Griswold, in order to create a cultural object (and then define it as an event) it has to be structured by a set of intersecting ideas and institutions;[25] moreover, social facts tend to "adapt" to the ideas and institutions of the society in which they are found. For this reason, "collective" events are generally constructed in one way and not in equally possible others. If the problems of collective interest are culturally defined, it is normal to expect that they increase and fall in popularity over time. With regard to this, attempts have been made to identify what explains the rise and fall of events, starting from what is identified as "a situation of collective interest", re-elaborating the thesis by Hilgartner and Bosk[26] on "social problems" which like social events are the products of a process of a collective definition and an allocation of meaning.

Hilgartner and Bosk[27] propose a model for the understanding of social events that goes beyond the traditional models. It sets out courses for the systematic study of the factors and forces

[23] Wendy Griswold, *Sociologia della cultura* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1997).
[24] Ibid., 133.
[25] Ibid., 134.
[26] Stephen Hilgartner and Charles Bosk, "The Rise And Fall Of Social Problems," *American Journal Of Sociology* 94 (1988): 33–46.
[27] Ibid., 53–78.

that drive the public's attention towards the same event and far away from the other objective or putative conditions. The two authors define a social fact of collective interest as a putative condition or situation that is labelled as problematic in the arenas of public debate and its successive and consequent action and use a wide sphere of sociological literature as well as literature on the interpretative process in mass media, then proceeding to making use of the theory of organisation networks, submitting the influence and the interrelations between institutions and social networks to the "publicly" framed and presented definitions of a social event.

Starting from "agenda setting",[28] it states that the original focus (the process structuring the agenda for public decisions made in official forums) is to limit others (the process structuring whatever concerns the collective in the public arenas) in the identification and choice of events of general interest.

This complex model contains a number of constitutive elements such as:
- a dynamic competition process among the actors of a society in the assertion of the importance of events;
- the institutional arenas that are used as "environmental" conditionings where the social issues gain attention and growth;
- the driving capacity of these arenas, such as the possible limit of the number of facts that can gain widespread attention at the same time;
- the selection principles or institutional, political and cultural factors which influence the probability of survival of the formulas of these very facts;
- the models of interaction among the different arenas;
- the operation networks that promote and attempt to control the facts, whose communication channels in turn form huge arenas.

As a first step in understanding the nature of the collective definition process, it should be noted that there is a consistent mass of potential facts, that is situations and putative conditions that could be conceived as such, and that this mass is highly stratified, even if the great majority of these putative conditions remain outside or on the edges of the public debate. Furthermore, the temporal "attention" span can vary enormously.

Certain events maintain a position outside the public debate for a long time, then fade into the background, while others grow and decline much more rapidly. Others develop silently, fade away and then re-emerge again (never completely disappearing) obtaining a fluctuating amount of public attention. There are then the "potential" events which are not only governed by their objective nature but also by an extremely selective process in which they "compete" to obtain public attention in society. A fraction of potential events is often publicly presented by groups or individuals defining them as such, and these social actors coming from various sectors of society can have very different aims: actively organised political interest groups and social movements may want to use facts/events to stimulate reforms or social changes.

There are many ways to define a specific situation as an "event", and this also depends on the interpretative framework: within each actual problem area, different ways of framing the situation in fact compete in being accepted as the authoritative version of reality.

By means of these interaction processes, events can be defined as such and appear and stay on the public agenda. Their success or failure in this "competition" does not necessarily depend on the number of people involved or the number of independent variables (of the "newsmaking" type) which are needed to measure their importance.

[28] Melvin De Fleur and Sandra Ball-Rokeach, *Teorie delle comunicazioni di massa* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1995).

The collective definition of a social event therefore does not occur in society or public opinion as generally understood but in specific and particular public arenas in which social issues are focused upon and developed. These arenas include the executive and legislative branches of the government, the media, political organisations, organised social events, religious congregations, professional societies, etc.

It is within these institutions that events as social issues are discussed, selected, defined, framed, dramatised, "packaged" and presented to the public, as well as consequently experienced by the public itself.

Even if there are many differences between the various arenas, they all share important characteristics: above all, each one has a capacity range that limits the number of situations which it can develop each time. It is clear that the number of situations that could be potentially interpreted as problems is so huge as to be virtually infinite, while the space and time to present the problems publicly is completely limited. It is this discrepancy between the number of potential issues and the dimensions of the public space that can host them that makes the competition among events so crucial and central in the collective definition process.

It will therefore be useful to develop, even though very briefly, certain further considerations on the role of the media in this construction of reality.

Additionally, reflections on the media have been focused for some time now on the socio-cultural mechanisms of the social construction of reality, a process which is increasingly "mediated" by the large communication systems.

In other words, to speak of "mediated reality by the media" means (today more than in the past) to consider:

a) the media as producers of a "second reality" parallel (even though intersecting) to the one experientially experimented in an im-mediated' way;
b) the media as "diffusers" (but also "producers") of "cultural objects" with a pervasive activity strongly influenced by social behaviour.

As far as generally concerns the production of reality, the basic question is not linked to the problem of how the media "can/wants" to distort reality (the image of the media as "manipulators") or of how the media "represent" reality itself (the image of the media as "windows on the world"), but how, insofar as "systems", they construct (their) reality with their own specific logic and modalities of observation, choice (gatekeeping), highlighting (newsmaking, but also the "programmes"), all this achieved through "their own" language.

This is also because the media, like every other system, is basically self-referential, capable that is of structuring the environment and therefore of "interpreting", "translating" and "retransmitting" the same according to criteria and/or self-constructed internal processes for which any "data" can become relevant.

As far as the production and reproduction of culture is concerned, it is certain that the media, even within the context of a complex process that includes stages and actors as well as a system of highly differentiated needs/functions,[29] constitutes a fundamental moment of the process itself, from its beginning up to the present. This is a crucial moment both because it is now mainly by means of the media that "cultural objects"[30] become collectively such (often

[29] Griswold, *Sociologia*, chapter 4.
[30] Ibid., 27.

as "mass" phenomena) in a sometimes "surplus" and "unanchoring" way,[31] often also creating "difficulty in considering culture as a coherent system of meanings".

Within the context of the cultural production process, the media "diffuses" and "stabilises" (even if at times ephemerally as can be seen with "fashions") the cultural objects created elsewhere, "considering them" in time and "handing them down" considering also their more than consolidated function of primary and secondary agents of socialisation contributing therefore to imprinting, to the basic as well as individual personality in a way that should not be underestimated. The activity of the media in cultural production is not necessarily limited, however, to diffusing and/or handing down but to "valorizing" (or "devalorizing") the socio-cultural facts,[32] both symbolically and instrumentally, above and beyond whatever is highlighted by the agenda setting, to "reifying" the same to make them "appear" and/or "disappear" according to a logic independent of the nature of the cultural objects themselves, but on the basis of a logical system.

It must nonetheless be recalled (with the threat of an "apocalyptic" reading of this essay) that decoding is not necessarily the "preferred" but often the "negotiated" or even "opposited" one[33] or rather, that the so-called "valorization" and "reification" are not achieved in the sense of "Pavlov's dog", or also that between "message offered" and "message interiorised"[34] there is "no easier said than done". All of the contributions from communication theory and research are actually well-known, from the theory of "the field" to "uses and gratifications" and, above all to "cultural studies". The aim here is to emphasize that that the media as cultural reproducers and diffusers (and at times also valorizers, as mentioned above, if not actual producers) nonetheless construct all data in terms of values and/or self-referentially defined behaviour (and as such interpretable insofar as "observed systems" apart from being "observing systems") and with respect to logic linked to those of the "dominating social groups."[35]

5 The events as "emotional places"

Altough emotions are essentially "subjective", generally and necessarly not shared with others, it is entire possible that more individuals together, interpreting and experiencing an event with the same intensity, make these emotions truly "collective"; in other words, one can talk of an "emotional contagion" as a form (immediate and automatic) of emotional sharing, characterized by the absence of any cognitive mediation.[36]

Certain basic considerations:
a) according to Turnaturi,[37] there is no field or aspect of contemporary life that is not flooded with emotions that run rampant in public discourse, in the media sweeping away all forms of confidentiality and discretion, breaking all barriers between the public and the private. Showing one's emotions seems to have become the "only way" to express oneself and get others excited.

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[31] Franco Crespi, *Manuale di sociologia della cultura* (Bari: Laterza, 1996), 219–220.
[32] Luhmann, *La realtà*, 27.
[33] Griswold, *Sociologia*, chapter 4.
[34] Mauro Livolsi, *Manuale di sociologia della comunicazione* (Bari – Rome: Laterza, 2000), 276.
[35] Diane Crane, *La produzione culturale* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1997), 54.
[36] Silvia Bonino, *I riti del quotidiano* (Turin: Boringhieri, 1998).
[37] Gabriella Turnaturi, introduction to *Intimità fredde. Le emozioni nella società dei consumi*, ed. Eva Illouz (Milan, Feltrinelli, 2007); see also Gabriella Turnaturi, "Emozioni: maneggiare con cura," in *Intimità fredde. Le emozioni nella società dei consumi*, ed. Eva Illouz (Feltrinelli, Milano, 2007), 15.

I therefore exist if I display my emotions publicly, buying notoriety and visibility through this new "pass".

b) The origin of the emotions, passions and feelings[38] is strongly influenced by the cultural background of each community. This is why there can never be an emotional feeling unique and universal fact, although subjective and individual, the "emotion is linked to the socio-environmental circular: it changes our social action but is triggered by the latter". Most provocatively, there is the version of sociality with which Sartre[39] was concerned. In this case, emotion is conceptualized as socially *constituted*. In this form of sociality, emotion is seen as being

> (…) defined by and defining social relationships. This perspective suggests that we cannot know anything about our social relationships without the emotions that we use to navigate ourselves through these relationships. But, similarly, emotion is fully encompassed by those social relationships.

This implies that emotion does not exist within the solitary individual because it depends on social configurations to not just trigger it, but also to actually form it.[40]

c) The collective dimension has partly disintegrated in the late-modern contemporary: the individual weakly swings closer between individual freedom and existential loneliness, emotions in general are more collective and the feeling is truly disjointed. What is important is to consume: objects, assets (including intangible assets such as "events"), provided services are consumed instantly, quickly, and even the mass media, which is now "living with us", fills and conditions our space. Everything is "liquid",[41] changing, transient including personal relationships and emotions reduced to "disposable" consumer goods.

d) On the other hand, emotions in the postmodernity have gained considerable importance, both in the private and in the public and hold at the same time the role of the middle, and the end parameter of sociality. It seems that people orient their lives on a search for excitement and pleasurable sensations, and judge experiences and relationships according to their intensity. Quoting Bauman: "we can say that the common perception of the postmodern citizen's duty is to lead a good life."[42] The result is the model of an individual who is identified with the one proposed by Bauman, i.e. the "pleasure-seeker" and "collector of pleasures," as opposed to the "purveyor of goods" the representative of early modernity.

f) Finally one has to remember that people enter into relation with one other even (or perhaps especially) through the emotions, and the social interactions that result in further developing emotions, in short, emotions are socially constructed and change social practices.[43]

Human emotions are also contagious, and feeling strong emotions would have the effect of synchronization of brain activity between people. These were the findings of a study conducted at

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[38] Massimo Cerulo, *Il sentire controverso* (Roma: Carocci, 2010).

[39] Jean Paul Sartre, *The Emotions: Outline Of A Theory* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1948).

[40] Larissa Tiedens and Colin Leach, eds., *The Social Life Of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 3.

[41] Zigmund Bauman, Vita liquida (Bari: Laterza, 2009).

[42] Zigmund Bauman, *La società dell'incertezza* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1999), 55.

[43] Henry Flam, L'*uomo emozionale* (Milan: Anàbasi, 1995).

Aalto University in Finland.[44] Observing emotions in non-verbal communication of others, for example, a smile, creates the same emotional response in us. Tis synchronization of emotional states between individuals supports social interaction: in fact, when all the members of the group share a common emotional state, their brain processes information from the environment in a similar way.

In the research in question, when the study participants saw short films which were pleasant, neutral or unpleasant their brain activity was investigated with functional magnetic resonance imaging.

The results revealed that unpleasant emotions and intense to synchronize processing networks are particularly located in the frontal regions and medians, while living situations which are extremely exciting result in the synchronization of networks which support vision, attention and the sense of touch.

According to Nummenmaa, the sharing of other emotional states provides observers with a somatosensory and neural framework which facilitates the understanding of the intentions and actions of others and allows you to tune in with them. This automatic tuning facilitates social interaction and group processes.

> There is a wide agreement that social events and entities outside the individual play a role in the generation of emotions (…) there are numerous way that emotions can be social. For example, psychologists have long conceptualized emotion as *responsive* to social events (…) emotions are typically considered as responses to important events in our lives, and social events are among the most important (…) finally, emotions are conceptualized as socially constituted. In this form of sociality, emotion is seen as being defined by and defining social relationships.[45]

It is in the events (or rather, the participation in social interactions with them) that emotions can occur more freely and widely. An encounter with the "other", not "mediated by the media" all that much which encases the experience through their own codes; in other words, the events, "products", of the postmodern culture industry and at the same time "producers" of culture and social, must be regarded as a "place" where (through the dynamic ritual event itself) the collective emotions take shape and are expressed, becoming therefore themselves, in turn, the "product" of the event and "producing" culture.

The event produces "squares" (real and/or virtual), places that meet, share emotions "here and now" without, as has been said, a contribution of the all-encompassing media, penalizing just the interpersonal relationship and direct contact. The event creates conditions to accommodate the need to "get together" with a great emotional outlet.

This need, however, is modeled in terms of postmodernism, which is not necessarily stable and long-lasting but not limited to a concept of happening.

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[44] Minna Nummenmaa, Enrico Glereanb, Mikko Viinikainenb, Iiro P. Jääskeläinenb, Riitta Haria, and Mikko Sams, eds., "Emotions promote social interaction by synchronizing brain activity across individuals," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 109, no. 24 (2012): 9599–9604, accessed December 30, 2012, http://www.pnas.org/content/109/24/9599. 2012.

[45] Tiedens and Leach, *The Social Life*, 2–4.

6 Events that are re-proposed in time

Events that are periodically repeated in time therefore become a constant feature of the socio-cultural experience can take on the importance of traditions.

With an extremely meaningful etymon wavering between delivery and teaching, traditions or "canonised collective memory",[46] can be defined as the "models of beliefs, customs, values, behaviour, knowledge and competences that are handed down from generation to generation by means of the socialisation process".[47] This term is then generally used to indicate both the product and the process[48] of the relative cultural production of the transmission/teaching of the same. Traditions come to make up a fundamental part and a distinctive element of cultural identity and belonging, and moreover constitute a significant point of reference for social action in general and, in particular, support a specific Weberian typology of the action itself, "in conformity with acquired habits that have become constitutive of custom; it is the reaction to consuetudinary stimuli that are in part considerably imitative. Most of the actions in our daily life are dictated by the sense of tradition".[49]

As a distinctive element of culture, traditions take on both endogenous (of self-recognition) and exogenous (of identification) importance for the social groups referring to them.

The traditions system can be interpreted as a genuine social institution, both in the sense of "form of belief in action and recognised behaviour, decreed and constantly practised" and in the sense of "consolidated practices, habitual ways of doing things, characteristics of a group activity".[50] Therefore, as institutions traditions acquire a complex social functionality which can be summarised as follows:[51]

- simplification of the social action (a sort of collective preconceived thought making behaviour easier);
- behaviour compass (the supplying of pre-arranged schemes of reference).

The overall system of traditions, with respect to an idea of the culture-subculture *continuum* can then be distinguished between great and small traditions,[52] or complementarity, the coexistence between a) features linked to a specific community making part of a wider social system and more widespread, generalised and common features or also b) differences existing between official cultures and folk cultures; coexistence and complementarity which are established in a continuity of reciprocal reinterpretations made up also (or often) of rediscoveries, re-evaluations and past recollections.

"Street cultural events" are in all probability the most significant to be seen at present and which are repeated over time among the most widespread forms of events with a numerous following. On the one hand, this is "an interpretation of a cultural fact as a living and present fact, of action and relations (…) to strongly express the culture in which we live, its memories and traditions, projects and utopias. This course, with a demanding rush for extent and greatness is all synthesised and realised in the here and now of an event".[53] On the other hand,

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[46] Paolo Jedlowski and Maria Rampazi, eds., *Il senso del passato* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1991).
[47] Charlotte Seymour-Smith, *Dizionario di antropologia* (Florence: Sansoni, 1991), 411.
[48] Alberto Maria Cirese, *Cultura egemonica e culture subalterne* (Palermo: Palombo, 1996), 96.
[49] Giovanni Morra, *Propedeutica sociologica* (Bologna: Monduzi, 1994), 96.
[50] Luciano Gallino, *Dizionario di sociologia* (Turin: Utet, 1993), 388.
[51] Carlo Mongardini, *La cultura del presente* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1993), 222–225.
[52] Seymour-Smith, *Dizionario*, 203.
[53] Argano, *Gli eventi*, 23–24 .

> the street is an environment in which to plan and organise facilities, or rather experiences, and is as hard as it is interesting. It is a habitat worthy of attention as it belongs to what in jargon is called the urban interior, where the boundaries, inhabitants, customs, functions, habits, furniture, climate, uncertainties, the intrusive (exogenous) and endogenous factors are those of a particular increasingly multi-ethnic, intercultural and multi-social cohabitation, but at the same time respectful of privacy, differing interests and of the limits that the privatised use of the public facility imposes.[54]

Cultural street events enjoy an increasingly high participation and this we believe is not only due to the "content/s" of the events themselves (even though fundamental) but also sociologically speaking, as a result of the opportunity to meet and know oneself again through a common (or communication) action formalised in what can be defined as a ritual:

> in a certain sense, the ritual, like the set of schemes that structure and organise the way of carrying out certain collective activities from the symbolic point of view of feeling and imagination, characterises all the elements of a practical culture, from the material ones to the social and personal ones. In the economy of practical culture (of action and practice) it therefore represents what the expressive symbols in the strict sense of the word represent in theoretical culture, that is, it diffuses communication.[55]

Rituals can now be defined as "social dramas"[56] and "means of collective expression of socially regulated feelings"[57] and also as collective practices with a highly symbolic and psychologically liberating content, aimed at strengthening social cohesion and perpetuating the cultural reference outcome. They can be classified into rituals (to emphasise loss of status and/or individual and collective social inefficiency), into strengthening rituals (celebrations of particular positive results achieved), into renewal rituals (to back up significant moments of socio-cultural change), integration rituals (events to emphasize and launch collective news), recomposition rituals of conflicts (with the aim of recomposing deteriorated social balances).

Apart from the specific typology, rituals constitute a genuine compass for collective social action, a particularly suitable instrument to ensure the cultural continuity of social groups by means of the very possibility (particularly at critical moments) of symbolic meetings.

7 An events society?

Since, and without having to refer to Weber, sociology and the social sciences are in general "all encompassing", attempting that is to interpret social phenomenologies both "as they are shown" and "with respect to what they show" in a detailed logic, we cannot avoid hypothesising that the success of events in today's society is not accidental or "exceptional" but can come into the interpretative logic of the widely consolidated contemporaneousness itself, or the late-modern condition.[58]

As is well-known there can be a number of different significances attributable to and in fact attributed to late modernity, which is our contemporaneousness as presented to us:

– it can certainly mean the basic exhaustion of some of the supporting structures of modernity, in the broadest sense of the term, or of the construction process of the world, social restraints,

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[54] Giorgio Gilberti, *L'evento in strada* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2004), 12.

[55] Armando Catemario, *Lineamenti di antropologia culturale* (Rome: Armando, 1996), 395.

[56] Victor Turner, *Antropologia della performance* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1993).

[57] Valerio Valeri, "Rito," in *Enciclopedia Einaudi, Vol. XII* (Turin: Einaudi, 1981).

[58] Lyotard, *La condizione*.

ethics, social action in general as we have known them, experienced exactly because socialised to the same;
- it is resolved in order to attempt to deal with the growing social complexity, in the "present" almost like an "absolute" dimension in which the "memory" is of little significance and the "future" structurally uncertain. This "present" in fact closes the social actor in the experimentalism taking place even by means of an almost unnatural "use of time", conditioning and/or binding if not even "colonising" the experience through the rigid structuring and standardisation of activity in routines and ritualism;
- it can therefore emerge as a sort of uneasy state of mind of modernity itself, in terms of what no longer exists but also "what does not yet exist and does not know what it wants to be". Far from being an intellectual fashion, even if it could arise in the artistic-figurative field at the appearance of the term in this cultural area, post-modernity is manifested not so much in a definite and entirely definable set, but in a plurality of specific crises in the single representations of reality, the real modality of "incremental" change not being "strategically" linked in the different areas of culture and contemporary society;
- it can indicate a plurality of specific crises in the basic modalities of the social construction of reality of the representation of reality itself; a cultural morphogenesis from a certainly distant past that comes to change the importance and priorities of needs, choices and spiritual and material experientiality;
- it can appear as a "big container" in which, with difficulty, one tries to grasp and give some sense to a generalised fragmentation of experience that is at times "unanchored" and at others "re-anchoring itself" to a common feeling and a finalisation of socially shared action both by means of strongly individualistic or common but not necessarily collective paths.

All this undoubtedly leads to a considerable increase in uncertainty and high thresholds of ambiguity in social action in "imagining" and realising a plan (social and existential at the same time); a sort of continuous "pilgrimage" between different options and hypotheses (often opposing) of life, in the search for an identity no longer founded and resistant that comes to be perceived as "a handicap rather than an advantage", as it limits the possibility of adequately controlling one's existential path. It turns out to be a weight which hinders movement, a ballast to be thrown overboard in order to keep one's head above water.

The event (in itself an ephemeral situation but which takes shape and moves in a relatively certain structure, as said above) and the importance given to it at the same time seems to be something very late-modern owing to a number of reasons such as:
- the consequence of the fragmentation of experience and the failure of basic references, the "great narrations" that somehow determine the triumph of the "particular" over the general progress of things, of the "moment" over the "flow" deprived of a long term perspective;
- the constant increase in the sense of uncertainty can be overcome (more or less as an illusion) by unusual moments such as events which stimulate a recovery (more or less momentary) of the sense of we-ness, of the community perspective even if not necessarily collective.

The fact of constituting a strong urge to "exit from" socio-cultural routines, from a daily life which, even if a "safe harbour" can also be a "weight", a constriction especially if lacking in plans. To be able to interpret the event as a typical late-modern operation, according to a well-defined mechanism by Martelli[59] it is made up of:

[59] Stefano Martelli, *Sociologia dei processi culturali* (Brescia: La Scuola, 1999), 138.

– the recovery of former cultural conventions,
– the maintaining of modern features,
– the distortion of both in surprising re-elaboration;

in other words the event, its collective appreciation and the significant participation in it, as the outcome at least in part of a fuzzy logic highlighted in many contemporary social and cultural phenomena.

Whatever the case may be, events are now a constituent and constitutive part of our reality and this is why, only research, as has been said and as always, can truly define their sense and meaning.

8 A (very short) conclusion

In conclusion, it can be stated that important phenomena at the basis of a new post-industrial society, like the centrality of knowledge and intellectual type activities, free time that prevails over work time, intellectualisation, creativity, ethics, aesthetics, subjectivity, emotiveness, the global and the glocal, the decline of the "strong" (materialistic) needs and the diffusion of "weak" (post-materialist) needs, the new fears, the new hopes, the new spirituality, virtuality, the transformation of the family nucleus and the affirmation of new social subjects, the increasingly multiethnic society, the urban culture, information, schooling, collective and connective intelligence, nomadism and permanency, the decline of old ways and the start of new ones generate a spectacularly fast change in the system of expectations, experiences, relations and communication.[60]

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[60] Argano, *Gli eventi*, 15.

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From Homo Sovieticus to the XXI Century: Some Reflections on the Ambiguities of the "De-Utopianism" Process in Contemporary Russia

Abstract | The present paper is devoted to certain issues connected to Post-Communist anthropology, focusing in particular on the ambiguous consequences of what is commonly defined as the "de-utopianism" process in contemporary Russia. By means of an analysis of samples taken from influential literary works by current authors (such as V. Pelevin and Vl. Sorokin), attention will be drawn to human types, to their anthropological and psychological characterization on the background of the harsh transition period following the fall of the USSR. The contradictory images depicted in the literary texts also express the deep heritage of the Communist past and the current weakness of Russian civil society, deeply conditioned by drastic social and cultural changes.

Key words | Russian Literature – Post-Communist Anthropology – Pelevin Viktor – *Homo Sovieticus* – the de-utopianism process

The current essay is devoted to some observations on ambiguities connected with deep transformations following the collapse of the former Soviet Union (1922–1991). As is widely known, the heavy hardships experienced by the country on the social, political and economic levels have also had a considerable influence on the cultural and anthropological plans, on the self-awareness of the Russian people and on the artistic representations of their new, hybrid identity. The complex legacy of the Communist past, particularly evident in the transition years, but still subliminally present today, will be primarily considered from the psychological point of view, by means of an analysis of meaningful passages taken from contemporary literary works. The impact of certain slogans and of the typically Soviet linguistic code – *novojaz*, very similar to Orwellian *Newspeak* –, which artificially pervaded every field of human expression,[1] are clear examples of the semiotic atmosphere of those times, largely marked by suspicion, fear and social conformism. Reading between the lines, a number of the mocking and stereotypical images evoked in fictional texts provide the possibility to reflect about these aspects, tracing back the deep-rooted origins of specific attitudes and behaviours.

[1] On *Novojaz* see Benedikt Sarnov, *Naš sovetskij novojaz. Malen'kaja ènciklopedija real'nogo socializma* (Moscow: Èksmo, 2005).

What is usually defined at present as "Russian mentality" (*mental'nost'*) is highly conditioned by the controversial cultural and anthropological heritage of the Socialist period.[2] Its devastating and long-lasting effects cannot be underestimated, particularly for what concerns social relations, the approach to the surrounding world and the value of human life.[3] The radical and multifaceted de-utopianism process[4] which invested Russian society has brought about manifold consequences, both of a concrete and spiritual nature. Apart from the most striking and superficial elements typical of the Yeltsin years (1991–1999),[5] to the eyes of a western observer it may not be so easy to understand how the new, unprecedented availability on the market of a wide choice of food products and consumer goods substantially changed citizens' feelings, habits and inner passions, as well as their perception of reality. The never-ending queues and the chronic lack of goods of the Soviet era,[6] which generated an entire range of frustrations, the necessity of "useful contacts" (*svjazy*) and semi-legal tricks to obtain what one needed (*blat*), lie at the root of an irreversible change in peoples' frames of mind.

The neologism *Homo Sovieticus*, a pseudo-Latin form for "Soviet man", was used as a critical and satirical reference to an average person in the former Soviet Union; it soon became a socio-political concept also present in other countries of the so-called Eastern Bloc. The term, usually employed with negative connotations, was coined by the well-known writer, philosopher and sociologist Aleksandr Zinov'ev (1922–2006), who selected it as the title of one of his most successful

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[2] See the ambivalent perception of the figure of Stalin in Venedikt Erofeev, *Moscow to the End of the Line* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1994).

[3] Orlando Figes, *The Whisperers: Private Life in Stalin's Russia* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2007).

[4] With the assumption of "de-utopianism process", we allude to the complex web of emotive, political and socio-cultural reactions to the failing of the Communist "materialized utopia". As Groys wrote, the disintegration of the USSR brought about a complete reconsideration of previous aims and ideas about human beings and society as a whole: "In the best Hegelian tradition, the human being as such was understood by Soviet ideology as pure potentiality, a fluid nothing that becomes something only if it is given a certain function, a certain role in the process of socialist life-building." (Boris Groys, *The Total Art of Stalinism* [London and New York: Verso, 2011], 122). On this topic see also Scott Shane, *Dismantling Utopia: How Information Ended the Soviet Union* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1994).

[5] We are referring to some of the most evident, ostentatious and *pošlye* (vulgar, kitsch) aspects of the 1990s, such as the sudden opening in the heart of Moscow of luxurious and exclusive nightclubs and casinos visited by the so-called *novye russkie* (New Russians) with their showy train of intimidating bodyguards, beautiful girls and expensive western cars. The sociological and anthropological definition of *novye russkie* (also called *novye bogatye*) appeared for the first time in the newspaper *Kommersant* in 1992, and since then has been mainly present in the artistic field (in cinema, theatre or TV programmes), in the media and in popular information contexts. The expression entered the Russian language as a calque from the English form "New Russians"; this social category is at the centre of a range of amusing jokes and anecdotes, which stigmatize in a negative and ironic light some of their most popular attributes. On the topic see among others: Vladimir Pastuchov, "Novye russkie. Èvoljucija sovetskoj nomenklatury," *Megapolis Èkspress*, 24 fevralja, 1993; Zoja Boguslavskaja, "Oknami na jug. Èskiz k portretu 'novych russkich'," *Novyj Mir*, no. 8, (1995): 3–42; Tat'jana V. Čeredničenko, *Rossija 1990-ych: v sloganach, rejtingach, imidžach (aktual'nyj leksikon istorii kul'tury* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 1999); Sergej G. Kara-Murza, *Sovetskaja civilizacija. Kniga vtoraja*. Ot Velikoj Pobedy do našich dnej (Moscow: Algoritm, 2002), and the article by Igor' G. Jakovenko, "Novye russkie," accessed July 28, 2015, http://files.school-collection.edu.ru/.

[6] As several witnesses and scholars have remarked, the Russian terms *deficit/deficitnye tovary* (deficiency/goods shortage) denoted a sort of "ontological category" or immanent quality of Soviet everyday life, especially in the Brežnev years (1964–1982). On this theme see Sarnov, *Naš sovetskij novojaz*, 81–86; the observations of the Italian Slavist Gian P. Piretto (Gian Piero Piretto, *La vita privata degli oggetti sovietici. 25 storie da un altro mondo* [Milano: Sironi, 2012], 138–147) and the website "Vladimir Kozlov," accessed January 28, 2016, http://www.vladimir-kozlov.com/Veshchi.htm.

Fig. 1

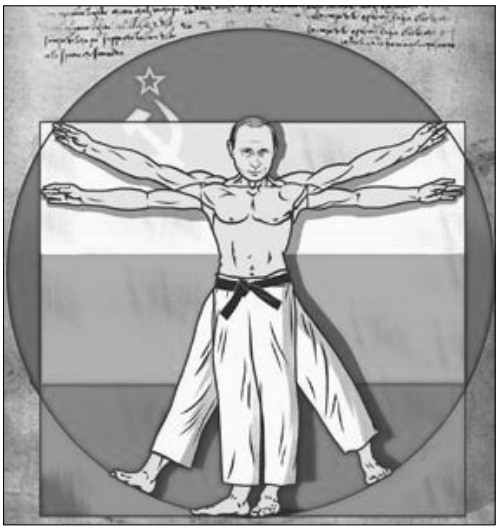

Fig. 2

works.[7] The expression ironically alludes to the "new type of human being" promoted by Soviet propaganda, who dedicated all his/her efforts to the edification of socialism.[8] In those times the official media and "orthodox" literature exalted the image of a morally upright man, imbued of collective, egalitarian ideals and freed from petty bourgeois values.[9] As a satirical reaction to this ideological vision, in the dreary and suffocating atmosphere of Brežnev *zastoj* (stagnation) the corrosive formula *Homo Sovieticus* effectively condensed the dull, conformist mentality and the heavily materialistic attitudes of philo-Soviet people, often described as empty puppets with a variety of tragic and humorous undertones [see **Fig. 1–2**]. It is important to underline, however, that the psychological influence of such a cultural and socio-political model not only affected party members (*apparatčiki*) or careerists,[10] but subtly conditioned almost everyone due to its impact being so powerful and pervasive.

In Russian Post-Communist slang another popular epithet with similar connotations is *sovok-sovki*, a nickname derived from the adjective *sovetskij* (Soviet) and used from 1990 on to characterize in a derogatory way both the Soviet Union and people "*sovetskij do mozga kostej*" (Soviet to the bone), still living and thinking in the old way.[11] It is of interest to recall, as it is well known, that the suffix "*-ok*" in the Russian language generally confers to a noun diminutive, but also familiar or affective nuances, which in this case add a sentimental and ridiculous halo to the informal expression. As Svetlana Aleksievič writes, "Sovietism" was a sort of widespread ontological and sociological condition, a common state of mind:

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[7] Aleksandr Zinoviev, *Homo Sovieticus* (Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1985).

[8] Sarnov, *Naš sovetskij novojaz*, 526–536.

[9] See Pëtr Vajl and Aleksandr Genis, *60-e. Mir sovetskogo čeloveka* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2001).

[10] See Leonid Ragozin, May 9, 2005, "The Thorny Legacy of Soviet Man," *BBC News*, accessed December 20, 2015, http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/europe/4529073.stm.

[11] Most scholars attribute the origins of this epithet to the renowned rock singer and musician A. B. Gradskij, to the culturological conceptualizations elaborated by P. Vajl and A. Genis and to M. Epštejn's creative usage of the term in his work about the mythologies of Soviet society: Michail Epštejn, *Velikaja Sov' (Great Sov'. A Philosophical-Mythological Essay)*, (New York: Word/Slovo, 1994). The study was originally written in 1988, was later published in the USA in 1994 and in Russia only in 2006. Today *sovok* corresponds to a widely known notion, commonly spread in the Russian and East European media and in their cultural debates (see Ragozin, "The Thorny Legacy"). For a short historic survey of the sources and the different connotations of the word see Michail Epštejn, "K istorii i značeniju slova 'sovok'," *Kul'tura pismennoj reči*, accessed January 25, 2016, http//gramma.ru/.

> Communism had a crazy plan: to build the 'old' human being all over again, as an eternal Adam. And in this they succeeded… and perhaps this is the only thing in which they succeeded. For more than seventy years a single human type, *Homo Sovieticus*, was produced in the laboratory of Marxism-Leninism. Some people think it was a tragic figure, while others referred to him with the ironic nickname '*Sovok*'. I seem to know that type of person, I know him quite well, I am close to him, I lived side by side with him for a number of years. He is me. 'Sovki' are my acquaintances, my friends, my parents. For some years I travelled throughout the former Soviet Union, because the anthropological concept of *Homo Sovieticus* affects not only Russians, but also Byelorussians, Turkmen, Ukrainians, Kazakhs… Nowadays we live in different states, we speak different languages, but you cannot mistake us for anybody else. You recognize us immediately![12]

As the culturologist Igor' Jakovenko points out, in the 1990s the term actually reflected "New Russians'" sardonic attitude towards the past [concerning "*novye russkie*" see **Fig. 3–5**]:

> The way "New Russians" related themselves to the traditional Soviet average person found its full formal definition in the word "*sovok*". "New Russians" were individualists, deeply rooted to earth.
>
> Idealistic, anti-pragmatic ethos and other intellectual "oddities" were alien to them. The luxurious consumerism and prominent features of the "New Russian" lifestyle strongly contrast with Soviet traditions.[13]

Fig. 3

Fig. 4

Fig. 5

[12] Svetlana Aleksievič, "Vremja second-hand. Konec krasnogo čeloveka," in *Družba narodov, Vremja sekond chènd* (Moscow: Vremja, 2013), 8–9. "У коммунизма был безумный план – переделать ‚старого' человека, ветхого Адама. И это получилось… может быть, единственное, что получилось. За семьдесят с лишним лет в лаборатории марксизма-ленинизма вывели отдельный человеческий тип – *homo soveticus*. Одни считают, что это трагический персонаж, другие называют его ‚совком'. Мне кажется, я знаю этого человека, он мне хорошо знаком, я рядом с ним, бок о бок прожила много лет. Он – это я. Это мои знакомые, друзья, родители. Несколько лет я ездила по всему бывшему Советскому Союзу, потому что homo soveticus – это не только русские, но и белорусы, туркмены, украинцы, казахи… Теперь мы живем в разных государствах, говорим на разных языках, но нас ни с кем не перепутаешь. Узнаешь сразу!" (Ibid., 4).

[13] Igor' G. Jakovenko, Aleksandr S. Achiezer and Igor' Kljamkin, *Istorija Rossii: konec ili novoe načalo?* (Moscow: Novoe izdatel'stvo, 2013). Igor' G. Jakovenko, "Novye Russkie," accessed December 31, 2015, http://www.krugosvet.ru/enc/gumanitarnye_nauki/sociologiya/NOVIE_RUSSKIE.html. "Отношение нового русского к традиционному советскому человеку нашло свое оформление в слове ‚совок'. Новый русский – индивидуалист, твердо стоящий на земле, чуждый этоса непрактичности и прочих интеллигентских ‚заморочек'. Престижное потребление, демонстративные характеристики образа жизни ‚нового русского' противостоят советским традициям" (ibid.)

Fig. 6

Fig. 7

Fig. 8

Apart from this relatively recent figurative usage, the word literally means "dustpan" or "scoop tool". The denotative association with rubbish has prompted a number of sarcastic jokes and caricatures, which play on the miserable and tragicomic end of the Socialist experience [see **Fig. 6–12**]. Concerning the artistic and existential plans, even the 1970s *samizdat* literature tended to portray *sovki* like robots, like ordinary mechanisms looking all the same under the imposing shadow of the socio-political system.[14] As Venedikt Erofeev (1938–1990) ironically wrote in *Moskva-Petuški*,[15] the deep contempt for money and business instilled by Soviet ideology in his contemporaries' minds gave them certain and almost caricature traits:

> The other passengers looked at me almost indifferently with their round, vacant eyes.
>
> I like that. I like it that my country's people have such empty, bulging eyes. This instills in me a feeling of legitimate pride. You can imagine what the eyes are like where everything is bought and sold (…).
>
> On the other hand, my people have such eyes! They're constantly bulging but with no tension of any kind in them. There's a complete lack of any sense but, then, what power! (What spiritual power!). These eyes will not sell out. They'll not sell or buy anything, whatever happens to my country. In days of doubt, in days of burdensome reflection, at a time of any trial or calamity, these eyes will not blink. They don't give a good Goddamn about anything.
>
> I like my people. I'm happy that I was born and grew up under the gaze of those eyes.[16]

Fig. 9

[14] On this aspect see also Epštejn, *Velikaja sov'*.

[15] Venedikt Erofeev, *Moskva-Petuški s kommentarijami Èduarda Vlasova* (Moscow: Vagrius, 2003), 27–28.

[16] "Публика посмотрела на меня почти безучастно, круглыми и как-будто ничем не занятыми глазами… Мне это нравится. Мне нравится, что у народа моей страны глаза такие пустые и выпуклые. Это вселяет в меня чувство законной гордости. Можно себе представить, какие глаза там. Где все продается и все покупается. […] Зато у моего народа – какие глаза! Они постоянно навыкате, но – никакого напряжения в них. Полное отсутствие всякого смысла – но зато какая мощь! (какая духовная мощь!) эти глаза не продадут. Ничего не продадут и ничего не купят. Что бы не случилось с моей страной, во дни сомнений, во дни тягостных раздумий, в годину любых испытаний и бедствий – эти глаза не сморгнут.

Once again, Aleksievič's work *Vremja Second Hand*[17] constitutes an invaluable source of analysis. The author, in fact, fixes as through a series of snapshots an intense flow of dissonant voices focusing on the everyday life details of the transition period. The contradictory, passionate memories which emerge from these pages seem to come directly out of the material and spiritual ruins of late post-Soviet history. The book, rich in anthropological considerations, recalls vivid pictures of common people's lives during and after the collapse of the USSR. Its title, half in Russian and half in English, immediately conveys the idea of the mental and cultural gap between the Communist past and the apocalyptic "day after" following its sudden end. As the writer comments, most of the witnesses she interviewed felt they were living in a sort of surreal "second-hand time", emptied of any genuine and steady meaning:

> All of us, people from Socialist countries, are similar and at the same time different from the rest of the people. We have our lexicon, our ideas about Good and Evil, about heroes and martyrs. We have a special relationship with death. In the short stories I review words such as 'shoot', 'execute', 'get rid of', 'erase' constantly hurt the ear. There are also other typically Soviet variations on the theme of annihilation as 'arrest', 'ten years without home-writing rights', 'emigration'. How much can human life be worth if we remember that recently millions of people died? We are full of hatred and prejudices. All comes from that place, where there was the GULAG system and a terrible war. Collectivization, de-kulakization, mass deportation…[18]

Tracing back concrete details and emotions through the recollection of episodes and personal memories, the narrative explores some of the distinctive features of the Soviet *byt* (everyday life) of that time. Without even being fully conscious of it, people were accustomed to a peculiar linguistic style characterized by brutal military jargon and by expressions alluding to repressive measures

Fig. 10

Fig. 11

Fig. 12

Им все божья роса… . Мне нравится мой народ. Я счастлив, что родился и возмужал под взглядами этих глаз" (ibid., 27–28).

[17] Aleksievič, "Vremja."

[18] Ibid., 4 (my translation, I. R.): "Все мы, люди из социализма, похожие и не похожие на остальных людей – у нас свой словарь, свои представления о добре и зле, о героях и мучениках. У нас особые отношения со смертью. Постоянно в рассказах, которые я записываю, режут ухо слова: ‚стрелять', ‚расстрелять', ‚ликвидировать', ‚пустить в расход' или такие советские варианты исчезновения, как: ‚арест', ‚десять лет без права переписки', ‚эмиграция'. Сколько может стоить человеческая жизнь, если мы помним, что недавно погибали миллионы? Мы полны ненависти и предрассудков. Все оттуда, где был ГУЛАГ и страшная война. Коллективизация, раскулачивание, переселение народов…".

Fig. 13

(«streljat', rasstreljat', likvidirovat'», «shoot, execute, get rid of»). From the rhetorical and semiotic point of view, they were constantly immersed in a war climate, as if they were always fighting against different enemies threatening the country. The permanent lack of freedom and the periodical media campaigns aimed at themes, such as the extirpation of the sense of private property and individual interest, sharply influenced collective imagery.[19] It is constantly not surprising, that after 1991 Russian citizens' utmost desire was to be relieved of this pressure: they wanted to act and think freely, as authentic human beings. During the harsh but at the same time heady years of Gorbachev's *perestroika* it became definitively apparent that to transform Utopian theories in real life was impossible [**Fig. 13**]: the bitter awareness of the failure of Communist ideals provoked intense, general feelings of disillusion and frustration. With the downfall of the USSR Russian people were suddenly deprived of what they had been used to consider their Soviet identity. They were inebriated by the new freedom on the one hand, but totally unprepared to deal with it on the other hand. On the symbolic level, the abrupt loss of a homeland generated a diffused sense of humiliation and uncertainty. One can talk of a "mangled" identity, emphasized by the catastrophic socio-economic situation and by the increasing weight of criminal gangs.[20]

Fig. 14

Contemporary literary works thoroughly echo that complex and ambiguous atmosphere, particularly for what concerns the characters' psychological representation. In Viktor Pelevin's (*1962) *Generation "P"*[21] Vavilen Tatarskij, the protagonist of the novel depicting the "Pepsi generation" [**Fig. 14**], gradually passes from the classical routine of a late-Soviet *intelligent* to the hyper-technological and unscrupulous world of advertising:

> Tatarsky pictured his future approximately as follows: during the day – an empty lecture hall in the Literary Institute, a word-for-word translation from the Uzbek or the Kirghiz that had to be set in rhyme by the next deadline; in the evenings – his creative labours for eternity.
> Then, quite unobtrusively, an event of fundamental significance for his future occurred. The USSR, which they had begun to renovate and improve at about the time when Tatarsky decided to change his profession, improved so much that it ceased to exist (if a state is capable of entering Nirvana, that is what must have happened in this case); so any more translations from the languages of the peoples of

[19] See Terry L. Thompson and Richard Sheldon, eds., *Soviet Society & Culture. Essays in Honor of Vera S. Dunham* (Boulder and London: Westview Press, 1988), 181–194.

[20] On this aspect cf. John Pickles and Adrian Smith, eds., *Theorizing Transition: the Political Economy of Post-communist Transformations* (London: Routledge, 2005).

[21] Viktor Pelevin, *Generation "П"* (Moscow: Vagrius, 1999). The novel, greeted with great success by the public both in Russia and abroad, had a mixed and controversial critical reception. The original title, evidently seeming a bit "obscure" for foreign markets, was translated into English the first time as *Babylon* (Faber and Faber, 2001) and the second time as *Homo Zapiens* (Penguin Books, 2002). The first solution apparently echoes the title of the Italian translation (*Babylon*, Mondadori, 2000). These choices draw attention to other meaningful themes present in the text, such as the psychological manipulation operated by TV and advertisement mechanisms and the mythological image of Mesopotamian Babylon. These titles unfortunately placed the references to the "Pepsi Generation" and to the USSR transition period, which play an equally important role in the work and are central to our analysis, on a second plan.

> the USSR were quite simply out of the question. It was a blow, but Tatarsky survived it. He still had his work for eternity, and that was enough for him.[22]

The disillusioned and initially frustrated poet Vavilen has a personal experience of the transition. The ordinary, immutable future he figured out – a monotonous, badly paid public job alternated into secret nocturnal efforts committed to true, eternal art in a *samizdat* form[23] – seems to vanish into thin air. The USSR implodes around him, and with it disappear rhetorical political slogans, but also the world people were used to, the only one they knew [**Fig. 15**]. The intellectuals belonging to the "P generation" were expected to reproduce the alienating but familiar routine of their parents, who led secondary, parallel lives protected by the private shelter of their narrow kitchens, where they discussed, read and frantically copied down forbidden works accompanied by Okudžava is Okudžava's Soviet period transition years and Visotskij's songs. During the Soviet period books and culture were considered surrogates of real life;[24] in the dramatic chaos of the transition years they sadly become one of the profitable goods to sell in order to survive. It is as if they had betrayed and disappointed people as well. The de-utopianism process radically called former values and points of reference into question. He no longer wrote poems after that, as with the collapse of Soviet power they had simply lost their meaning and value.[25] Rejecting his bizarre and typically Soviet given name (a surreal acronym formed by the initials of the writer *Vasilij Aksënov* and *Vladimir Il'ič Lenin*),[26] Tatarskij demonstrates a psychological and cultural displacement which eloquently mirrors the drastic changes affecting ordinary people's *byt* during those years.[27] Notwithstanding his ability to react and adapt rather quickly to the new "far west" context, the young man occasionally experiences an ambiguous wave of bitter-sweet nostalgia for the lost collective homeland:

Fig. 15

[22] Viktor Pelevin, *Babylon* (London: Faber & Faber, 2001), 3. "Татарский представлял себе свое будущее примерно так: днем – пустая аудитория в Литинституте, подстрочник с узбекского или киргизского, который нужно зарифмовать к очередной дате, а по вечерам – труды для вечности. Потом незаметно произошло одно существенное для его будущего событие. СССР, который начали обновлять и улучшать примерно тогда же, когда Татарский решил сменить профессию, улучшился настолько, что перестал существовать (если государство способно попасть в нирвану, это был как раз такой случай). Поэтому ни о каких переводах с языков народов СССР больше не могло быть и речи. Это был удар, но его Татарский перенес. Оставалась работа для вечности, и этого было довольно" (Pelevin, *Generation "П"*, 13).

[23] For certain aspects in the first part of the narrative Vavilen seems to recall some of the anthropological and psychological features of male characters typical of the so-called *gorodskaja proza* (urban prose). We are thinking in particular of the "existential uncertainty" (*neustrojstva*) of Griša Rebrov, the intellectual protagonist of Jurij Trifonov's (1925–1981) renowned *povest' Dolgoe proščanie* (*The Long Farewell*, 1971).

[24] See Aleksievič, "Vremja," 40–41.

[25] Pelevin, *Babylon*, 5. "Больше он не писал стихов: с гибелью советской власти они потеряли смысл и ценность" (Pelevin, *Generation "П"*, 16).

[26] Apart from the acronym, his name can also be interpreted as a variation of the word Babylon, *Vavilon* in Russian, the ancient Mesopotamian town which represents a meaningful motif in the text.

[27] See Svetlana Bojm, *Obščie mesta: Mifologija povsednevnoj žizni* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2002), 281–293.

> When Tatarsky was out walking one day, he stopped at a shoe shop that was closed for lunch. […] there in the midst of a chaos of multicoloured Turkish handicrafts stood a pair of unmistakably Soviet-made shoes.
> Tatarsky felt a sensation of instantaneous, piercing recognition. The shoes had pointed toes and high heels and were made of good leather. They were a light yellowish-brown, stitched with a light-blue thread and decorated with large gold buckles in the form of harps. It wasn't that they were simply in bad taste, or vulgar; they were the clear embodiment of what a certain drunken teacher of Soviet literature from the Literary Institute used to call 'our gestalt', and the sight was so pitiful, laughable and touching, (especially the harp buckles) that tears sprang to Tatarsky's eyes. The shoes were covered by a thick layer of dust: the new era obviously had no use for them.
> Tatarsky knew the new era had no use for him either, but he had managed to accustom himself to the idea and even take a certain bitter-sweet satisfaction in it.[28]

His ambivalent emotions are symbolically condensed into a pair of kitschy, unfashionable boots of autarchic Soviet production ("èto bylo tak žal'ko, smešno i trogatel'no", they were so pitiful, ridiculous and touching): apart from Pelevin's brilliant and corrosive irony,[29] the dusty remnants of the past in this passage seem to express concretely, as authentic "objective correlatives", the protagonist's state of mind.[30] To the eyes of the spiritually unsettled man the solid, pragmatic roughness of these ordinary objects reflects the "difference" of their Socialist experience, the flavour of their everyday lives full of illusions, pains, loves and hopes.[31] The new materialistic approach to life is particularly successful because Soviet attachment to things and personal belongings, stemming from the constant lack of material goods during the Communist period, is incomparable to any other. In the novel the profound sense of confusion and deracination of the Yeltsin years is also conveyed through the abuse of several types of drugs and through the image of the Tower of Babel. This mythological *Leitmotiv* has a great deal of inter-textual connotations in the narrative, but certainly alludes to the hybrid and unstable identity of the Russian people, deftly manipulated by the occult powers of advertising companies. The more he succeeds as a copywriter, the more Vavilen searches for meaning in a culture now apparently only defined by material possessions, moral corruption and self-indulgence.[32] On this blurred background he constantly attempts to discover the forces that determine individual desires and shape collective

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[28] Pelevin, *Babylon*, 4–5. "Однажды во время прогулки Татарский остановился у закрытого на обед обувного магазина. […] среди развала разноцветных турецких поделок стояла пара обуви несомненно отечественного производства.Татарский испытал чувство мгновенного и пронзительного узнавания. Это были остроносые ботинки на высоких каблуках, сделанные из хорошей кожи. Желто-рыжего цвета, простроченные голубой ниткой и украшенные большими золотыми пряжками в виде арф, они не были просто безвкусными или пошлыми. Они явственно воплощали в себе то, что один пьяненький преподаватель советской литературы называл ‚наш гештальт', и это было так жалко, смешно и трогательно (особенно пряжки-арфы), что у Татарского на глаза навернулись слезы. На ботинках лежал густой слой пыли - они были явно не востребованы эпохой. Татарский знал, что тоже не востребован эпохой, но успел сжиться с этим знанием и даже находил в нем какую-то горькую сладость" (Pelevin, *Generation "П"*, 14–15).

[29] Marina Mežieva and Natal'ja Konradova, *Okno v mir: sovremennaja russkaja literatura* (Moscow: Russkij jazyk. Kursy, 2006), 22–23.

[30] The image of the unmistakable shoes of Soviet production is also evoked with similar mixed feelings by Sergej Dovlatov (1941–1990) in his collection of tales about his life in the USSR: see Sergej Dovlatov, *Čemodan* (The Suitcase, Tenafly: Ėrmitaž, 1986).

[31] See Svetlana Bojm and Pushkin Lubonia, eds., *Nostalgia. Saggi sul rimpianto del comunismo* (Milano: Bruno Mondadori, 2003), 149–153.

[32] See V. Aleksej Dmitriev, "Sovremennaja mifologija kak èlement struktury romana V. Pelevina Generation 'P'," *Gumanitarnye issledovanija. Žurnal fundamental'nych prikladnych issledovanij* 4 (2002): 55–60.

belief. In his quest, the young man sees coincidences which suggest patterns disclosing a sort of "hidden meaning" behind the chaos and the inner "strangeness" of the post-Soviet world:

> It was a very strange world. Externally it had not changed all that much, except perhaps that there were more paupers on the streets, but everything in his surroundings – the houses, the trees, the benches on the streets – had somehow suddenly grown old and decrepit. It was not possible to say that the essential nature of the world had changed either, because now it no longer had any essential nature. A frighteningly vague uncertainty dominated everything. Despite this, however, the streets were flooded with Mercedes and Toyotas carrying brawny types possessed of absolute confidence in themselves and in what was happening, and there was even, if one could believe the newspapers, some kind of a foreign policy. Meanwhile the television was still showing the same old repulsive physiognomies that had been sickening the viewers for the last twenty years. Now they were saying exactly the same things they used to jail other people for, except that they were far bolder, far more decisive and radical.[33]

On many occasions coeval literary texts, through their metaphorical and allusive usage of language, achieve the effect of fixing the most reliable sensations and impressions of a specific epoch in vivid images.[34] Pelevin's biting and absurdist satire is realized through refined postmodernist stylistic devices which skillfully blend various linguistic discourses.[35] In this insightful excerpt from the narrative the expression «strašnovataja neopredelënnost'», «terrible indefiniteness» effectively translates into words the frightful, ambiguous and destabilizing psychological atmosphere that dominated Russian society. The artistic representation of those complicated days suspended between the Soviet past and an uncertain present[36] seems to prefigure some of the future developments of the country.

Another work by Pelevin set in Putin's era seems to already reflect with its sibylline title certain gloomy but penetrating views on the current context. This is the eclectic prose collection *DPP (NN) / Dialektika Perechodnogo Perioda iz Niotkuda v Nikuda*, *TPD (NN)/Dialectics of a Transitional Period from Nowhere to Nowhere*,[37] composed of the novel Čisla (*Numbers*) and six short stories. The protagonist of the first part of the book, Stepan Arkaďevič Michajlov known as Stëpa, began his computer business in the final part of Gorbachev's administration. The past peeps through the pages, coming back to the present in the guise of certain old acquaintances belonging to the Communist party *nomenklatura*:

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[33] Pelevin, *Babylon*, 6. "Этот мир был очень странным. Внешне он изменился мало – разве что на улицах стало больше нищих, а все вокруг – дома, деревья, скамейки на улицах – вдруг как-то сразу постарело и опустилось. Сказать, что мир стал иным по своей сущности, тоже было нельзя, потому что никакой сущности у него теперь не было. Во всем царила страшноватая неопределенность. Несмотря на это, по улицам неслись потоки ‚мерседесов' и 'тойот', в которых сидели абсолютно уверенные в себе и происходящем крепыши, и даже была, если верить газетам, какая-то внешняя политика. По телевизору между тем показывали те же самые хари, от которых всех тошнило последние двадцать лет. Теперь они говорили точь-в-точь то самое, за что раньше сажали других, только были гораздо смелее, тверже и радикальнее" (Pelevin, *Generation "П"*, 17–18).

[34] See Mark Lipoveckij, *Russkij postmodernism: Očerki istoričeskoj poètiki* (Ekaterinburg: Ural'skij gosudarstvennyj universitet, 1997), 252–272.

[35] On the topic see Michail Sverdlov, "Technologija pisatel'skoj vlasti," *Voprosy literatury* 4 (2003), accessed January 25, 2016, http.//magazines.russ.ru/voplit/2003/4/; and Igor' Silanťev, V., "Ritorika diskursnych smeščenij v romane V. Pelevina Generation "P", *Kritika I semiotika* 8 (2005): 243–248.

[36] As is quite logical, the same themes and recurring images are present in a number of Russian cultural works of the 1990s, which tried to depict common people's utter sense of loss and alienation. Among others, worthy of mention is Èl'dar Rjazanov's prize-winning film *Nebesa Obetovannye* (*Promised Heavens*, 1991), telling in allegorical tones the painful and tragicomic story of several old Moscow tramps (*bomži*).

[37] Viktor Pelevin, *DPP / (NN) Dialektika Perechodnogo Perioda iz Niotkuda v Nikuda* (Moscow: Èksmo, 2003).

> Stëpa's business started as usual, trading with computers in the late Gorbachev era. […]
> It soon became clear that his old idea to attend the Economics Faculty was a wise choice. It wasn't the notions about Socialist finance (about which he didn't remember anything) which were useful to him, but the relationships: the former labour organizer of the course helped Stëpa register his own bank. He realized that a lot of people who held key-positions were already known to him from the times in which business was called *Komsomol*.[38]

The formal dissolution of the USSR had apparently implied the complete dissipation of Socialist ideological issues, but on a deeper, anthropological level, certain people and mechanisms at the foundation of that complex system had survived, adapting to the new circumstances.[39] This fact and the Soviet constant emphasis on collectivity are viewed as the major reasons for the trend of non participation that scholars still observe in Eastern European countries. What is generally defined as the "weakness of civil society"[40] in all probability represents the most powerful and lasting legacy of the Communist experience.[41] It is not the case then that from the beginning of the narrative Stëpa knew how to move within the chaotic Muscovite jungle,[42] passing from the mysterious mechanisms of international finance to the criminal racket and to the new, sophisticated intricacies of political power. The multi-layered social context evoked in this text through the caustic lens of Pelevin's writing closely recall Bauman's influential notion of "liquid modernity":

> What makes modernity 'liquid', and this justifies the choice of the name, is its self-propelling, self-intensifying, compulsive and obsessive 'modernization', as a result of which, like liquid, none of the consecutive forms of social life is able to maintain its shape for long. 'Dissolving everything that is solid' has been the innate and defining characteristic of the modern form of life from the outset; but today, unlike yesterday, the dissolved forms are not to be replaced, and nor are they replaced, by other solid forms.[43]

The plump man's obsessive passion for numbers, the massive presence of the English language, the evident lack of any certainties or moral limits create an intense sensation of absurdity, which

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[38] Ibid., 32–34 (my translation, I. R.): "Степин бизнес начался обыкновенно – с торговли компьютерами в позднюю горбачевскую эру […] Вскоре выяснилось, что его давнее решение поступить в финансовый институт было мудрым выбором. Пригодились не полученные знания о природе социалистических финансов (от них ничего не осталось в голове), а знакомства: бывший профорг курса помог Степе зарегистрировать собственный банк. Оказалось, что многих ключевых людей он знает еще с тех времен, когда бизнес назывался комсомолом".

[39] See Jurij Levada, "*Homo Sovieticus* Limits of Self-Identification," *Russia in Global Affairs* 2 (2005), accessed January 18, 2016, http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/n_4953.

[40] In Morjé Howard's words, the low levels of public participation in Post-Communist countries are also due to the widespread disappointment with political and economical developments since the collapse of the state-socialist order: «In the years since those dramatic times, many Postcommunist citizens feel they have been let down, even cheated, by the new system that quickly replaced the old one. This disappointment has only increased the demobilization and withdrawal from public activities» (Marc Howard Morjé, "The Weakness of Postcommunist Civil Society," *Journal of Democracy* 13, no. 1 [2002]: 163).

[41] See Marc Howard Morjé, *The Weakness of Civil Society in Post-Communist Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[42] Russian contemporary cities have acquired for certain aspects the magnetic, evanescent and impersonal attributes which characterize Augé's *unplaces*: "Ce qui est significatif dans l'expérience du non-lieu, c'est sa force d'attraction, inversement proportionnelle à l'attraction territoriale, aux pesanteurs du lieu et de la tradition. La ruée des automobilistes sur la route du week-end ou des vacances, les difficultés des aiguilleurs du ciel à maîtriser l'encombrement des voies aériennes, le succès des nouvelles formes de distribution en témoignent à l'évidence"(Marc Augé, Non-Lieux. *Introduction à une anthropologie de la surmodernité*, [Paris: Seuil, 1992], 147–148).

[43] Zygmunt Bauman, *Culture in a Liquid Modern World* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011), 8.

is also stressed by the verbal texture of the narrative. It is as if business and money represented the only steady attributes in this "liquid" and osmotic flow:[44]

> That time and life was so absurd in its inner depths, while business and economics depended to such an extent on hell knows what. Any person, who based their decisions on rational analysis, would look like someone odd who was trying to go ice-skating in the middle of a hurricane at its utmost intensity. The fact that the unhappy ones felt they could be swept off their feet was the least problem: those same means, through which they expected to surpass the others became burdens that dragged them to the bottom. Apart from this, the ice-skating rules were displayed everywhere, the music was optimistic and at school they taught children, to prepare them for life, the triple jump with a twist.[45]

The haunting return of the past also permeates Vladimir Sorokin's novel *Den' opričnika* (*A Day in the Life of an Opričnik*, 2006),[46] a dark dystopian tale set in 2027, but inspired by Ivan the Terrible's notorious corps of guards. Through a powerful mixture of Medieval and Soviet reminiscences, at the centre of Andrej Komjaga's thoughts there is the assumption that «the Russian state is sacred». The ancient monarchy has been restored, so cruelty against state enemies becomes an art to protect it. Sorokin's imaginative diagnosis of Putinism further grasps that the looting by officials is driven not by profiteering alone, but by their conviction that they are defending Russian interests.[47] Everything Sorokin's *opričniki* do is a transaction, but their love for the country runs deep. They may give in to temptation and tune in to foreign radio ("enemy voices"), but these moments of weakness vitiate neither their pride in their work, nor their code of honour. They have ideals. At a certain point in the narrative, a Siberian soothsayer predicts that the country will be "all right", while tossing Russian literary classics (still printed on paper) into the fire:

> "What fits between these words?"
>
> "I don't know, Praskovia Mamontovna. Maybe… a hollow trunk?"
>
> "You've got a sorrowful excuse for a brain, dovey. Not a hollow tree, but Russia".
>
> That's what it is…Russia. Since it's Russia, I lower my eyes to the floor at once. I look at the fire and see the *Idiot* and *Anna Karenina* in flames. I have to say – they burn well. In general, books burn well. Manuscripts go up like gunpowder. I've seen many manuscript and book bonfires – in our courtyard and in the Secret Department. For that matter the Writers' Chamber itself burned quite a bit on Manezh Square, purging itself of its own subversive writers, thereby cutting our workload. One thing I can say for sure – they always make for a special fire. It's a warm fire. It was even warmer eighteen years ago, when people burned their foreign-travel passports on Red Square. Now that was an enormous fire! It made a strong impression on me, since I was an adolescent at the time. In January there was a deep freeze, but at His Majesty's call people brought their foreign-travel passports to the main square of the country and

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[44] See also Mark Lipoveckij, *Charms of the Cynical Reason: The Transformations of the Trickster Trope in Soviet and Post-Soviet Culture* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2011).

[45] Viktor Pelevin, *DPP [NN]* (Moscow, Èksmo), 41. "Эпоха и жизнь были настолько абсурдны в своих глубинах, а экономика и бизнес до такой степени зависели от черт знает чего, что любой человек, принимавший решения на основе трезвого анализа, делался похож на дурня, пытающегося кататься на коньках во время пятибалльного шторма. Мало того, что у несчастного не оказывалось под ногами ожидаемой опоры, сами инструменты, с помощью которых он собирался перегнать остальных, становились гирями, тянувшими его ко дну. Вместе с тем, повсюду были развешены правила катания на льду, играла оптимистическая музыка, и детей в школах готовили к жизни, обучая делать прыжки с тройным оборотом" (ibid., 41).

[46] Vladimir Sorokin, *A Day of the Oprichnik* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011).

[47] Mark Lipoveckij, "Sorokin-trop. Karnalizacija," *Novoe Literaturnoe obozrenie* 120, no. 2 (2013), accessed January 21, 2016, http://www.nlobooks.ru/node/3368.

> tossed them onto the fire. They kept bringing them and bringing them. From other cities they came to Moscow, the capital, to burn the legacy of the White Troubles. They came to take an oath to His Majesty. That fire burned nearly two months…[48]

This evocative scene symbolically echoes the burning of the writer's manuscript in Bulgakov's *Master and Margarita* (1928–1940),[49] but instead of the immortality of true art – in Woland's famous statement «rukopisy ne gorjat», «manuscripts don't burn» –, in the desolate and hyper-technological "waste land" of modernity books *do* burn, as if the Russian cultural and spiritual heritage had been completely deprived of any meaning and value.[50] In other words, in today's Russia old and new issues, past and present seem to intermingle,[51] as if to confirm Augé's observations about the hybrid nature of what he calls "supermodernity": «Ce que contemple le spectateur de la modernité, c'est l'imbrication de l'ancien et du nouveau. La surmodernité, elle, fait de l'ancien (et de l'histoire) un spectacle spécifique – comme de tous les particularismes locaux».[52]

In conclusion, this concise analysis of selected fictional samples has provided us with the opportunity to propose certain reflections on the ambiguous consequences of what is commonly described as the "de-utopianism process" in contemporary Russia. It is a composite and extensive phenomenon, closely connected with people's memories, with their opinions and with their individual experience of Socialism. This is why a number of them express inner feelings of regret and nostalgia for certain aspects of the Utopian past [**Fig. 16**]. Without any pretensions of exhaustiveness or generalization, attention has been drawn to human types, to their anthropological and psychological characterization as it emerges from influential literary works. In recent years, a number of elements have suggested alarming continuities between the Soviet regime and the present [**Fig. 17**]: in Putin's age orthodoxy and nationalism have replaced Communist political dogmas, but the methods through which power and mass culture are managed demon-

Fig. 16

[48] "– Что между словами этими помещается? – Не разумею, Прасковья Мамонтовна. Может… дупло? – Умом ты прискорбен, голубь. Не дупло, а Россия" (Sorokin, *A Day*, 115–116).
Вон оно что… Россия. Коли – Россия, я очи долу сразу опускаю. В огонь гляжу. А там горят Идиот и Анна Каренина. И сказать надобно – хорошо горят. Вообще, книги хорошо горят. А уж рукописи – как порох. Видал я много костров из книг-рукописей – и у нас на *дворе,* и в Тайном Приказе. Да и сама Писательская Палата жгла на Манежной, от собственных крамольников очищаясь, нам работу сокращая. Одно могу сказать – возле книжных костров всегда как-то тепло очень. *Теплый* огонь этот. А ещё теплее было восемнадцать лет тому назад. Тогда на Красной площади жег народ наш свои загранпаспорта. Вот был кострище! На меня, подростка, тогда это сильное впечатление произвело. В январе, в крутой мороз несли люди по призыву Государя свои загранпаспорта на главную площадь страны да и швыряли в огонь. Несли и несли. Из других городов приезжали, чтобы в Москве-столице сжечь наследие Белой Смуты. Чтобы присягнуть Государю. Горел тот костер почти два месяца…» (Sorokin, *Den' opričnika*, 98).

[49] Mikhail Bulgakov, *Master and Margarita* (Paris: YMCA Press, 1967).

[50] See Krzysztof Tyszka, "Homo Sovieticus Two Decades Later," *Polish Sociological Review* 168 (2009): 507–522.

[51] On the symbolic level this deep interconnection can be also observed in the ambiguous phenomenon of East European "*Ostalgie*", with museums, design catalogues, souvenirs and tourist gadgets aimed at reproducing the typical *realia* and specific identity of former Socialist countries (on this aspect see Svetlana Bojm, "Ipocondria del cuore: nostalgia, storia e memoria," in *Nostalgia. Saggi sul rimpianto del comunismo*, ed. Svetlana Bojm and Pushkin Lubonia [Milano: Bruno Mondadori, 2003], 1–88).

[52] Augé, *Non-Lieux*, 138.

strate considerable affinities.[53] Gogol's poetic, everlasting appeal resounds anew from the ashes of the past: Where is Russia going now? In line with the nineteenth-century cultural tradition, through its phantasmagoric and intrinsically destructive qualities postmodernist literature seems to pose once again the eternal, transversal question concerning the destiny of the country. The final image of Sorokin's novel, in fact, is lyrically devoted to the *opričnik*'s dreamlike, fragmentary vision of his white stallion, metaphorically compared to the Russian homeland running away into the dark:

Fig. 17

> We must live to spite the bastards, to rejoice in Russia… My white stallion, wait… don't run away… where are you going my beloved…where, my white-maned… my sugar stallion… we're alive… oh… people alive… all alive till now… everyone… the entire oprichnina…our entire kindred oprichnina. As long as the oprichniks are alive, Russia will be alive.
> And thank God.[54]

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[53] See Jakovenko, Achiezer and Kljamkin, *Istorija Rossii*.

[54] Sorokin, *A Day*, 191. "Надобно жить сволочам назло, России на радость… Конь мой белый, по годи… не убегай… куда ты, родимый… куда, бело гривый… сахарный конь мой… живы, ох, живы живы кони, живы люди… все живы покуда… все вся опричнина… вся опричнина родная. А покуда жива опричнина, жива и Россия. И слава Богу" (Sorokin, *Den' opričnika*, 164).

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History, Memory, and Religion in the Czech Lands

Abstract | The paper deals with the role of religion in the process of defining Czech national identity. In the first part it aims at defining a proper theoretical framework for describing and analyzing the broad context of the topic. The second part of the paper consists in applying the theoretical framework to the subject of religion and national identity in modern Czech history. The theoretical background is based on the combination of K. Dobbelaere's concept of secularization with the sociopolitical conflict model as defined by P. S. Gorski. The role of religious ideas, practices and institutions is transformed in the process of societal modernization and functional differentiation. New, non-religious worldviews are developed. In the process of mutual interaction of secular worldviews with religion, religious elements become an integral part of discourses within the developing subsystems of politics, education, economics, etc. It leads to the situation of the persisting importance of religious ideas at the societal level, where religious phenomena continue to be discussed. The concept of Czech national identity incorporates religious elements under the conditions of the religious monopoly in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The anti-clerical or anti-Catholic concepts of national history appear at a societal level, while people tend to embrace the dominant form of religion connected to the state system at the individual level. Individual religious affiliation reveals an increasing complexity with the end of the religious monopoly, with the creation of the independent Czechoslovakia in 1918 and under the situation of religious pluralism. At the individual level the Roman Catholic Church continues to dominate religious life of the Czechs, nevertheless the declared church membership gradually decreases. Since religious phenomena have become incorporated into secular worldviews, such as into the concept of national identity, religion persists at a societal level.

Keywords | Czech Republic – Modern History – National Identity – Religion – Roman Catholic Church – Secularization – Sociopolitical Conflict Model

1 Introduction

In this paper[1] I will focus on the role of religion[2] in Czech society from a diachronic perspective, in modern Czech history. My enquiry will be primarily concerned with organized, traditional

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[2] For the purpose of my paper, I apply the classical sociological definition of religion by Émile Durkheim. Religion is defined as: "(…) a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say,

forms of religion. It is therefore focused on the Roman Catholic Church[3] as the most important traditional religious organization in the Czech lands from a historical and contemporary point of view. The paper examines the position of the Church in Czech society and is focused on its political and social influence in the modern history of Czech society. I will also examine how religion in general and the Church in particular became involved in the discourse on Czech national and cultural identity, and therefore how and why the organized, traditional religion persists on the societal level of the Czech socio-cultural environment. Last but not least, my intention consists in defining the proper theoretical tools that allows for a treatment of the broad aspects of the topic of religion and national identity in modern Czech society.

For the purpose of my enquiry I will apply the *three-level concept of secularization* as designed by Karel Dobbelaere,[4] classifying the phenomena connected to secularization according to societal, organizational, and individual dimensions. In order to interpret the persistence of religious phenomena on the societal level, I will apply the *sociopolitical conflict model*,[5] an interpretative frame coined by Philip S. Gorski.[6]

In my paper I intend to further develop my previous research on the topic of the position of religion in modern Czech society. I formulated certain basic principles of my research on this topic in cooperation with Dušan Lužný in our paper "Religion and Politics in the Czech Republic: The Roman Catholic Church and the State".[7] The paper deals primarily with the contemporary state of religiosity in Czech society. The main argument of our approach to the topic of religion in Czech society can be summarized as follows: religion is not disappearing from Czech society and culture, and it becomes involved in public debates from both historical and contemporary perspectives. The paper gives two significant examples of religion entering the public sphere of Czech society from the contemporary perspective. It deals with the legal struggle over the ownership of the Prague cathedral between the state and the Church, and it also examines the case of the Church Property Restitution Bill: both cases can be perceived as widely discussed examples of traditional religiosity entering the public sphere of Czech society after the fall of the Communist regime in 1989. Both examples also reveal the persistent importance of religious topics on the societal level in contemporary Czech society. As the analysis of the two cases clearly demonstrates, both cases are intimately connected with the attempts of the state and of the political representatives to control (or at least to take part in the control of) the discursive practices constituting the cultural memory of the Czech nation.[8] Taking into consideration Karel Dobbelaere's model of the three levels of religion, progressive secularization of contemporary Czech society can be observed on the individual level. This can be demonstrated with the data on affiliation to specific churches and denominations and on church attendance. These indicators of religiosity are rapidly decreasing in contemporary Czech society.[9] Even though individual level

things set apart and surrounded by prohibitions – beliefs and practices that unite its adherents in a single moral community called a church." (Émile Durkheim, "The Elementary Forms of Religious Life," [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004], 46).

[3] Hereinafter referred to as "the Church".

[4] Karel Dobbelaere, *Secularization: An Analysis on Three Level*s (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2002).

[5] Hereinafter referred to as "SPCM".

[6] Philip S. Gorski, "Historicizing the Secularization Debate. An Agenda for Research," in *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*, ed. Michele Dillon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 110–122.

[7] Jakub Havlíček and Dušan Lužný, "Religion and Politics in the Czech Republic: The Roman Catholic Church and the State," *International Journal of Social Science Studies* 1, no. 2 (2013): 190–204, accessed August 6, 2015, doi: 10.11114/ijsss.v1i2.145.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid., 193–195.

of secularization can be considered relatively high, religion persists on the societal level. Several topics connected to religion are publicly discussed, becoming an important part of politics.[10] The persistence of religion on the societal level can be explained from the perspective of the concept of the collective memory,[11] for religion can be perceived as "a chain of memory"[12] that allows for interpreting the past, understanding the present and foreseeing and planning the future.[13] The tools allowing one to control the collective memory are, with no doubt, vital for both the political and church representatives as an important means of social control. This is the reason why religious themes still have considerable political potential.

It is now my intention to demonstrate the reason why religion continues to influence the societal level of Czech society: for this purpose the diachronic approach must be applied. It allows for a description and further analysis of the role (or roles) of the Church in the process of development of Czech national identity. The persistence of religious themes on the societal level of contemporary Czech society cannot be understood without a closer look at the historical process of negotiation of the role (or roles) of religion in the collective memory of the Czechs: the diachronic analysis of this process constitutes the main topic of this enquiry. My inquiry therefore focuses on the historical process in which religion became integrated into the narratives on the Czech past, into the concepts of Czech national identity. The purpose of my paper consists in answering the following question: what is the role of religion in the process of defining Czech national identity? This is connected to other issues: what is the role of religion, of Christianity – and particularly of the Roman Catholic Church – in the narratives on the Czech past?

2 Theoretical Background and Method

2.1 The Concept of Secularization

The topic of this paper cannot be treated without briefly explaining the topic of secularization. Secularization in its broadest meaning can be defined as the process in which religious thinking, practice and institutions lose their social significance.[14] I see the process of secularization rather as the process of diachronic *transformation* of religious thinking, practice and institutions in modern societies. In my opinion, the idea of the "decline" of religion reflects the political project of "secularization thesis": this is based on the notion of the advancement of reason and science leading to the inevitable "decline" and disappearance of "irrational", "superstitious" and "religious" in the future of humankind.[15] The concept of secularization in social sciences should therefore be based rather on the perspective of transformation of religion together with

[10] Ibid.

[11] Collective memory (Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992]) is connected to the membership in a specific social group which provides ideas and concepts that are to be remembered, and – often even more importantly – to be forgotten. The collective memory of a particular social group is, of course, constituted under specific historical circumstances. From this point of view (the collective memory is conditioned by specific historical context) the collective memory of a specific social group can also be considered as "specific" or "particular": e.g. it allows us to speak about particular national cultural or historical memory.

[12] Danièle Hervieu-Léger, *Religion as a Chain of Memory* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2000).

[13] Havlíček and Lužný, "Religion and Politics in the Czech Republic," 199.

[14] Bryan R. Wilson, *Religion in Secular Society: A Sociological Comment* (London: C. A. Watts, 1966), xiv.

[15] Havlíček and Lužný, "Religion and Politics in the Czech Republic," 192; Roman Vido, *Konec velkého vyprávění? Sekularizace v sociologické perspektivě* (Brno: Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury, Masarykova univezita, 2011).

the process of societal modernization and functional differentiation of secular domains. As José Casanova puts it:

> (…) the core and the central thesis of the theory of secularization is the conceptualization of the process of societal modernization as a process of functional differentiation and emancipation of the secular spheres — primarily the state, the economy, and science — from the religious sphere and the concomitant differentiation and specialization of religion within its own newly found religious sphere.[16]

Within the context of Czech society and culture, the historical process can be observed within which the religious sphere – the roles attributed to religious thinking, practice and institutions – is transformed together with the development of the secular domains of society.

From the historical and contemporary perspectives, Christianity can be seen as the dominant form of religion in the Czech Lands. Various Christian churches and denominations – above all the Roman Catholic Church and Roman Catholicism – determine the religious life of the Czechs, both from the synchronic and diachronic point of view. In connection with the issue of the process of defining the national identity in the Czech Lands, the role of Christianity in general and of the Roman Catholic Church in particular have been assessed and evaluated a number of times by several authors.[17] Certain authors embrace the idea that the contemporary shape of religious life in the Czech Lands results largely from the processes of defining and re-producing the national identity of the Czechs.[18]

As I will primarily pay attention to the role of the Roman Catholic Church in the process of defining Czech national identity, I will also examine various ideas connected to the role of Christianity in the debates on the national identity of the Czech people. For this purpose I will use the method of historical analysis based on various resources: I will discuss statistical data on the religious affiliation of the inhabitants of the Czech Lands, I will also examine certain literary texts on the topic of religion, political essays and programmes and also secondary resources and scholarly writings on the topic of the historical development of religion in the Czech Lands. This analysis allows us to understand the historical process of integrating religion into the concept of Czech national identity.

2.2 The Three-Level Model of Secularization

As we shall see, in the case of the Czech Lands the development of the social and cultural context within which religion can be situated is fairly complex. In order to describe and analyse the process in which the roles of religion changes in modern societies, it is vital to find a theoretical background allowing us to embrace the complexity of the process. From this point of view and for the sake of successfully analysing the role of religion in Czech society, I have already pointed out[19] the usefulness of the theoretical model of secularization presented by Karel Dobbelaere.[20] Since the process of secularization must be seen in its complexity as a multi-dimensional set of phenomena, Karel Dobbelaere introduces the following three types or levels of secularization: societal, organizational and individual.

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[16] José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 19.

[17] See note no. 41.

[18] E.g. Zdeněk R. Nešpor "Ústřední vývojové trendy současné české religiozity," in *Jaká víra? Současná česká religiozita/spiritualita v pohledu kvalitativní sociologie náboženství*, ed. Zdeněk R. Nešpor (Praha: Sociologický ústav AVČR, 2004), 21–37.

[19] Havlíček and Lužný, "Religion and Politics in the Czech Republic".

[20] Dobbelaere, *Secularization*.

Societal secularization can be seen as the result of the process of functional differentiation, rationalization and development of social subsystems connected to modernization.[21] Religion loses its exclusive function of societal legitimization as competing non-religious, secular ideologies or world-views are developed and popularized. New, non-religious institutions in charge of different social subsystems are established and the Church loses its control over the newly established institutions,[22] whether it is politics, education, health care and social services, economy or science. To put it plainly: "Religion becomes one subsystem alongside others and loses its overarching claim."[23] The process of societal secularization brings about the polarization of religion and society, and the polarization is accompanied by a demonopolization of religious traditions and leads to a pluralistic situation, in which religions have to be marketed.[24]

On the organizational level of secularization religious bodies themselves are driven to rationalize. They adapt to the new pluralistic situation by organizational changes within themselves.[25] Speaking of organizational secularization, Dobbelaere claims that the perspective on this topic should be broadened. Inspired by Berger's "Sacred Canopy",[26] Dobbelaere makes us aware that religion may bear the seeds of secularization within itself.[27] Dobbelaere emphasizes[28] Berger's remark that the roots of societal secularization lie in the very Christian worldview, in the Biblical tradition: from this point of view, Christianity is seen as "its own gravedigger".[29]

It is important to note that Berger's and Dobbelaere's notion on the "seeds of secularization" within a religious worldview can be easily reversed. As Christianity contained the roots of societal secularization, the secular worldviews, such as national ideologies, bear within themselves religious themes. The secular worldviews that are often openly and declaratively anti-religious come into being through the process of emancipation from religious worldviews. From this point of view it is not surprising that the secular worldviews encompassed and took over several topics originally connected with religion.

On the individual level, according to Dobbelaere, the involvement of individuals in churches and denominations declines: "Individual secularization refers to individual behavior and measures the degree of normative integration in religious bodies."[30] The liminal events of the individual life cycle such as births or burials cease to be sacralized and the individual tendency to rejection of religious norms and practices increases.[31]

It is vital to emphasize that all three types or levels of secularization must be seen as reciprocal, as mutually interconnected, and, according to Dobbelaere:

> By distinguishing organizational secularization and individual secularization from one another and from societal secularization, we are in a better position to study the empirical relationships between

[21] Ibid., 24.
[22] Ibid., 29.
[23] Ibid., 24.
[24] Ibid., 35. Dobbelaere refers to Peter Berger who puts it as follows: the pluralistic situation leads to a situation in which: "(…) the religious tradition, which previously could be authoritatively imposed, now has to be marketed. It must be 'sold' to a clientèle that is no longer constrained to 'buy'." See Peter Berger, *Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1967), 138.
[25] Dobbelaere, *Secularization*, 35.
[26] Berger, *Sacred Canopy*.
[27] Dobbelaere, *Secularization*, 35–38.
[28] Ibid., 37.
[29] Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 129.
[30] Dobbelaere, *Secularization*, 25.
[31] Ibid., 23, 38–39, 137.

> societal secularization and organizational secularization; between societal secularization and individual secularization; and between individual secularization and organizational secularization.[32]

My enquiry in this paper will be primarily concerned with the first, societal level of secularization from the diachronic perspective, in connection with the concept of the nation and national identity in the Czech Lands. I will also, however, briefly touch upon the subject of individual and organizational levels of secularization.

2.3 Societal Secularization and Social Differentiation

At this point, it is important to note that in the process of societal secularization, religion becomes not only one of the multiple subsystems, but also that the other, newly defined and developing subsystems seek and define their ways to "negotiate" relations to the subsystem labeled as religious. When perceived this way, it is impossible to examine the religious sphere without considering its relations and connections to the other spheres of the socio-cultural system. The religious domain must be examined in terms of its relations to the spheres of e.g. politics, economy, education, etc. In my paper, I will deal with the interaction of religion and politics in connection to the topic of Czech national and cultural identity and in connection to the position of religious ideas within the historical process of formulating this identity (or rather identities).

Talal Asad observes that modern nationalism quite naturally draws on pre-existing languages and practices including, of course, those we can label as "religious".[33] This perspective allows us to explain why religious ideas and concepts become discussed within secular nationalism and, perhaps, why nationalist ideologies often include elements and motifs which originated in religious systems. It is obvious that various socio-cultural domains, institutions, competing world-views (both religious and secular), and their proponents, interact with one other. They influence each other reciprocally. The process is fairly complex obviously and, according to Asad, it would be inappropriate to simply assume that nationalism should be seen as religion, or that it has been shaped by religion.[34]

Miroslav Hroch claims that historical phenomena such as various symbols, values, stereotypes, or historical narratives pre-existing the formation of modern nations become integrated into the process of nation formation at the end of the 18th and in the 19th centuries.[35] Hroch observes that the very existence of such symbols, values, stereotypes or narratives has been independent from the wishes or plans of the actors involved in the process of nation formation. Even though the so-called nationalists often apply such phenomena in their concepts of nation-building ideologies or political programmes, they re-interpret them and treat them in innovative contexts, different from the contexts in which such phenomena historically originated. From this point of view, it is not surprising that various phenomena originating in religious discourse are discussed in connection with the process of nation building in the Czech Lands.

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[32] Ibid., 25.

[33] Talal Asad, "Religion, Nation-State, Secularism," in *Nation and Religion: Perspectives on Europe and Asia*, ed. Peter van der Veer and Hartmut Lehmann (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 178–196.

[34] Ibid., 187.

[35] Miroslav Hroch, *Národy nejsou dílem náhody. Příčiny a předpoklady utváření moderních evropských národů* (Praha: SLON, 2009).

2.4 The Sociopolitical Conflict Model

For the purpose of my enquiry it is vital to examine the historical process of mutual influences and relations between the religious and political sphere in the Czech Lands. In order to pursue such an analysis, a fusion of sociological and historical perspectives is inevitable. Broadly speaking, historians often ignore sociologists and *vice-versa*, but there are theoretical concepts or models combining both approaches. For the purpose of my enquiry, the concept of the *sociopolitical conflict model* (SPCM) can be applied. The SPCM has been coined by Philip S. Gorski and based on the works of David Martin and Hugh McLeod.[36]

Gorski sees the SPCM as an interpretative framework elaborated by a loose-knit group of scholars rather than as a theoretical model in the proper sense of the word.[37] Although the SPCM applies a number of terms similar to the model of religious economies, such as "competition" or "pluralism", their understanding of the terms is broader. It is understood rather as "a competition of worldviews" and churches and denominations compete not only among themselves, but also with secular, non-religious worldviews.[38] For the purpose of the analysis of the relationship between religion and political spheres, the SPCM seems to be promising, since it focuses on the competition arising from non-religious movements rather than from the other churches. Gorski summarizes the main argument of the SPCM as follows:

> In situations of religious monopoly, church and state will tend to become closely identified with one another, and social protest and partisan opposition will tend to evolve in an anticlerical or anti-Christian direction; a high level of religious disengagement is the result. In situations of religious pluralism, by contrast, in which some churches and church leaders are institutionally and politically independent of the state and the ruling elite, opposition to the existing regime did not automatically translate into opposition to the religion per se, and could even be expressed in religious terms; here, the degree of religious disengagement is likely to be lower.[39]

In connection with the topic of this paper, one of the assets of the SPCM can be seen as particularly promising: it is its emphasis on the relationship and influence of the complex social subsystems of religions and politics. David Martin writes on the isomorphism of politics and religion,[40] and the SPCM allows us to follow the historical context of this isomorphism in general, not only within the context of the Czech Lands.

After summarizing the options of the theoretical approach to the topic, let us turn our attention to the historical process of secularization in the Czech socio-cultural environment.

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[36] Gorski, "Historicizing the Secularization Debate"; David Martin, *General Theory of Secularization* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978); Hugh McLeod, *European Religion in the Age of the Great Cities, 1830–1930* (London: Routledge, 1995); Hugh McLeod, *Religion and Society in England, 1850–1914* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996).

[37] Gorski, "Historicizing the Secularization Debate," 116.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Martin, *General Theory of Secularization*, 47.

3 Secularization in the Czech Lands from the Historical Perspective

3.1 Recent Scholarship on Religion and National Identity in the Czech Lands

It will not be possible to discuss here in details the scholarship on the topic of religion and national identity in Czech society.[41] Let me mention, however, at least two of the most recent publications treating this issue.

In her recently published monograph on contemporary Czech society and religion, Dana Hamplová treats the topic of "Czech 'atheism' and its specifics".[42] According to Hamplová, Czechs are particularly indifferent towards organized, institutionalized religions and this lack of concern is seen primarily as a result of Czech nationalism and its interpretation of the medieval Hussite reformation movement.[43] Indeed, the question of interpreting the past and the role of the Hussite movement constitutes a key element in the debates on Czech national identity. Nevertheless, the assertion of the secular character of the Czech society is oversimplified and even misguided. Not only does religion preserve an important place in the public sphere of Czech society,[44] but also, from a diachronic point of view, constitutes a pivotal element in the debates on Czech national identity.

Another analysis of secularism in Czech society has been published by Petr Pabian.[45] In his article on the roots and forms of Czech secularism, Petr Pabian claims that Czech secularism is not a result of the process of constructing Czech national identity.[46] In his "alternative story of Czech secularity", Pabian places an emphasis on the need to examine the inner conflicts within the diverse segments of Czech society and also draws upon the work of David Martin. In my view, the role of the debates on religion in the process of defining Czech national identity has influenced the position of religion within Czech society. Although I do not agree with Pabian in this point, his analysis brings up another important asset, e.g. in its stress on the need to distinguish between the diversity of ideas and practices within Czech Catholicism itself. Pabian makes us aware of the existence of competing opinions on the role of religion in debates on Czech national identity.[47] Unlike Pabian, I am convinced that the debates on religion in the process of defining Czech national identity strongly influenced the actual form of Czech secularism. Nevertheless, it should be said that the role of "nationalization" of Czech society over the course of the 19th and 20th centuries cannot be considered the one and only reason for the contemporary form of Czech secularism.

3.2 The Individual Level of Secularization from the Historical Perspective

At the individual level of secularization, a decline in declared religious affiliation to the Church can be observed. According to the national censuses, the dominant religious affiliation in the Czech Republic at present is Roman Catholicism. In the most recent census of 2011, a total number of 1,082,463 respondents declared their membership in the Church, that is almost 74%

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[41] The historical context of the role of religion in Czech society has been discussed e.g. in the following monographs: Zdeněk R. Nešpor, *Příliš slábi ve víře: Česká ne/religiozita v evropském kontextu* (Praha: Kalich, 2010); Petr Fiala, *Laboratoř sekularizace. Náboženství a politika v ne-náboženské společnosti: český případ* (Praha: Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury, 2007); David Václavík, *Náboženství a moderní česká společnost* (Praha: Grada, 2010).

[42] Dana Hamplová, *Náboženství v české společnosti na prahu 3. tisíciletí* (Praha: Karolinum, 2013), 23–36.

[43] Ibid., 23.

[44] Havlíček and Lužný, "Religion and Politics in the Czech Republic".

[45] Petr Pabian, "Alternativní příběh české sekularity," *Sociální studia* 10, no. 3, (2013): 85–105.

[46] Ibid., 88–89.

[47] Ibid., 90–92.

of all organized believers and 10,4% of the total population.[48] As the statistical data reveal, the number of Church members has gradually decreased in the modern history of the Czech Lands. The 19th century censuses demonstrate the overwhelming dominance of Roman Catholic believers: the available data from the period between 1869 and 1910 reveal that approximately 95% of the inhabitants of the Czech Lands ascribed to the Church.[49] This situation can be clearly perceived in connection with the existence of a religious monopoly in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The data on individual religious affiliation reveal a radical change with the origin of the new independent Czechoslovak state in 1918, connected to the end of the monopoly and the establishment of a pluralistic situation. The membership in the Church dropped significantly to approximately 82% of the total population in 1921 and to approximately 78% in 1930.[50]

The relatively high level of secularity at the individual level has in all probability multiple reasons,[51] and should without any doubt be seen in connection with the process of establishing Czech national identity and the struggles around Czech national and cultural self-determination. From this perspective, the role of Christianity in general and of the Roman Catholic Church in particular in the process of establishing the modern Czech nation and national state is worth mentioning.

3.3 The Societal Level of Secularization from the Historical Perspective

Broadly speaking, the role of the Roman-Catholic Church in the process of establishing the Czech nation is evaluated as a rather negative one from the point of view of the Czech nation builders of the 19th, and the beginning of the 20th centuries. This fact has significant historical reasons. The rigid state politics of the first half of the 19th century sought for control over all spheres of society, including religion. The state prohibited the church administration from direct contact with the Roman Curia and priests were considered "state officials in churches"; from the point of view of the state, the Church formed a special administrative unit controlling the spiritual life of the imperial subjects.[52] The Austrian-Hungarian emperor Franz Josef I aimed at the "unity" or "alliance of throne and altar", pursuing the politics of his predecessors.[53]

The situation involving a *de-facto* religious monopoly led to the development of anti-clerical or anti-catholic sentiments amongst an important part of Czech intellectuals and political leaders of the 19th century. The traditional concept of close cooperation between the Church and the ruler manifested in close cooperation between the ruling House of Habsburg and the Roman Catholic Church. It came to be seen as a barrier for the development of Czech national identity and for the cultural, social and political emancipation of the Czech people. It was apparently the opinion of a significant part of Czech society who perceived the Roman Catholic Church as "anti-Czech" and, in contrast, praised the tradition of the medieval Czech reformation movement (the Hussite movement) as one of the pillars of Czech national identity.[54]

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[48] "Sčítání lidu, domů a bytů 2011. Náboženská víra," (Census of population and housing 2011. Religious beliefs) *Czech Statistical Office – Český statistický úřad*, accessed February 20, 2014, http://vdb.czso.cz/sldbvo/#!stranka=podle-tematu&tu=30719&th=&v=&vo=null&vseuzemi=null&void=.

[49] Vladimír Srb, *1000 let obyvatelstva českých zemí* (Praha: Karolinum, 2004), 160.

[50] Ibid., 161.

[51] Pabian, "Alternativní příběh české sekularity".

[52] Jitka Lněničková, *Čechy v době předbřeznové, 1792–1848* (Praha: Libri, 1999), 250–254.

[53] Hubert Jedin, *History of the Church Volume IX. The Church in the Industrial Age* (London: Burns and Oates, 1981), 55.

[54] Zdeněk R. Nešpor, *Ne/náboženské naděje intelektuálů. Vývoj české sociologie náboženství v mezinárodním a interdisciplinárním kontextu* (Praha: Scriptorium, 2008), 46–48.

Even in the second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, it was important to keep in mind the differences between Bohemia and Moravia. In Bohemia the measure of formal Catholicism and disrespect toward the Roman Catholic Church was considerably higher and stronger than in the Moravian part of the Czech Lands. Moravia still retains its Catholic character, at least to a certain extent.[55] This difference obviously represents an interesting topic for further research.

It should be said that the nativists of the 18th century did not view the role of the Catholic Church as negative,[56] many of them being Catholic clerics and scholars themselves, and this attitude does not particularly change in the first decades of the 19th century. Later, in the course of the development of the Czech nationalist movement in the 19th century, the Roman Catholic Church came to be perceived as a safeguard of the conservative, repressive powers preventing the national development of the Czech people. In the understanding of the proponents of Czech national identity, the conservative powers restricted the development of Czech national self-awareness. The Czech religious reformation and the Hussite movement of the 15th century come to be stressed by a number of Czech thinkers as the most significant period of Czech national history. One should mention here e.g. František Palacký (1798–1876), the so-called "Father of the Nation" who can be seen as the founding father of the Czech national myth or Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk (1850–1937), known as the "President Liberator", the first president of an independent Czechoslovakia. Both thinkers perceived the Hussite reformation as the most glorious period of Czech national history.[57] Although there were alternative views of the concept of Czech history that did not evaluate the role of the Roman Catholic Church negatively,[58] the anti-Catholic opinion prevailed.

The anti-Catholic concept of Czech history can be summarized as follows: after the glorious period of the Hussite movement and the Czech reformation, the nation declined with the establishment of the Habsburg monarchy, and particularly with the debacle of the Bohemian Revolt against Habsburg rule in 1618–1620. The subsequent Baroque period together with the governmentally supported dominance of the Roman Catholic Church is evaluated as the "the Dark Age" of Czech national history.[59]

There is a quite clear historical image of the Roman Catholic Church in the collective memory of the Czech people: the Czech nation is oppressed and exploited by the outdated, "corrupt and rotten" Habsburg monarchy. As Karel Kramář (1860–1937), the first Czechoslovak prime minister, put it: "The monarchy of Habsburg has collapsed like an edifice which was rotten inside and there was nothing to keep it standing."[60] In this reading, the Czech nation is oppressed by Austrians or "Germans" who are non-native to the Czech lands.[61] Last but not least, the Czech nation is oppressed by the Roman Catholic Church, its clerics and prelates who are, in this interpretation, connected with the other oppressive forces by providing them with legitimization and cooperating with them.[62]

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[55] Fiala, *Laboratoř sekularizace*.

[56] František Kutnar, *Obrozenské vlastenectví a nacionalismus. Příspěvek k národnímu a společenskému obsahu češství doby obrozenské* (Praha: Karolinum, 2003), 84–86.

[57] Nešpor, *Ne/náboženské naděje intelektuálů*, 62–63.

[58] Miloš Havelka, *Spor o smysl českých dějin. 1895–1938* (Praha: Torst, 1995).

[59] Ladislav Holý, *The Little Czech and the Great Czech Nation. National Identity and the Post-Communist Social Transformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[60] Karel Kramář, *Pět přednášek o zahraniční politice* (Praha: Pražská akciová tiskárna, 1922), 70.

[61] Jan Křen and Eva Broklová, eds., *Obraz Němců, Rakouska a Německa v české společnosti 19. a 20. století* (Praha: Karolinum, 1998).

[62] Dana Hamplová and Zdeněk R. Nešpor, "Invisible Religion in a 'Non-believing' Country: The Case of the Czech Republic," *Social Compass* 56, no. 4 (2009): 1–17.

As Karel Havlíček Borovský (1821–1856), a popular Czech journalist, poet and politician, puts it in his satirical poem "The Baptism of Saint Vladimir":

> For us any Lord God will do,
> As long as we have one
> To keep the farmers
> In due respect.
>
> With them all discipline
> Will soon turn to mist and fume
> Once they have no one
> To pray for their Tsar.[63]

"The Czech national myth" was created in accordance with these ideas and thus conceived in the development of the Czech nativist movement at the end of the 18th and particularly during the 19th century. It became widespread with the creation of an independent Czechoslovakia in 1918. The slogan "Away from Rome" was propagated by important proponents of the Czech political elite and this slogan merged with the antagonism towards the Habsburg dynasty.

It is important to emphasize that the social and historical context of the last decades before the end of the Empire and before the end of the religious monopoly was far more complex. As for the putative Catholic loyalty to the Habsburg monarchy, the actual situation at the end of World War I seems to have been much more complicated than often depicted. According to Pavel Marek,[64] it is vital to reflect on the diversity of opinions among representatives and members of the Roman Catholic Church in the Czech Lands. The high ranking members of the Roman Catholic clergy, bishops, etc. were mostly loyal to the Habsburgs. The political representatives of Catholicism and regular members of the Church often agreed and sympathized with Czech political parties. According to Marek, the thesis of "a pro-Habsburg" position by the Roman Catholic Church in the Czech Lands is oversimplified.[65] Nevertheless the anti-Catholic sentiments become more popular. As Ján Mišovič puts it in his account of the history of religion in the Czech Lands: "The motto of the period was: 'Away from Vienna, away from Rome'."[66] It is important to emphasize that even though the politics of an important part of the Czech political elite has been, generally speaking, anticlerical, or rather anti-Catholic, it cannot be simply labelled as anti-Christian. Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, the first president of an independent Czechoslovakia, declared this in his well-known statement: "Jesus, not Caesar, I repeat, that is the purpose of our history and democracy."[67]

The stereotypes were repeated and further developed by the Communists after they came to power in 1948.[68] They used and dispensed these ideas supplemented by the Marxist-Leninist promotion of atheism. The Roman Catholic Church was persecuted because of its "reactionary" and "anti-popular" character.[69]

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[63] Karel Havlíček Borovský, *Stokrát plivni do moře* (Praha: Československý spisovatel, 1990), 175. English translation: courtesy of Pavel Drábek.

[64] Pavel Marek, *České schisma. Příspěvek k dějinám reformního hnutí katolického duchovenstva v letech 1917–1924* (Rosice: Gloria, 2000).

[65] Ibid., 12–16.

[66] Ján Mišovič, *Víra v dějinách zemí koruny české* (Praha: SLON, 2001), 75.

[67] Tomáš G. Masaryk, *Světová revoluce. Za války a ve válce, 1914–1918. Vzpomíná a uvažuje T. G. Masaryk* (Praha: Orbis a Čin, 1933), 608.

[68] Hamplová and Nešpor, "Invisible Religion".

[69] Karel Kaplan, *Stát a církev v Československu, 1948–1953* (Brno: Doplněk, 1993).

4 Conclusion

As the example of the Czech socio-cultural environment reveals, the role of religion in modern Czech history has been formed along with the process of defining Czech national and cultural identity. It follows the basic premises of the sociopolitical conflict model as defined by Gorski.[70] The application of the SPCM leads us to describe and analyze the process of secularization in its historical context, together with an analysis of mutual influences between the spheres of religion and politics. In a situation with a religious monopoly when the official state politics *de facto* incorporated the Roman Catholic Church into its power structures, the social protest connected to the development of the Czech national movement leads to anticlerical or anti-Catholic sentiments. On the societal level, competing worldviews are developed and they "negotiate" their relationship to the Christian, i.e. Catholic worldview. Therefore certain religious ideas are incorporated into the newly established concept of Czech national history, e.g. the importance of the Hussite reformation movement.[71] Nevertheless, as the statistical data reveal, individual affiliation to Roman Catholicism prevails. With the radical change in the political environment accompanying the end of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and with the end of the religious monopoly, secularization at the individual level becomes apparent. The development of religious pluralism leads to a decline in individual affiliation to the Church which can be observed up to the present time. This tendency has been further enforced by the Communist regime with its oppression of religion in general. Religious themes nevertheless prevail at the societal level: as it has become an integral part of the narratives of Czech national history and continues to be discussed on the political level even today. The distinction of the levels of secularization by Karel Dobbelaere[72] allows us to examine and analyze the differences in the process of secularization on the respective levels. It allows us to conceptualize the endurance of religious phenomena at the societal level, where religion continues to be discussed, and, at the same time, the decline of religious affiliation at the individual level. The sociopolitical conflict model as defined by Gorski makes us aware of the need to examine the process of secularization in its overall historical context, and analyze the mutual relationship and influences of the religious and political domains.

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[70] Gorski, "Historicizing the Secularization Debate".
[71] The limited extent of this paper does not allow me to treat the topic of the Catholic concept of Czech national history, e.g. the traditions connected to St. Wenceslas or the Saints Cyril and Methodius.
[72] Dobbelaere, *Secularization*.

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Religious Socialization in the Tachov Micro-Region and Related Difficulties

Abstract | This paper focuses on the functioning of the Catholic Church in the Tachov micro-region. It analyses how the key figures (Catholic clergymen and religious lay people) perceive religious socialization and the role played by religious memory during the socialization process. I chose the Tachov micro-region because the presence of the Catholic Church was extremely strong there up until the end of World War II. After the end of the War, however, the majority of the region's inhabitants (Sudetenland Germans) were expelled and its character changed dramatically. It currently ranks among the least religious regions in the Czech Republic. The data were gathered as part of my own ethnographic research over the period between January 2014 and July 2015.

Keywords | Religion – the Czech Republic – the Catholic Church – Tachov, Socialization – Germans – Secularization – Religious transmission – Memory

1 Introduction

The reasoning of this study[1] is based on the assumption that religion provides religious people with cognitive, normative and emotional clues and that when the historical role of religion is taken into consideration, its relicts are contained in cultural memory even in distinctly secular countries, including the Czech Republic. In other words, religious memory is present, by means of values and symbols, in both society and individuals, and these values and symbols are accepted as an integral part of traditional values inherent to the society. The legitimacy of these norms and symbols is confirmed in the ethos of the particular country, which is not necessarily justified rationally, but rather relies on tradition.

Tradition is carried on by memory, which in turn, may be defined as the ability of an individual/community to preserve certain types of information. The important thing is that tradition always draws on the past, which, in turn, is always grasped from the present.[2] This gives rise to the conclusion that tradition does oblige, creates the feeling of belonging together and defines the strength of inter-group solidarity (which function as social ties) but that the solidity of these ties is repeatedly tested and re-established. This means that when we think about the past as of a source of memory trying, at the same time, to define its relationship to the present, we must come to the conclusion that "the past is being reconstructed with respect to the present and the present is explained through the past".[3]

[1] This research is supported by the Czech Science Foundation, research project "Continuity and Discontinuities of Religious Memory in the Czech Republic" ("Kontinuita a diskontinuity v náboženské paměti v České republice"), project No. 14-01948S.

[2] Jacques Le Goff, *Paměť a dějiny* (Praha: Argo, 2007), 23.

[3] Ibid., 36.

I have focused in this text on how the key actors – Catholic clergy and religious lay people – perceive the way the Catholic Church[4] functions in the micro-region and how they relate this functioning to (historical) memory. I have opted to study the Tachov micro-region because this is where the Catholic Church was extremely strong up until the end of World War II. The Sudetenland Germans were consequently expelled which entailed massive transformations. The micro-region currently ranks among the least religious in the Czech Republic.

I would now like to outline the transformation of the ethos of the micro-region with respect to the role played by the Catholic Church. I will also describe the methodology of my research and introduce those findings which I established on the basis of ethnographic research.

The primary goal of the present paper is to explain how the actors perceive issues related to socialization. I have decided to study socialization because of the following reasons. It is first an important concept in the sociology of religion. This is demonstrated by the existence of a large number of empirical studies targeting issues of weakening primary religious socialization and the transfer of religion-related attitudes to adulthood. Researchers have also been interested in the "breaking points" and causes which might eventually represent decisive factors bringing about the erosion of religious socialization and resignation of one's confession. Education and age represent the most frequently matched variables.[5] The reason why attention is so often brought to socialization is that in order to create a functional society able to reproduce itself, society must be able to create and generate institutions able to maintain it. The creation and control of organizations that, through the socialization processes, realize institutional adaptation strategies able to temper antagonisms between the individual and the group represent an integral part of the process.[6] Yet in other words: "Socialization is not a mere adoption of pieces of culture. It is, too, the pressure exercised by the society during the creation of the basic categories of experience, memory, thinking and communication".[7]

Studying religion as an institution, the following question consequently needs to be asked: does the primary religious socialization in late modern societies have a long-term and lasting impact on religious people? In other words, is the primary religious socialization strong enough to make religious people stick to faith and religious practice despite all secularization, modernist and individualization pressures?[8]

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[4] The term "Church" refers in our text to the Czech Catholic Church.

[5] Amy Argue, David R. Johnson and Lynn K. White, "Age and Religosity: Evidence from a Three-wave Panel Analysis," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 38, no. 3 (1999): 423–435; Marjorie Lindner Gunnoe and Kristin A. Moore, "Predictors of Religiosity Among Youth Aged 17–22: A Longitudinal Study of the National Survey of Children," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 41, no. 4 (2002): 613–622; Ariana Need and Nan Dirk de Graf, "Losing My Religion: A Dynamic Analysis of Leasing the Church in the Netherlands," *European Sociological Review* 12, no. 1 (1996): 87–99; Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004); James R. Tilley, "Secularization and Aging in Britain: Does Family Formation Cause Greater Religiosity?," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 42, no. 2 (2003): 269–278.

[6] Amitai Etzioni was among the first ones to voice the difference between three types of organizations and their socialization strategies. All the three types are based on a systematic combination of reward and punishment. According to Etzioni, they depend on different types of control that the organization uses to align individuals with their requirements. These are Etzioni's three types of organizations: a) coercive, b) utilitarian and c) normative. See Amitai Etzioni, *Modern Organization* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1964).

[7] Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, "Sociology of Religion and Sociology of Knowledge," *Sociology and Social Research* 47 (1963): 424.

[8] From an empirical point of view, the role played during socialization by gender is tested (Laurence R. Iannaccone, "Religious Practice: A Human Capital Approach," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 29, no. 3 [1990]: 297–314; Ellen M. Gee, "Gender Differences in Church Attendance in Canada: The Role of Labor Force Participation," *Review of Religious Research* 32, no. 3 [1991]: 267–273; Alan S. Miller and John P. Hoffmann, "Risk and Religion: An Explanation of Gender Differences in Religiosity," *Journal of the Scientific Study of Religion* 34,

2 The Catholic Church in the Tachov Micro-Region

The level of religiosity in the Tachov micro-region ranks among the lowest in the Czech Republic. This leads us to the conclusion that religion and religious memory are substantially devitalized in the region. Let us briefly outline some religion-related data concerning the Czech Republic, as established by the 2011 Population and Housing Census (hereinafter referred to as Census). According to the statistics, a mere 21% of the population considers themselves as religious. Out of these 21%, only 14% adhere to a Church or some kind of religious organization. Most religious people, declaring they adhere to some kind of religious organization (14%), are members of the Roman-Catholic Church, or in other words, 74% of the total of religious people declaring they adhere to some kind of religious organization are Roman Catholics (in contrast when the entire population is taken into consideration, Roman Catholics represent only 10%). 34% of the population, in contrast, stated they were without a confession (which, in absolute numbers, represents 3,612,804 persons out of a total of 10,562,214 inhabitants).[9]

These numbers demonstrate that Roman Catholics are the largest religious minority in the country. This makes the Catholic Church, at first sight, an influential institution backed by 10% of the population which it should be able to rely upon in political and cultural conflicts with the majority society. The truth as documented by various research projects, however, is that the influence of the Czech Catholic Church is not as strong as could be expected when the cultural significance of the Church in the history of the nation is taken into consideration.

The Tachov micro-region is part of Western Bohemia and as such, falls under the jurisdiction of the Plzeň Bishop and is classified as the so-called Tachov vicariate.[10] At this point attention is drawn to data collected in the last (2011) Census. Since the previous (2001) Census, virtually no demographic changes occurred in the Tachov micro-region. While it had 51,439 inhabitants in 2001, it had 51,917 in 2011. From a broader perspective, this means that over the course of this period, the population curve stopped falling (as was the case in the 1990s). When it comes to comparing declared religiosity, however, there were certain changes. In 2001, a total of 10,016 in-

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no. 1 [1995]: 63–75; Rodney Stark, "Physiology and Faith: Addressing the 'Universal' Gender Difference in Religious Commitment," *Journal for Scientific Study of Religion* 41, no. 3 [2002]: 495–507; Jeremy Freese, "Risk Preferences and Gender Differences in Religiousness: Evidence from the World Value Survey," *Review of Religious Research* 46, no. 1 [2004]: 88–91.), as well as to what extent the outer environment influences the forms of belonging and practices of religiosity and what are the factors causing someone to abandon/adopt a faith and leave/become member of a religious organization. This is not a trivial problem because while the presence of faith in the world is acknowledged, along with a certain role it plays, its role as an agent integrating individuals into society has been challenged (Hubert Knoblauch, *Religionsoziologie* [De Gruyter: Berlin – New York, 1999], 220.). See, for example, a study by Alasdair Crockett and David Voas who have established that despite an influx of religious immigrants, the number of people affiliated to religion in Great Britain has been decreasing from generation to generation. See Alasdair Crockett and David Voas, "Generations of Decline: Religious Change in 20th-century Britain," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 45, no. 4 (2006): 567–584.

[9] "Population and Religion. Census 2011," accessed April 4, 2015, https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/nabozenska-vira-obyvatel-podle-vysledku-scitani-lidu-2011-61wegp46fl.

[10] From the administrative point of view, the Church in the Czech Republic is divided into two provinces, the Czech and the Moravian. The Czech province comprises of 5 dioceses and the Moravian of 3. The Plzeň diocese covers almost entirely the State administrative units of the Plzeň and Karlovy Vary regions. The Plzeň diocese was founded in 1993. Plzeň, with its Saint Bartholomew cathedral, is the seat of the Plzeň Bishop. The diocese spreads out on 9 236 km2, it has 795 000 inhabitants, out of which 142 000 are Roman Catholic. Catholics on the Plzeň diocese territory represent approximately 18% of the population, there are 101 priests. The most serious problem the Plzeň diocese has to cope with is the chronic lack of priests. This is why the Bishop decided to merge parishes and has repeatedly asked for help abroad, a call that was listened to mainly by Polish Church. Currently, ¼ of the Plzeň diocese priests are foreigners, most of them Poles.

habitants declared their affiliation to a particular confession, while in 2011, it was only 3,511 persons. This dramatic decline primarily affected the Catholic Church: it had 8,022 members in 2001 and only 2,111 in 2011. The situation at present is even more dramatic which is apparent from a survey carried out in 2014 by the Church itself.

The results of the surveys repeatedly carried out by the Plzeň bishopric since 1997 demonstrate more precisely the overall decline in attendance at religious services. The decline is fairly steep when it comes to women, but has been more gradual in the case of men. This decline can be, in the case of both groups, explained by the dying off of the oldest generation which has been, over the long term, defined as the one with the highest declared religiosity.[11] When we also look at the age structure of the churchgoers, it is apparent that 2/3 of those who participate in religious services are men and women older than 61. This, in absolute numbers, meant that at the time of the Census, 349 persons regularly attended religious services, out of which 204 were women (their average age was 58 years) and 145 men (average age 42 years). The average age of all those who participate in religious services within the vicariate is 56. When these data are placed within the context of the overall number of inhabitants of the region in 2011, it is apparent that actively participating Catholics represented slightly over 0.5% of the region's population.

3 Research Field and Methodology

I have based this study on two theoretical concepts, the first one being *social constructivism*. I share the following assumptions with social constructionists: (a) society is a man-made product, (b) society is an objective reality, (c) individuals are social products.[12] I base my research on the assumption that data collected within the frame of the study may be found exclusively in everyday life reality. Social actors, in other words, have at least an elementary level of self-reflexion and, parallel to this, that the social order and social reality is structured by their motives and interpretations. If this assumption is applied to social institutions, we can say that the institutions are of an objective character, being the products of the opinion consensuses and practices adopted by the actors. If we apply, however, the constructionist approach to the behavior, intentions, motivations and practices carried out by members of non-institutionalized religious communities, we look at socially constructed facts. These are real in the sense that they are inter-subjective, i.e. "exist independently of the observer and persist in time meanwhile their factuality depends on and is maintained by the reflexive acceptance of this reality".[13] I therefore assume that the principles governing the social constructivism theory are well known and that there is no need to elaborate on them.

The second theoretical concept I have based my paper on is Jan Assmann's[14] types of inter-subjectively shared memory. There is the communicative memory constituted by everyday interactions and rarely transgressing the form of talk or narrative. This type of memory is rather fragile. It is not protected from forgetting by being fixed through some kind of material objectivization, such as texts or paintings, which would institutionalize it through cultivating and

[11] Jan Váně, Dušan Lužný and Martina Štípková, "Traditional and Alternative Religiosity in Contemporary Czech Republic: A Comparison of Age Groups", in *Altern in den Religionen/Ageing in Religion*, ed. Karl Baier and Franz Winter (Münster: LIT, 2013), 184–203.

[12] Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *Sociální konstrukce reality: pojednání o sociologii vědění* (Brno: CDK, 1999).

[13] Michael Lynch, "Against Reflexivity as an Academic Virtue and Source of Privileged Knowledge," *Theory, Culture & Society* 17, no. 3 (2000): 9.

[14] Comp. Jan Assmann, *Kultura a paměť: písmo, vzpomínka a politická identita v rozvinutých kulturách starověku* (Praha: Prostor, 2001); Jan Assmann, Religion and Cultural Memory (California: Stanford University Press, 2006).

providing it with a means to be transferred and codified.[15] Communicative memory can be seen as a landmark based upon which individuals are able to orientate in the world and, at the same time, works as a medium of interaction among individuals and, parallel to this, is nourished by these interactions.

There is also a cultural memory, transgressing the memory shared by individuals with their contemporaries. It is, in fact, the communicative memory consciously transformed, through recording and interpretation, into an objectivized form, i.e. the cultural memory. There are, in other words, two poles of memory: the communicative memory, which is of an episodic character and is linked to our experience, and the cultural memory which relies on the semantic memory which, in turn, is linked to everything that we have learned and remembered. Speaking of memory, mention should be made of socialization, a process closely related to the constitution of memory. Socialization helps us remember but, at the same time, our memory helps us become socialized. Socialization is not the mere foundation of memory, but is also a function or, as we might call it, the "cement of memory".[16] Life in society (the social context) is the place where norms and values originate. These norms and values represent a key element when it comes to defining what is important and what is the significance of rules, values, facts, etc. By doing this, we structure our private experience to the deepest level: the private and the shared intertwine and that is why it is very difficult to establish a difference between the memory of an individual and the memory of society.

I would like to now move onto another specific concept of memory, religious memory, connected, in Jan Assmann's work, primarily with religious rites which he views as a medium of thinking.[17] Religious memory is considered part of the collective memory, which is not only a sediment of settled experiences and interpretations but is socially constructed. This[18] means that involved in its creation are not only competing discourses and power structures – as it is fashionable to say today – but that it is a product of socially shared symbolic universes and that a key role in this process is played by the objectivization of experience through language as a tool used to reproduce shared objectivized cultural (religious) symbols, such as texts, rites, paintings or sculptures.

Religious memory, just like the cultural memory, has the ability to constitute the space that is shared on the basis of a common experience, thanks to which it is filled up with shared or, in contrast, antagonistic expectations influencing actors' behavior. In order to understand these expectations, the hermeneutic method would be recommended, concentrating on the role played by "understanding" under the condition that we approach important events as a text. Hermeneutics, thus, along with the cultural memory theory, serves as a tool to explore the conditions that help constitute and recognize a text (events) as binding.

The data (the attitudes and opinions of key actors (politicians, laymen, clergymen) concerning the nature of religious memory and the role played in the process of its constitution by the Catholic Church as a regional "hegemon") were collected in ethnographic research, a suitable tool allowing the researcher to explore the actors' perspectives (the actors being regarded as key figures in my analysis of the present and of the weakening of religious memory).

The data were collected in the period between January 2014 and July 2015. Over the period of this time, we performed a total of 28 interviews with key respondents and approximately 400 hours of observation. I have contacted priests who lived and worked in the region during

[15] Csaba Szaló, "Od kolektivní paměti k paměti města," *Sociální studia* 10, no. 2 (2013): 7–11.
[16] Assmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory*, 4.
[17] Ibid., 139–154.
[18] See also Berger and Luckmann, *Sociální konstrukce reality*.

the Communist regime and, later, after its fall, priests who are living and working in the region at present. I have done the same with politicians, contacting individuals with political influence who have the power to affect relationships in the political representation in the town of Tachov and the Catholic Church. When looking for relevant lay informants, I sought out individuals who were active in the public space. In other words, I used three lines of contacts, to which we added new informants through the snowball sampling technique.

The average length of the interview was around 90 minutes and all the interviews were semi-structured. All the interviews were recorded and transcribed. I received informed consent from all the participants and I committed to keeping confidentiality. It soon became evident that in such a small region, it is, in some cases, practically impossible to maintain the anonymity of the source, primarily in the case of Church representatives and politicians. This means that in order to protect our informants I was not able to use all the information gathered. Part of the problem was solved by only listing categories (a) priest, (b) religious lay person.

4 Memory and Socialization

The frequently shared conclusion at present is that modern and late modern societies are no longer able to play the role of a universal anchor (i.e. generate a strong ontology)[19] because they have redefined their governing principle: it is now individual freedom. Stephen K. White argues that current societies are based on a weak ontology. This means that communities, perceived as sources of individual identity and entities to which actors ascribe meaning and which they consider as normatively binding, are only functional and legitimized as long as individuals see them as such. In other words, communities created on the basis of a weak ontology are, de facto, groundless. They are fundamentally significant for people just as long as they are significant for the individuals and their role may therefore be questioned and contested at any moment.[20]

This state of societies (communities) has also been described by Charles Taylor. According to Taylor, we are living in an age of authenticity and expressive individualism. The basic idea behind this theory is that none of us has the right to interfere in the business of another for the sake of their well-being and that interventions are only acceptable as a tool of protection from harm. Another principle states that values and moral order cannot be instilled through discipline. Charles Taylor believes that this approach has already been embedded in the thinking of previous generations. This also implies the idea that the defense of individual privacy, along with the non-acceptability of intolerance, represents the very basis of social co-existence. According to the generally shared belief, however, the obligation to act in a moral way with respect to society and solidarity with society may not be coerced in late modern societies because everything is supposed to be spontaneous and authentic. This kind of reasoning raises the following question: how, in an age of expressive individualism, can one make the voluntariness act in the right direction?[21] It has gradually become evident that the generally accepted emphasis placed on authenticity and on expressive individualism leads to the weakening of the feeling of political, religious and communitarian belonging. One of the by-products of the above-mentioned is the drop in participation in common affairs. Atomized individuals lose interest not only in politics

[19] For the key texts summarizing (not only) the general explanations as to why (mostly) religions no longer work as all encompassing systems, see Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Doubleday, 1967) or more recently Charles Taylor, *Sekulární věk* (Praha: Karolinum, 2013).
[20] Stephen K. White, "Weak Ontology: Genealogy and Critical Issues," *Hedgehog Review* 7, no. 2 (2005): 11–25, accessed July 7, 2015, http://iasc-culture.org/THR/archives/WeakOntologies/7.2DWhite.pdf.
[21] Břetislav Horyna, *Druhá moderna* (Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 2001), 58.

but in anything that does not coincide with their expressive needs linked to self-development or emotional consumption. The original links to society as a whole, such as religion or, after religion had been pushed aside, class-related identity as the last forms of identity linked to a large group, have ceased to exist.[22]

This results not only in the decomposition of the overarching symbolic world represented by religion[23] but also in the decomposition of originally alternative symbolic worlds such as science. What remains, however, is the fact that the clash of individual conceptions is not necessarily won on the basis of the theoretical proficiency of those who legitimize them (regardless of whether they are religious, political or "postmodern" theorists), but that the result depends on their power and on the way the basic structures of the society are established.[24]

Taking the above into consideration, it is not surprising that the Church (represented, in this case study, by the Catholic Church in the Tachov micro-region) is facing a conflict with alternative symbolic worlds. This is why actors operating in individual symbolic worlds must, when in collision with other symbolic worlds, be more rigorous when internalizing the terminology used to legitimize the institutional order that they represent. The purpose of this study is to explore the way religious people internalize the terminology legitimating the order that they have chosen to follow. In other words, I am interested in the socialization process, or, yet in other words, in the key component (socialization) that allows individuals to maintain and structure relationships among the actors within a society. I am interested in the following question: what is the way individuals internalize the world of symbols and meanings that help them maintain religious memory?

As religious memory is disintegrated through the individualization processes, it is extremely important to analyze the forms of socialization in the religious environment. (Not only) the religiously oriented environment but also politically conservative groups argue that individual (self) consciousness is constituted exclusively within the context of a community, which is the source of collective memory. Those who are not drawing from the collective memory cannot consequently acquire adequate religious or political (self) consciousness.[25] Insufficient reproduction of collective memory also increases the chances of weakening the feeling of belonging and breaking the ties of solidarity with the given community, which is often translated into an unwillingness to help fellow believers as well as into a low level of engagement in "our cause".

Socialization is consequently merely a strategy which communities use to ensure that the subjective reality experienced by individuals interlinks with the objective reality of the particular community. In lay terms this means, with respect to the researched Catholic community, that individuals are able to stick to their Catholic faith only under the condition that they relate to their community of Catholics, in other words, that they are in regular contact with it and that active religious socialization is carried out. As soon as the relationship with the plausibility structures agent is disrupted, the relevant socialization process gradually disintegrates:

> The longer the periods during which these instruments are not reinforced in the process of approving the reality in the face-to-face situations, the less probable it is that they will be able to influence reality. (…) It is true that individuals usually remember the realities of their past, the only way, however, to 'refresh' them is to meet those who consider these realities equally relevant. Plausibility structures represent, at

[22] Taylor, *Sekulární věk*, 105–126.

[23] See Peter L. Berger and his 1967 writings.

[24] Berger and Luckmann, *Sociální konstrukce reality*, 119.

[25] Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim, *Dálková láska: Životní formy v globálním věku* (Praha: Slon, 2014), 207.

the same time, a social base allowing for the suppression of doubts and without which the given definition of reality is unsustainable.[26]

I never quit going to church even though they wanted to stop me and did all these things, you know. I had quite a lot of troubles because of my faith. And my children did as well because they attended religion classes. And then the youngest one came home after a class and was crying: "Mom," he said, "they are laughing at me because I go to religion classes and this and that." So I told him: "Do not pay attention to them."

(religious laywoman)

I was not raised in a Catholic way. I come from an atheist family. I had a grandfather who, after all these twists of fate, became a "Church Secretary".[27] I became personally closer to faith through my cousin and got involved here in Tachov. I started going to the church – my Grandmother went to church – so I went with her and tried to initiate some communication. And then I think it started. I decided I would get baptized and I was confirmed sometime around the time the Pilsen episcopate was founded. (…) And then it started here, for a while, with this priest, ***, and then another priest, ***, came, and then yet another one, ***. It seems like no one was able to stay because it probably was not very easy, these conditions, and maybe also the internal policies defined by the Bishop. (…) In my generation, the community was not really functioning properly (…) but during *** it changed. He was into it, he was active within the Catholic community and he was making an effort. He opened up space for development, for creativity, he was trying to involve us. We were given space to be engaged, to come up with ideas, meditations, Taize chants, to enlarge the offer, I would say, read the Bible and interpret it. (…) and then it was over, they called him away. And then the quarrels started: they said that the way he did things resembled the way Protestants did them too much and so on. (…) When they called him away, I quit [my Church engagement] and I was not the only one. We made an agreement with the current Protestant Hussite Church and started using their space to meet. But these meetings are no longer going on. But for some time, they were. We continued meeting each other as we used to with our old priest, it was quite interesting. But we did not want to join another Church. So we met at the Hussite parish house and then in people's flats, we read the Bible and so on. There were 20 of us, we were homeless in a way. (…) Then we connected a bit to the Methodists, we did things together, even something like masses. And then it was over. There was a conflict among us, it grew and we were unable to communicate properly about it. We did not really become aware of it, nor did we try to solve it and it became really serious and as a result of this, the community fell apart, we were no longer enthusiastic.

(religious layperson)

The above-mentioned quotations represent two typical phenomena affecting the Church in the researched region. There was, on the one hand, a group of religious people, primarily older ones, who suffered under Communist oppression and who had been socialized (from the point of view of religion) in the spirit of confrontation with the Communist ideology (this was anchored in the structures of society). As soon as the regime fell in 1989, on the other hand, society opened up to new impulses, including religious ones and, as a consequence, became not only pluralistic but also made possible a range of conversions.[28]

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[26] Berger and Luckmann, *Sociální konstrukce reality*, 152–153.

[27] During Communist rule, the Church was controlled according to the so-called Church Acts from 1949. These Acts made it possible to carry out State control over all Churches and religious societies. It was specifically Act No. 217/49 Sb., constituting the State Agency for Religious Affairs. Act No. 218/49 Sb. It was consequently called the Act on Economic Security of Churches and Religious Societies. The State Agency for Religious Affairs was to carry out control over the Churches and cooperate with so-called Church secretaries, operating outside the central office, within the framework of the National Committees and monitoring activities carried out by priests within the regions. They were granting or denying permits allowing priests to work and reported to the State Agency for Religious Affairs. Church secretaries, therefore, represented the tool of direct control over the priests.

[28] Life in a pluralistic world also means, however, that individuals change the worlds in which they live (sometimes even several times during their lifetime). Actors, in other words, transform their subjective reality

Conversion as such is nothing new and surprising. Without the institution of conversion, traditional religious groups in the Czech Republic would probably not have been able to survive. This phenomenon was particularly typical for the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s.[29] The number of conversions has been declining since this time. What is important, however, are not the conversions themselves but the ability to make the converts stick to the particular faith, in other words, to ensure that they keep in mind their conversion experience and remain persuaded as to the plausibility of the act of conversion. This may not be achieved, however, without long-term inclusion into a religious community. Without this inclusion, the newly acquired reality seems unsustainable on an individual basis. The plausibility structures, needed to legitimize the new reality, are generated and saturated exclusively on a communitarian basis. The goal, therefore, is to internalize the plausibility structures constituting the world of an individual, a process leading to the replacement of all the other worlds that the actor inhabited before the alternation.

The above cited quotation actually implies several issues which we have classified as characteristic features of the particular religious community in the Tachov micro-region. First and foremost, it became evident that there was a lack of significant others which would guarantee the reproduction of plausibility structures strong enough to persist even if the significant others disappeared. This is exactly what happened. As a result of a conflict between a group of parishioners and a priest, the Pilsen Bishop removed the priest at the beginning of the new millennium, an event entailing a complete breakdown of the plausibility structures.[30]

The second problem is the skepticism of traditional Catholics who perceive the converts as free-floating, justifying their attitude by giving the example of what has happened after the departure of the priest (young people, followers of this priest, quit going to church after his departure and completely stopped participating in the religious life).

The success or not of the socialization depends, of course, not only on priests but on the family. Family, however, is not a strong religious socialization actor in the researched region. This is due not only to the high divorce rate in the entire Czech Republic but also to the low trans-generational religious homogeneity of couples in the region. This means that children going through the socialization process internalize more than one form of memory (religious and non-religious), which results in the multiplication of memory. This is, additionally, even more diversified in this region which is due to the fact that their (grand) parents immigrated from various places within Czechoslovakia (and, in some cases, even from outside it) as part of the re-population process following the expulsion of the Sudetenland Germans. This results in

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completely. This process is called alternation. Berger and Luckmann define alternation as the total transformation of subjective reality. During the alternation process, the individual is re-socialized. The re-socialization also concerns identification with the individuals who are responsible for the re-socialization (this part of the process is analogical to primary socialization). As a result of this, the primary nomic structures of an individual's subjective reality break down, replaced by a new network of effective significant others with whom the re-socialized individual identifies emotionally. Religious conversion represents a prototype of the alternation process (Berger and Luckmann, *Sociální konstrukce reality*, 152–153).

[29] The end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s were characterized by frequent spontaneous conversions. Jiřina Šiklová, a Czech sociologist, was trying to develop the term "young Christians", referring to people who converted spontaneously, displaying their religiosity in the face of the regime. Their problem, however, was that they failed to acquire the traditional Christian doctrines and adjusted their religiosity and spirituality to their individual choices (comp. Jiřina Šiklová, "Mládež v ČSSR a náboženství," *Svědectví* 20, no. 79 [1986]: 513–520; or Zdeněk R. Nešpor, *Příliš slábi ve víře* [Praha: Kalich, 2010], 95–97).

[30] This argument has an extremely ambiguous and complicated background and it has been arousing emotions up until the present. Each of the parties cites their own arguments among which, however, formal fallacies of the ad hominem type prevail.

the pluralization of memories, accompanied by the creation of various cognitive dissonances. Local families often face traumas of completely contradictory ideologies and religious attitudes (i.e. completely different symbolic worlds).

> I am a communist, I have not ceased to be a communist and I am not ashamed of it, even though I am 85. (…). Look, we used to go *** to pilgrimages and carnivals when my Grandmother was still alive. My wife inclined to it, as well, so we had to go to church. People also went to church because our Czech teacher played the organ, he was an organ virtuoso. And as the kids were growing, they were more interested in rides and shooting a rifle at the carnival and it was no longer fun for them to go to church, they did not have a strong relationship to it. And I never forced them! I kept telling them, if you want to go, go with your Grandmother or with your Mother, and so on. So Grandmother went to church with Grandfather, right, and with my brother-in-law. And we went to the carnival and then Grandma would come. (…) At the beginning, it was normal to go to church and the Communist organization did not blame me. (…) Even the PS's wife went to church here, right, they came from Slovakia, (…), their wives went to church often and it was not an issue.[31]
>
> (a Tachov micro-region inhabitant)

> Since 1989, I am no longer a member of the Communist Party but my thinking is Communist. (…) My wife as well as my Grandmother went to church, even if was freezing, Grandma went to Tachov on foot. She was 84 back then, so I sometimes went to give her a lift, she would not ask, and before I could pick her up, she was half way up the hill and she would give money to the priest. She would get 900 Czech crowns as her pension but she gave 100 to the Church each month. It was deep in the people.
>
> (a Tachov micro-region inhabitant)

Leaving aside the fact that even 25 years after the fall of the Communist regime, the respondents talk about the coexistence of contradictory symbolic worlds and profess their sympathy to the Communist tradition with a suspicious ease, it has to be said that the actors do suffer when harmonizing these worlds. This results in the creation of multiple memories and opens space for multi-dimensional and plural forms of existence which are hard to cope with and which members of families fight by forgetting.

One cannot forget everything, however, as even the process of forgetting is selective. According to the social construction of reality theory, individuals preserve only a small portion of all their experience in their memory. The preserved memories are sedimented, creating entities worth remembering. These entities endow our lives with a certain sense, the sediments being legitimized and incorporated into the overall representation of the sense of one's life.

Groups sediments are stored in the form of language with individual actors not necessarily being present at the moment of the creation of the group experience. A tradition is thus constituted which can, however, create a completely different theory of the origin of the original concrete sediments.[32] In the environment which we researched, it was the expulsion of the Sudetenland Germans which constitutes the shared sedimented experience. This experience is sedimented in the minds of the Tachov micro-region's inhabitants and legitimized in various ways. This is not exceptional as sedimented experiences often receive, with time passing, alternative legitimations, i.e. new meanings are ascribed to memory sediments. This is exactly what happens when the experience with the expulsion of the Sudetenland Germans is interpreted. Being a (non)religious Communist is another aspect mentioned quite often. Experiences are reinterpreted and related to basic social structures.

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[31] PS – Border Patrol Units.

[32] Berger and Luckmann, *Sociální konstrukce reality*, 70–71.

People in the researched region cope with the question of Sudetenland Germans in two ways: (1) religiosity is low in the Tachov micro-region because the Sudetenland Germans left it. Faith, along with religious memory, was lost with them. (2) we never talked about the Germans, it was always a taboo subject. It is only now that they have begun talking about it and we do not know if it is appropriate to to open up old scars.

Each sedimented experience needs to be incorporated into one's subjective reality, which is also legitimized with respect to objective reality. In other words, there is the need for a legitimation process enabling an adequate explanation and legitimization of the central elements of the institutionalized tradition. Cognitive value is assigned to the institutionalized order, supported through objectivized meanings.

This knowledge is important because legitimation is not only a question of knowing what the right value are. Values are supported by understanding that is might not be applied without the right knowledge.[33] Bearing this in mind, we observed in the researched environment that not only there was a conflict over the form of legitimation but also a conflict over the values that should be legitimized. This is also reflected in the subjective realities which are expressed through the process of creation of individual biographies. Such a state occurs when the borders of the "knowledge" itself, drawing their clarity from traditional explanations, become blurred.[34] Tradition consequently explains who is religious in the right/wrong way, who is the right/wrong convert, priest, Communist, etc.

Looking at the issue from the point of view of meanings, the crucial thing is to create a stable, comprehensible institutional order working as a defense against the fear of chaos and inaccuracy. The only important thing on the level of meanings is to create a stable and understandable institutional order that would function as a defense wall against the fear of chaos and incomprehensibility, an order that would resist external pressures. In the researched environment, this pressure may be illustrated by the conflict between the Christian faith and the Communist ideology (regime). The transcending capacities of the symbolic world of religion made it quite easy to classify and explain the experience of pressure exercised by the Communist regime (translated into various measures taken by the regime, ranging from denying education to the regime's opponents and their children to physical liquidation). The fear of the regime could be coped with and understood as a test of faith and resistance. This kind of legitimizing explanation is given not only by the actors affected by the events at the time but is also given when interpreting the past after 1989.[35]

The problem, however, occurs when the "theorists" and "executors" of the institutionalized order begin arguing over the forms of its interpretation and execution or, which is even more serious, cease to care about its proper transfer. As a result of this, inhabitants of a particular universe begin to doubt and fall into a state of cognitive dissonance. This cognitive dissonance, to put it simply, is a result of the pluralism that (as we have already said) permeates all aspects of reality, in modern societies, and the utmost consequence of which is a situation in which there is no group that would be able to constitute a society as a whole through its sets of beliefs. The situation is even more serious, however, as groups are no longer able to provide all-encompassing support for even their own members.[36] Such a situation weighs on everybody, including religious

[33] Ibid., 94.

[34] Mention should be made briefly of Berger and Luckmann's four legitimation levels: (a) incipient legitimation (b) theoretical propositions in a rudimentary form, (c) explicit theories by which an institutional sector is legitimated in terms of a differentiated body of knowledge, (d) legitimation through symbolic words (ibid., 95–96).

[35] Tomáš Halík, *O přítomnou církev a společnost* (Praha: Křesťanská akademie, 1992); Tomáš Halík, *Obnovíš tvář země. Texty k obnově církve a společnosti z let 1989–1998* (Praha: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 2014).

[36] Peter L. Berger, *Vzdálená sláva* (Brno: Barrister & Principal, 1997), 75.

groups and churches as entities, the aim of which is to provide their members with tools allowing them to find their way in the world.

Each religious group strives to maintain the orthodoxy of its doctrine and practice. In a pluralistic society, however, it has been increasingly difficult to maintain and reproduce religion in its orthodox form (i.e. to maintain traditional definitions of reality) because the pluralistic world speeds up the process of introduction of social transformations. Pluralism decomposes the traditional conceptualization of reality and gives way to skepticism and innovation, decomposing in this way the "reality of the traditional status quo".[37]

To make an individual stick to a particular set of beliefs (i.e. retain them in a consistent order of being), all symbolic worlds rely on a certain kind of terminology. It should be added, however, that all kinds of terminologies also contain the strategies of therapy and repression.[38] These are the tools used to maintain the world as a consistent whole.

In order to explain this briefly, the goal of the above-mentioned strategies is to prevent the inhabitants of a symbolic world from leaving it or from refusing to accept defined forms of institutionalized reality. It is not important what form the therapy or suppression strategies (pastoral activities, communist canvassing, etc.) take. The goal is to postulate a set of principles defining the theory of deviation, the diagnostic apparatus and the terminological system that allows both the therapists and individuals, having gone "astray", to internalize their deflection from the socially shared reality.

Countless modifications of this approach can be found over the course of history but they all share one principal characteristic. The terminology is constructed in a way to provoke the feeling of guilt of all those who deviate or even leave the particular world. This aspect clearly illustrates why declared religiosity has been in decline.

> People, remember, lost the feeling for religion, they lose it when they do not have it in front of them. And this is why the decline started. Look at the young people and stuff. As long as kids went to school and studied religion [catechism], they were formed to behave in a certain way. And they did not dare do the things they do today. When you look at young people today you see that they do not even take notice of old people. I think that religion classes [catechism] should have remained part of the curriculum. Because then people had a different character, they were different and kids were growing up among this different kind of people. (…) I think that it is education's fault, when you think about today, you see that religion is missing. People have nothing in themselves. Because, you can't deny, when someone was at least a bit of a Catholic, they feared something, they had a kind of fear and today, people don't fear anything.
>
> (religious layperson)

The above commentary is not the only one of this type and could be seen as a typical complaint of an older person who had gone through both primary and secondary religious socialization at school. It is not surprising that the Communist regime was violently suppressing religion, including the secondary religious socialization. The clash between the two symbolic worlds, however, did not take place on the argumentation level but purely on the power level. The winner, to put it in symbolic words, had a bigger stick, i.e. took advantage of the situation and forcibly introduced and implemented the terminology legitimizing the type of understanding of the reality preferred by the ruling group.

The question can thus be asked how the Church addresses the issue of reintroducing the practice of religious (secondary) socialization in the (from this perspective) ideologically free

[37] Berger and Luckmann, *Sociální konstrukce reality*, 124.

[38] "Therapy uses the group's terminology to keep all its members within the frontiers of a particular world. Suppression, on the other hand, uses its terminological apparatus to erase all terms that are outside this symbolic world." (Berger and Luckmann, *Sociální konstrukce reality*, 114).

Post-Communist era. Religion-related terminology does, of course, have tools at its disposal (such as confession guides or sermons threatening with hell, damnation or eternal death, for example) designed to fit individuals into the borders of institutionalized definitions of reality. These tools are introduced to individuals during religious socialization. It has been determined, however, that the Church is not rigorous enough in its efforts to implement them.

This can be illustrated by providing the example of not actually existing active pastoral activities which represent, in fact, both a socialization tool and institutionalized therapy. No complete system of pastoral activities/religious socialization is provided in the Tachov micro-region. Local priests instead rather (implicitly) use the strategy of suppression. In other words, they use a different, factually correct way (referring to the relevant symbolic world) to reinterpret the experience coming from the outside world. Let us give an example:

> They are blocked, religion does not say anything to them, and it has all become even worse with the Church property restitutions.[39] This is a real problem. They think [the Church] is loaded. The Church, has been constantly accused of just longing for money and having these pedophile scandals, you never hear anything else about the Church. It is a new test for us.
>
> (priest)

It is evident that defense has become the main strategy used by some of the priests. Let us now look, however, at the actors and at the way they approach religious socialization. In their testimonies, they often complain about disintegrated families (as the primary source of /religious/ socialization). Our respondents, including the non-religious ones, have also complained that primary and secondary schools do not support religious education (as the secondary religious socialization). This is not a trivial complaint because those who control the decisive socialization processes have the key to the creation of reality. An individual does not necessarily have to, of course, understand the theories justifying abstract symbolizations which legitimize the definitions of reality. It is enough for them to simply rely on those assertions promoted by society. In other words, the world of actors is filled with sense and theoretical explanations that do not necessarily have to be based on empirical knowledge but which are accepted because society supports them and because they have been standardized.

> For all of these things, you had to have a permit. When you wanted to organize a religious meeting, a celebration, you had to have a permit. And as they were gradually closing country schools, children just lost religion.
>
> (priest)

> Priests were the ones who kept the tradition. Priests and teachers. They crushed the teachers. They put them in jail. And then, when teachers were needed, it was only the approved ones who could study, to make sure that they had the correct political views. Don't tell me this isn't the way it was. People who are in their 50s today, are people who have no relation to religion. Teachers no longer had to teach religion. … There were teachers who organized religion classes. Here we had a certain Mr. ***, a school headmaster, and they [the Communists] sacked him. And sent him in jail. He was incarcerated for a long time. But before, when there was the Corpus Domini, he organized everything. And they blamed him for having organized the Corpus Domini. And he was sentenced to jail. He also organized the funeral when our Pepicek died. He just came there and made the people line up. It was in him, he was a teacher. And he

[39] The Church property restitution quarrel has been going on in the Czech Republic since the early 1990s. It concerns the return of Church property stolen by the Communist regime. The Restitution Act was passed in Czech Parliament in 2012. For more information on the problem of restitutions, see, for example, (Jan Váně and František Kalvas, "The Agenda-Setting Effect of Focusing Events: A Case Study of the Church Restitutions Issue," *Sociólogia* 45, no. 3 (2013): 290–315.

> went to church, his entire family, they were religious people. And today, these teachers, when they are a bit closer to faith, they are just searching for something different, a pseudo-faith.
>
> (religious layperson)

> Back then [during the 1980s], no one, without the Grace of God, was able to maintain religiosity. I would even say that almost nothing could keep the religiosity. Those times were miserable. We (at the Tachov vicarage) wanted to find an entire Christian family, we wanted to count them. And we counted the *** near the town of Planá. The father, the mother, the children. In Tachov, there was just this Mr. ***, his wife and his children but that was all. In the town of Bor, for example, there was the *** family but the father was not with them, it was just the woman and the children. Which means that we never found an entire family. Well, don't let me forget the town of Sedliště, the *** family and that's it. One entire family, another one and a third one. Three families in the entire region.
>
> (priest)

The above cited testimonies refer primarily to the period of Communist rule. It is not surprising that the possibility to teach religion (catechism) at schools was banned along with forbidding the Church to participate in the education process. The problem, however, lies elsewhere. In the Tachov micro-region, religious education was not even provided at the parish house. This had the ultimate consequence being the key figures of transfer and control of the socialization process (priests) who ceased to make any effort and transferred the responsibility for religious socialization to families. The families in the region, however, were religiously indifferent and in the majority of the cases, not homogamous. Apart from this, people repeatedly emphasized in their testimonies that they expected religious socialization would be backed by the teachers. Families provided for the emotional backup through the everyday practice of the living faith (such as attending religious services, prayers said before meals, etc.) but it was expected that cognitive transmission of religious literacy would be carried out by teachers and priests. Nearly all the teachers of religion and priests were removed, however, from schools and only a small number of priests were allowed to continue carrying out their activities in this border region, thereby becoming the only agents able to mediate the vast knowledge about the particular order of things. These priests, however, mostly gave up.

After the change of the regime, the Church was again able to start participating in the life of society in an active way. At the beginning of the 1990s, it was also granted quite massive support by the fairly irreligious Czech environment. The setting was perfect for it to not only renew its position within society but reintroduce forms of religious socialization. New priests, sent by the Bishop to renew religious life as a whole, including pastoral activities, were sent to the researched region. An effort to implement the system of religious socialization from within and outside the religious community was part of the plan.

> I don't know how many years ago I started teaching religion there, at schools, as well, primary schools. I took up the initiative, it was after the Revolution. Back then, the Ministry of Education wrote a letter that we had to be allowed into schools. There was one primary school headmaster, she was quite stand-offish and she did not want to allow me in. And I told her, I'm sorry, but I have this letter so you will have to show me something in writing that I am not allowed to get in. And then I was allowed.
>
> (priest)

In the beginning of the 1990s, the Church was definitely trying to enter into schools. Its efforts were quite successful. In the researched area, however, the following problem occurred. During the 1990s, priests were coming and going. At the beginning of the new millennium, the problem culminated with a rupture between one of the priests and part of the religious community.

A number of parishioners were on his side, supporting his ecumenical efforts and innovative way of carrying out pastoral activities. Other parishioners even rejected his style and complained to the Bishop. The priests having been called off, the situation calmed down partially but a price had to be paid. A number of the parishioners left the Church. The situation was reflected in the pastoral strategies and religious socialization strategies promoted by the Church representatives.

> I don't want to say that the brothers just gave up [teaching religion classes at primary schools]. But you know, each time when you come somewhere and you start something, people sign up. So the question is whether if I stayed for 5 years, for example, I would still be teaching religion in schools. The question is whether I would be able to keep the people motivated to come. It is nice to establish a tradition but it is not so easy to maintain it.
>
> (priest)

The second argument explaining why the religious socialization is not successful, cited by the priests, is the difficult nature of the task. In their testimonies, they try to excuse the inactivity of their fellow-brothers by referring to the difficulties related to the process. In reality, catechism was not taught at either primary or secondary schools. It was only taught in the parish house but "only" certain children from religious families attended the classes. The broad public, in fact, is not actually informed about the possibility of attending the classes.

The third type of argument as to why catechism is not taught in the region any longer reflects the conflict which occurred in the area and which we have already mentioned.

> Well, I am actually glad that priests do not go there [teach catechism at primary schools] because I am persuaded that it is better for the Christian faith this way. The truth is that badly translated, the fundamentalist religion presented on the basis of dead theorems may actually prevent people from accessing it. (…) because when faith becomes instrumental and ideologized, a wall is created between it and the people. (…) So I'm glad things turned out as they have because if it had gone the other way around, people could be discouraged under current circumstances. People who want to learn something about faith can go to the Methodists, they work with young children and young people in a natural environment. They are open. And I am not arguing in favor of *** now, but for me one question remains: would he be accepted in the Tachov schools? He should be given some space, of course, under the condition that his class would be taught as an after-school optional class. He should do this, but personally, I would not even call these religion classes even if they are taught at the parish house. (…) I would rather present Christian stories with an ethical background, etc., in order to make it more precise.
>
> (priest)

The above-mentioned proposition implies that the Church has been presenting itself and its ideology in a rather traditionalist way and that those who favor this approach often try to resolve the position the Church occupied before World War II and before the beginning of the Communist regime, i.e. a position when it represented a "natural" segment of State institutions. It also implies that such an approach has nothing to do with the transformations that the Catholic Church underwent after the 2nd Vatican council.

The last approach that became visible when we analyzed our interviews with the priests demonstrated a certain helplessness and had already been mentioned involving the shutting away and defense of the strategy of the current position. There is a certain difference, however, as the first approach reflects a forced resignation, resulting from the pressure exercised by the Communist regime which was targeting religion with the aim of crushing it, religion as an antagonistic symbolic world. The following example, however, represents a "non-forced" resignation because no such cultural battle is taking place at present.

> They visit, they come to study religion with us here, we have a class tomorrow (…) you have to believe and tell yourself, hopefully, all this effort will not be lost, hopefully it will not be forgotten. We have to believe that each little seed planted in a child will grow, maybe not immediately but possibly in twenty, thirty years. One wise priest used to say, well, it's like this: you're going to teach religion to children and then they are going to go out into the wide world, maybe they're not going to go to the church so often, but maybe one of them becomes a journalist and then he'll remember – Father, when he was teaching us religion, was always nice to us, he used to give us candy – and he would at least not write a nasty article about the Church. This is also the way to influence people, the basis of ethics and the basis of awareness about Christian holidays. (…) but yes, there are secondary schools and primary schools but I do not have any contact with them. These children are not in my reach because their parents never went to church and they don't either. This means that I only have parents of very, very young children and then I have grandparents.
>
> (priest)

It thus seems that the Church not only retreats from the public space but that is has no strategies allowing it to introduce new agenda in the public space.[40] In certain testimonies, it has even been said that priests were glad when people had their children baptized occasionally or when they organized a religious funeral or wedding ceremony. This demonstrates that the Church has maintained religious memory in the region and that it serves it by playing the role of a service organization focused on spiritual matters. Those who are worried about the poor state of the situation are not only concerned with the lack of families with children but primarily with the prevailing passiveness among religious laypeople.

To wrap up the situation on a general level, religious groups in the Tachov micro-region have been repeatedly facing their competitors in the arena of defining the nature of reality. On the one hand, they have the feeling that their efforts to influence the decisive processes of creating and legitimizing a certain social reality are being kept down by tools ranging from assaults against the Church to restrictions placed on the Church as the bearer of culture in schools. On the other hand, however, the question remains as to why the Church does not take advantage of possibilities that would allow it to broaden the scope of its activities by participating in individual socialization, i.e. become more active in schools and in the public space. A ministerial memorandum exists whereupon schools have to provide for conditions allowing for the teaching of religion as part of the curriculum. It is therefore not clear why the Church relies on parents (religious families) being willing, hopefully, to "bring" their children to study religion once a week at the parish house.

Additionally, the Church does not even make use of its "soft power" by becoming a visible, strong actor within the public space[41] and by introducing the notion of a different world (the world of religion), providing for alternative definitions of reality (compared to those accepted by the majority of society). It seems that the Church representatives are persuaded that their worlds is "the indigenous" world and that the competing theoretical systems with a different definition of reality come from the outside. They base their assumption on the idea that they are a part of the tradition and of the cultural memory of the nation. This is true but it is also true that religious (Catholic) memory, representing a sedimented experience, currently consists of a pure relic (in the form of religious holidays, concerts and churches perceived as historical monuments), while religious activities are reinterpreted as a purely aesthetic or leisure activity. It is therefore important that it is primarily the theorists of combating symbolic worlds who act as interpreters and theorists of the religious world for both the general public and their own members.

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[40] Jan Váně, *Komunita jako nová naděje?* (Plzeň: ZČU, 2012).

[41] Ibid.

5 Conclusion

In this text, I attempted to describe how the researched actors (priests, religious laypeople) in the selected region approach the possibilities and forms of religious socialization. The findings of the case study have shown that the researched actors expect religious memory to be transmitted by the family and backed up by priests as the bearers of the knowledge. Priests are expected to provide professional (religious) services and information on the legitimizing order which the individual is bound to internalize.

The family represents, in the testimonies, the primary mediator introducing the doctrine and religious memory. It is, therefore, possible to confirm on the most elementary level that religion is serious when talking about the fight for the family and that this fight, going on across all cultures, also concerns the Czech Republic and the Tachov micro-region. It is consequently possible to confirm Ulrich Beck's words according to which "everybody claims the right to canonize the 'good family', to define right and wrong in matters of sexuality, freedom and equality between men and women, to define what is good and what is bad, what is God's will and what is the Devil's will."[42] The conflict over the character of the family represents the very basis of the rupture and indicates the chances that religiosity will be maintained or expanded in a form which is supported by traditional churches.

Families are important but the priests are seen as those who ought to guarantee that the institutional order is transferred and understood properly. The actors have repeatedly complained about religion not being taught at schools (being taught, if at all, only in parish houses) and that certain priests in the researched region did not address the issue of religious education. The success of the primary socialization (which is crucial but not sufficient) in the process of defining the reality of the religious world that would be seen, by a child, as the only possible world, is weakened at the very beginning, particularly as it is apparent that children do not have access to the knowledge of the history of the institution (religion), in other words, as the "original meaning" of the institution is not printed in their memory. This means that everything related to religion is perceived as a kind of family (regional) tradition that has to be legitimized, i.e. explained and justified. In order to do this, there is a need to dispose of particular legitimation formulas which, however, need to be promoted by a relevant authority (a priest). These formulas also need to be "coherent, understandable and in line with the institutionalized order. If not, the new generation does not find them plausible".[43]

It is therefore surprising (and may be interpreted as a strategic error), that one of the crucial tools usually used to ensure the legitimation of the adopted institutional order, tools that should be easily understandable from the cognitive and normative aspect and that should function as tools of social control, are not used in an adequate way. The lack of interest in religion concerning young people, the drop in the numbers of people actively participating in religious services, the drop in the numbers of religiously homogamous couples: none of these are surprising in a situation in which socialization does not guarantee that individuals internalize a particular set ("programme") of procedures and activities.

The transfer of the institutional order cannot be carried out solely by the family. It has to be done within the community, in the frame of which the shared (religious) memory is coined as a form of "experience" transferred and legitimized across generations. The key role is played by theorists and legitimators, i.e. significant others. Local priests are almost always among these significant others. The question remains, however, as to who else is counted among the significant

[42] Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, *Dálková láska*, 201.
[43] Berger and Luckmann, *Sociální konstrukce reality*, 64.

others? This is why the text tried to explore the way priests are addressing the possible (re)socialization of individuals in a situation when the number of religious people has been dropping and the demographic outlook is far from optimal.

It has become clear that there are four typical approaches to the above-mentioned problem: to claim that (1) religious socialization was destroyed by the Communist regime and that there is nothing to do about it, (2) religious socialization is unsuccessful because, according to the priests, it is a long lasting, difficult task. This is, in some cases, explained by the fact that priests are small in number and that they are overloaded with work and have to divide their attention among numerous activities. Furthermore, it seems that the passivity of some of the priests is due to a certain shyness which does not allow them to repeatedly ask for permission to carry out activities at primary or secondary schools and actively seek out students' attention and which makes them fear they will be rejected. (3) The third approach reflects the expectation that the Church will "automatically" regain positions which it occupied before World War II and before the beginning of the Communist regime. And there is a certain surprise that society resists this effort. And the last (4th) approach resigns on all activities, arguing that active participation in the public space strategy is not functional and that there is a need to come up with a new strategy, only it is not yet clear what this new strategy should be.

One of the possible explanation as to why Catholics have been unable to establish themselves in the Tachov micro-region was that it has not been applying the approaches usually used by minorities. Allow me to explain. I have already stated that Catholics represent the largest religious minority in the region. As a minority group, it was not popular either during the Communist regime nor is it popular today (even though the rejection is not as strong at present). Its strength emerges rather as a reference to the significance of the position it used to hold in the region and within the culture of the entire nation. As a minority, however, striving to establish itself as a point of reference and gain longterm influence, it needs to be "steadily consistent, act self-assuredly, avoid sending out the message of being rigid and dogmatic and influence the social environment in a skillful way".[44] If this is done, the power of the symbolic majority world may be, in the end, undermined by the persuasiveness of the minority.

The problem, however, is that the actors' attitudes are not self-assured. Both religious lay people and priests instead refer to the wrongdoings that they had been subject to during the Communist era or to the lack of interest at present. The self-assured forms of behavior, if any, are only directed inside the community and it seems that the only visible strategy is to "somehow cope" with the environment.

The basic problem, then, is the lack of an ability to adopt a firm standpoint and the inability of the Church to clearly address some of its inner issues, such as the problem of priests collaborating with the Communist regime, unclear economics or non-standard sexual behavior by certain priests. These types of behavior are seen as dogmatic blindness and an inability to admit that the Church no longer ranks among the most important actors in the life of society. Its efforts to protects its "reputation" are therefore seen as fairly implausible and even counterproductive. If one additionally adds a dilatory approach to religious socialization, nothing, not even a reference to tradition and the significance of religion, can help with the situation. When all of the above is taken into consideration, it is understandable that the only thing that Church is still able to do, while defending its form of institutionalized reality, is to refer to the grace of God.

[44] Philip Zimbardo, Luciferův efekt. *Jak se z dobrých lidí stávají lidé zlí* (Praha: Academia, 2014).

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The Use of Paper Offerings in Taiwanese Folk Religion

Abstract | Taiwanese folk religion is a complex mixture of Taoism, Buddhism and local indigenous deities. The Buddhist ceremony "普度Pu du" (a mass for the dead) is performed in a Taoist shrine. Ordinary people go to pray there without distinguishing between Taoism and Buddhism. Most Taiwanese believe in this mixed folk religion.

Offerings in Taiwanese folk religion consist of incense sticks, candles and paper currency "紙錢 zhiqian" (made from paper, printed or cut with a knife). Based on their wishes, people prepare flowers and food. Additionally, depending on the event, they prepare "紙紮 zhiza" (offerings made from paper and bamboo). In the seventh month of the lunar calendar, there are events such as "七娘媽生Qiniangmasheng" (on the 7th day) and "普度Pu du" (on the 15th day). On the 7th day, the worshipers prepare paper offerings called "七娘媽亭 qiniangmating" (the goddess's shrine). On the 15th day, or "普度Pu du", they prepare various kinds of paper offerings for the salvation of the dead. They display spirit-dwellings, statues of deities, ships for ghosts to board, etc.

At the end of the ceremony, paper offerings are burnt with fake-paper currency. People believe that they can send offerings to heaven or the underworld by burning them. They believe this can help their relatives who are "living" in the underworld.

Keywords | Taiwanese Folk Religion – the Coming-of-age Ceremony – the Salvation of the Dead – Paper Offerings; Burning

1 Introduction

Taiwanese folk religion 台湾民間宗教 is a complex mixture of Taoism 道教, Buddhism 佛教 and local indigenous worship of deities, in which the doctrine and creed can still be found unsystemized, rooted in nature worship.[1] Ordinary people go to a shrine or a temple without distinguishing between Taoism 道教 or Buddhism 佛教. Most Taiwanese people believe in this form of mixed folk religion. There are many deities displayed in a shrine, but their mutual relationship is weak and ambiguous. What is most characteristic of Taiwanese folk religion, is the idea that deities live their life in the same way as ordinary living people. Deities have birthdays just like ordinary people, and they are lavishly celebrated. Additionally, it is thought that even after death, dead persons live their lives in the underworld as they used to when alive.

Offerings in Taiwanese folk religion include incense sticks, candles and fake-paper currency "zhiqian 紙錢" (printed on paper or cut with a knife). As concerns the "paper currency", the

[1] 増田 福太郎 (Masuda Fukutaro), 台湾の宗教 (Taiwan no shukyo, Taibei: Southern Materials Centre Publishing 南天書局, 1935), 3–4.

directions for its use are given in detail.[2] The golden paper currency is sent to deities, the silver colors are for the underworld 冥界. The Taiwanese underworld冥界 is different from the Hell of Christianity 地獄. There are many shops around the temple which sell the "paper currency" **[Fig. 1]**.

After the worship, worshipers have to burn paper currency in the furnace by the shrine **[Fig. 2, 3]**. Flowers and food are also prepared by the visiting people, according to their wishes. Offerings made from paper and bamboo, called "zhiza 紙紮", are widely used depending on the ceremony.

In the seventh lunar month, there are two events: "Qi niangmasheng 七娘媽生" (on the 7th day) and "Pudu 普度" (on the 15th day). The explanation will begin with "Qiniangma 七娘媽" **[Fig. 4]**. This deity is a group of seven goddesses in total, whose role is to protect children. The deity "七娘媽 Qiniangma" is worshiped on her birthday by pregnant women and children under 15 years of age, who visit her with votive offerings in hope of auspice and protection.

Fig. 1

Fig. 2

Fig. 3

Fig. 4

[2] 張益銘 (Zhang Yiming), 金銀紙的秘密 (Jin yin zhi de mi mi, Taizhong: Chen xing chuban 晨星出版, 2010), 112–5.

2 The Coming-of-age ceremony "Chengren yishi 成人儀式"

Fig. 5

Fig. 6

Fig. 7

Tainan 台南 is located in southern Taiwan 台湾, and has a large port, where in ancient times children also engaged in cargo work. When they reached 16, they were regarded as adults, and received payment at the full rate. Every 16 year old child participates in the coming-of-age ceremony, in which gratitude to the goddess "Qiniangma七娘媽" is expressed. The ceremony is called "zuo shiliu sui 做 16 歲 – becoming 16 years old". It is still celebrated at present. Although this ceremony is still currently held, its meaning has changed, as many families pray for their children to enter the desired universities.

The form of the votive offerings, however, keeps its traditional way. During this ceremony, the worshipers prepare paper offerings called "Qiniangmating 七娘媽亭" (goddess's shrine). Today many such paper offerings are sold in the shops on both sides of the way to the temple **[Fig. 5]**. They are made of bamboo 竹 and paper 紙, hand-made and colorfully painted (printed) and are intended to be burned. The goddess's paper shrines are sent to heaven and finally lost, so that almost nothing remains about their history except the recorded texts. Recently many people have become aware of the artistic and ethnological value of "Qiniangmating 七娘媽亭", and some museums have begun to collect samples of these artifacts to preserve them, and research them. Even in ancient times, the material was essentially the same as today, namely bamboo and paper. The decoration and the artistic technique are slowly changing, however, over time. A number of decades ago, artisans made sophisticated woodcuts and printed them on paper, but today the production is rather simplified in order to save time and labor.

In the Taiwanese area, the forms of goddess' shrines "Qiniangmating 七娘媽亭" show local varieties. In the Tainan 台南 area, for example, the paper shrine (Qiniangmating 七娘媽亭) imitates a lofty three-storied building, which looks like a high tower. If the goddess shrine (Qiniangmating 七娘媽亭) is specially ordered by the temple, it becomes a large sized tower of high-quality (in this case, it may be preserved and used repeatedly) **[Fig. 6]**.

On the first floor, dolls of the four goddesses are placed and the dolls of the remaining three goddesses are on the second floor.

In the coming-of-age ceremony, 16-year-old children read the words of gratitude aloud to the goddesses and pass through the bottom of the tower, being the goddess shrine Qiniangmating 七娘媽亭 **[Fig. 7]**. This means that they have gone out of the protection of the seven goddesses, and now have become independent adults. This is the passage from boyhood to manhood. The ceremony is sometimes performed at home, when the parents will build the goddess shrine Qiniangmating 七娘媽亭 with both hands, and a new adult passes through the bottom **[Fig. 8]**. When the ceremony is over, they burn this tower together with paper currency and a letter of thanks in the furnaces, and thus send them to Heaven 天堂 **[Fig. 9, 10]**.

Fig. 8

Fig. 9

Fig. 10

3 The Pudu 普度 ceremony

On the 15th day, called "Pudu 普度", various kinds of paper offerings are prepared for the salvation of the dead. Spirit-dwellings (Pudugong-zuo普度公座, or Tiangong-zuo 天公座) are displayed, as well as statues of deities, ships for ghosts to board, etc. At the end of the ceremony, paper offerings are burnt together with paper currency. People believe that they can send offerings to Heaven or to Hell by burning them. They believe this can help their relatives who are "living" in the underworld. "Pudu 普度" is the ceremony in which the ancestor's spirits return to the present world in order to spend some days with their descendants, being almost equivalent to the Buddhist 佛教 Urabon-e 盂蘭盆会 (Buddhist "All Souls' Day"). After welcoming the ancestor's spirits, ordinary people in Taiwan also celebrate spirits who have no descendants, and welcome them with offerings. Such spirits are called "good brother 好兄弟 (haoxiongdi, lonely ghost)".

Fig. 11

The "Pudu 普度" ceremony is held both at home and in the office or police station which seem to have no relation with religion **[Fig. 11]**. When the "Pudu" 普度 season arrives, supermarkets sell sets of "Pudu 普度" goods **[Fig. 12]**. Both shrines and homes prepare paper-made red cylindrical bodies/forms called "Pudugong-zuo 普度公座 (the throne of Pudugong 普度公)" **[Fig. 13]**. This is the place where God stays after descending from heaven 天堂, therefore, there is no statue of "Pudugong 普度公" on the throne.

Shrines or temples prepare not only the Pudugong-zuo 普度公座, but also the Tiangongzuo (天公座, house of the Jade-Emperor, Yuhuang Dadi 玉皇大帝). Tiangongzuo 天公座 is made from yellow color paper **[Fig. 14]**. Yellow color is the symbol of the highest rank, belonging to Jade-Emperor 玉皇大帝. At home, people place the Pudugongzuo 普度公座 on the table **[Fig. 15]**. At the shrine or temple they prepare not only Tiangongzuo 天公座

Fig. 12

Fig. 14

Fig. 13

Fig. 15

and Pudugongzuo 普度公座, but also the statue of gods which have particular figures. They are Pudugong 普度公, Shanshen 山神 and Tudigong 土地公, because these three gods are indispensable. With the help of these statues, people believe that the entire world can be saved [**Fig. 16**]. Pudugong 普度公 is regarded as the incarnation of Guanyin pusa 觀音菩薩 (Deity of Mercy, a manifestation of the Buddha of Compassion). Good brothers 好兄弟 in Hell can be saved by the presence of Pudugong 普度公, or Guanyin pusa 觀音菩薩 [**Fig. 17**].

Fig. 16

The belief is expressed by the following tale: the good brothers 好兄弟 had burning flames in their stomachs and even when they ate food, it was all burned by the fire. They were consequently always hungry. Pudugong 普度公 had a blue face and golden eyes burning like fire. He had fangs in his mouth and a long red tongue. When he licked the stomach of the good brothers 好兄弟, the fire in their stomachs was extinguished, and finally the good brothers could digest food.

Fig. 17

Additional paper offerings required are as follows:

- Ships for the ancestors, to bring them back to the present world. There are many kinds, ranging from 30 cm to 10 m long [**Fig. 18**].
- The resting room for the souls, to rest from the pollution and fatigue of the journey from the underworld [**Fig. 19**]. This simple room, marked "gentleman – lady 男堂・女室", looks like a curtained bathroom [**Fig. 20**].
- A theatrical stage to entertain the ancestors with plays [**Fig. 21**].
- Lotus flowers, dresses and shoes are hand-made by the worshipers from paper [**Fig. 22**].
- There is not only the golden paper currency, but also the offering of the "zhima 紙馬", depicting scenes of salvation of the dead suffering in Hell [**Fig. 23**].

Fig. 18

Fig. 19

Fig. 20

Fig. 21

Fig. 22

Fig. 23

Fig. 24

At the end of the ceremony, paper offerings are burnt together with paper currency. People believe that they can send offerings to Heaven or the underworld by burning them [**Fig. 24, 25**].

Fig. 25

4 How to make paper offerings

Large-size paper offerings with bamboo-cut frames are made by professionals. The newspapers are pasted on a frame. Next, colored or painted papers are pasted on the newspapers. These papers used to be printed by woodblocks in the past, but today they are made by offset print. The traditional technique is handed on from parents to sons or from masters to apprentices. This is what the production in a workshop looks like.

The process of making Pudugong 普度公 is as follows. The main frame, on which the newspapers are pasted, stands in the centre. Colored papers are placed on them. In the background, one can see a steric modeling of the descending of Pudugong 普度公 and of the salvation he provides [**Fig. 26**].

Fig. 26

Fig. 27 is the central part. Guanyin-pusa 観音菩薩 dressed in white clothes is in the centre, in front of her stands Pudugong 普度公. On both sides of Guanyin 観音 stands Shancai-tongzi (善財童子 boy of goodness and wealth) and Yunu (玉女 the Jade-girl). On the right is Sunwugong 孫悟空, at his back stands Sanzang-fashi 三蔵法師. They are characters from the famous story "the Journey to the West 西遊記", in which these heroes go from China 中国 to India 印度 (天竺) in search of precious Buddhist scriptures.

Fig. 27

Fig. 26 and Fig. 27 show the bamboo in the process of production. **Fig. 28** is another set of "the Journey to the West 西遊記" by a different artist. These puppets are also manufactured paper offerings, used on the theatre stage. **Fig. 29** is a water god called "Four-ocean dragon king 四海龍王", who governs the north, south, east and west

Fig. 28

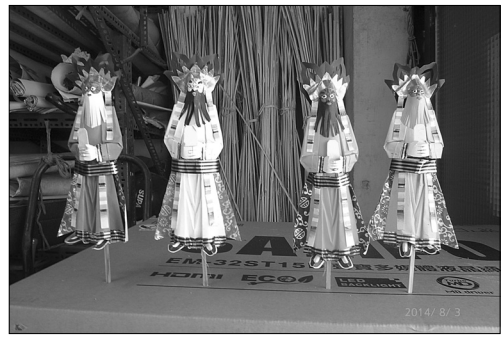

Fig. 29

Fig. 30

東西南北 waters, and belongs to the Taoist 道教 school. **Fig. 30** shows Guanyin pusa 觀音菩薩 (center), Shancai-tongzi 善財童子 (right), Yunu 玉女 (the Jade-girl, left). They all belong to the Buddhist 佛教 system.

The manufacturer of Fig. 26, Fig. 27 has been engaged in the production of paper offerings since his grandfather. Fig. 28–30 are made by a Taoist master. Paper offerings have no rigid regulations concerning manufacturing. Inherited forms are almost the same, but they have varieties based on the preference of time, materials change, etc.

5 Conclusion

It is true that many complex and various deities (both Buddhist 佛教 and Taoist 道教 included) exist in the Taiwanese 台湾 popular religion. They are rooted in nature worship. Ordinary people have a consensus view of them, although the doctrine or dogma are arranged and systematized. The most common understanding is that gods live the same life as human beings, and the dead person is "alive" in the underworld 冥界. When they consequently pray to gods, they prepare paper currency as offerings. They send (burn) paper offerings for the dead ones waiting in the underworld. These paper offerings are burned and sent to Heaven or the underworld.

In the case of a large-scale ceremony, special paper offerings are prepared to be consumed (burned) together with paper currency after the rituals. It is believed that only by combustion, these offerings reach God in Heaven, and their wishes/prayers are accomplished. Their relatives in the underworld are waiting for these daily essentials, and can be saved by burnt papers. Pudu 普度 is a ceremony to supply offerings for those who have no descendants to rescue them. These people are the "lonely ghosts", waiting for the "Pudu 普度 salvation".

Paper offerings in Taiwan such as paper currency 紙錢 and paper offerings "zhi-zha 紙紮", both adjusted their forms in accordance with the changing time and environment, and inherited the long-lasting popular tradition to meet the eager demands of native worshipers.

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All photos by Ryo Miyama except [Fig. 26, Fig. 27], which are photographed by Norihito Nakao (Tenri University Sankokan Museum).

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Interview

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Interview with Peggy Levitt

Peggy Levitt is a Professor of Sociology at Wellesley College and a Research Fellow at The Weatherhead Center for International Affairs and The Hauser Center for Nonprofit Organizations at Harvard University, where she co-directs The Transnational Studies Initiative. She is currently Visiting International Fellow in the Dept. of Cultural Anthropology at Vrije University in Amsterdam. Her books include *God Needs No Passport: Immigrants and the Changing American Religious Landscape* (New Press 2007), *The Transnational Studies Reader* (Routledge 2007), *The Changing Face of Home: The Transnational Lives of the Second Generation* (Russell Sage 2002), and *The Transnational Villagers* (UC Press, 2001). She has also edited special volumes of *International Migration Review, Global Networks, Mobilities*, and the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*. A film based on her work, *Art Across Borders*, came out in 2009. Her current projects include *The Bog and the Beast: Museums, The Nation, and the World* about how museums around the world create national and global citizens; *Reform Through Return? — The Impact of Return Migration and Social Remittances on Health and Education in India and China* about how social remittances and return migration affect institutional capacity building and policymaking in the health and education sectors in China and India; *Books, Bronzes, and Broadcasts*, a comparative study of sites of global citizenship creation including museums and heritage sites, universities, the global publishing industry, volunteer corps (such as the Peace Corps that countries like China and India are replicating) and the media (i.e. the BBC, Al Jazeera); and *Religion on the Edge: De-Centering and Re-Centering the Sociology of Religion*, a book project building on a growing body of research that de-centers taken-for-granted categories in the sociology of religion and, by doing so, re-centers some of its central tenants.[1]

I met Professor Peggy Levitt on 12th March 2015 in front of Harvard COOP and we sat down in a nearby café close to the window so that we could enjoy the sunshine.

The intersection of religion and migration has long been the focus of your research. *God Needs No Passport: Immigrants and the Changing American Religious Landscape* (The New Press, 2007) and *Religion on the Edge* (Oxford University Press, 2012) and several projects you run demonstrated the explicit shift in your research to the processes related to *religion*. What was the initial source of inspiration that brought you to the sociological study of religions? And when did you first realize the need to engage a transnational perspective in the research on religion?

When I was doing my dissertation work and wrote my first book about Dominicans living in this country I realised that I needed to use a transnational perspective because I could not understand people's experience here in Boston without looking at how it is connected to their homeland. One of the things that I bumped into was the role of the Church in enabling transnational lives. What I discovered was that there were a lot of connections between a parish in this village and with churches here in Boston and then there were connections between the national level

[1] See "Peggy Levitt, Sociologist, Author and Professor," accessed April 24, 2015, http://www.peggylevitt.org/.

churches as well. So when I was looking for my next project I thought the Dominican Republic, the Dominican experience, plays out the way it does because the Dominican Republic is so close to United States and it is so easy to get back and forth. It has almost been a colony of the United States at various stages of Dominican history. So what would happen if I looked at places that were geographically and culturally further apart? And what would be the role of religion in driving forward people's transnational lives? It was not just about Catholicism. And so the book *God Needs No Passport* is really a book about how people use religion to live transnational lives and then how we need to re-think religion and migration and the nation because of that. All of those places, spaces and institutions are affected by transnational migration in different ways. We can look at the Catholic Church like the archetypical transnational corporation because there is the Chief Operating Officer (CEO) who is the Pope and there is a headquarters in the Vatican. Then there is the architecture of the national churches that gets extended every time a new immigrant comes to town. But I also found that a similar kind of world-wide architecture with the Hindu communities that I was studying. Some denominations also created "transnational religious corporations." Others were based in India but were funded or led across borders. Others simply depended on supplies from the homeland. All of this adds up to the idea that it is very hard to imagine just a national church anymore.

So, the importance of religion emerged from bottom-up research.

Yes. I mean I knew that Dominicans were Catholics but I did not anticipate how important the Catholic Church was in aiding and undergirding their transnational lives. And it turned out also in the Brazilian case it was Protestant Churches that were important because Brazil is becoming much more Protestant and Evangelical. So after I was finished with that book I was talking with several colleagues who are sociologists of religion. We agreed that, at least in the United States, the sociology of religion is a very insular field that could use more energy and dynamism. It has also been a very Christian-centric conversation. We started talking about how could we shake that up a little bit. We wanted people to think about how the discussion would change if you unpacked some of the assumptions it is based on: the focus on Christian, Western, and organized religion and the assumption that religion is a force for good. So, we wrote *Religion on the Edge* to say: "Look what happens when you turn these assumptions on their heads and de-center them." That is why it is called de-centering and re-centering because when you look with fresh eyes, the center shifts or you see things in new ways.

Talking about the good and bad roles religion has in the society implies an engaged standpoint towards religion. One cannot help but notice that in your research you often stand on the side of the minorities which you, using the feminist vocabulary "give voice to". How does social engagement correspond to your academic perspective?

Well, I mean we are social scientists, we are not activists. So, I think that you can't have an answer to your question before you go out and do your research. I think there are people who are guilty of that. They know what they want to find and they go out to find it. And I don't agree with that. I think it is our job to show the complex, messy, untameable reality of social life. To look at it closely, carefully and honestly. And that is that. Once you have done your research in an honest rigorous careful way then you can take a stand on what the implications are. I am totally in favour of public sociology but I think that public sociology has to be based on rigorous, thoughtful, careful research. When I was writing *God Needs No Passport*, both the sociology of religion and the sociology of migration had their own blind spots. Migration scholars did not want to talk

about religion because they were secular themselves or leftists. Sociologists of religion were just beginning to admit that not all U.S. residents were Judeo-Christians. There were Muslims and Hindus too. And all of this changed with September 11. Then we faced a different kind of problem because everyone wanted to get on the bandwagon of studying Islam. At the end of the day, it is about doing careful, rigorous social science and then interpreting what your findings mean for a broader public facing real life problems.

There is still the burden of justifying one's own research which makes people choose particular popular topics in the end.

I know. I am not arguing with that.

So should sociology get rid of the need for social justification?

No, I don't think so if we want to stay relevant. Personally, I am not interested in having a conversation with just academics. The way I write books that translate what social science has to say to a larger audience, that enable people to see why this is important to their daily lives, that these abstract ideas have relevance for you as you breathe in and out. I always ask my students to be able to answer the "so what" question. Why should we care about what you are writing about? What larger problem or social process does it speak to? At the same time I am very disturbed, especially for my European colleagues, by how much they must scramble to get grants, to do work determined by the types of funding or agendas that government research councils are interested in. There is not much room to be interested in something and to learn about it. When I ask them: "What about if you just had an idea that you were interested in working on? Where would you possibly get the money to do that?" They throw up their hands which is very disturbing. We are living in an very anti-intellectual, anti-humanities moment.

Your project *Transnational Studies Initiative* (TSI) at Harvard University, is an interdisciplinary attempt to find new methodologies and conceptual tools for analysing contemporary (transnationally oriented) social life. I had a chance to visit the panel on transnationalism at AAA in Washington D.C. last year where you also gave a lecture. Apparently, the critique of methodological nationalism still persists even after 20 years since Glick-Schiller first coined the term. In your view, do we currently face stagnation in transnational studies? What are the current challenges and prospects in this field of research?

I think that if you look at how the world works you must use a transnational optic. It does not mean that everything is cross-border. It just means that if you only ask the question within the context of a nation-state you may miss an important part of what you want to understand. However, the way the academy is organised and the way the incentive structure is organised, it is very difficult. Rather than broadening and deepening our lens, we are chopping the world up into smaller pieces to satisfy every interest group. That's not to say that it is not important to study the experiences of different groups and regions but we need to understand how those different experiences compare with, interact with, and shape one another. I teach at a small liberal arts college and you can be an Asian Studies major, you can be a South Asian Studies major, you can be a Korean Studies major, you can be an African Studies major, you can be a Latin American studies major. So the world just keeps getting divided up into smaller and smaller pieces. The way funding is organized, the ways disciplines are structured, and the way journals divide the world reflects this approach. So it is very hard to ask transnational questions and to do research

in multiple sites. Our professional associations are also regionally focused. It is very hard to change this but I think we need a much more ample, multi-leveled optic.

Global or transnational studies, in my view, gets closest to this. But it is often at a very high, macro level. These scholars say that global culture and institutions exist but they don't tell us a lot about how and why they came into being or how people use them. Methodological nationalism is a hard habit to break. It is so engrained in how we think. So many categories that we use are permeated with nationalist assumptions and we don't always stop to think enough about how the questions we ask determine the answers we find.

People think in oppositions and divide between *us* and *them*. Perhaps it is impossible to get rid of it.

The world is complicated. There is no simple "yes" or "no" answer. It is not going be like the nation goes away. That is not the idea. The idea is that we must hold all of the levels and sites of social organisations in conversation with each other and ask what the right spatial unit of analysis is for what I want to understand. Sometimes you can answer the questions within the boundaries of a nation but other times you can't. We need to start with the world that is boundaryless and borderless and then see what kinds of boundaries and borders arise in particular settings and why. Maybe I can study the national such and such church in the Czech Republic or maybe I can't. Because maybe that church is connected to all the Czech communities all over the world and I am going miss all of that if I only stay within the nation. And yes, it is difficult and uncomfortable. For some people it is just too far out of their comfort zone but I honestly think you can't ask certain questions without opening up our gaze.

It is the situation around ISIS that has recently brought relevance to the research of religious transnationalism. Islam, Muslim immigrants and converts are perceived as a cultural and religious threat to Europe. The intangibility of transnational religious ties becomes a source of frustration for those who demand guarantee of safety from the governments. In light of these events, do you have any recommendation for sociologists of religion and migration in Europe?

I would say that these developments make the work of sociologists of religion all the more urgent and important. There are so many misunderstandings driving the debates about religion and politics and there is such a great need to bring a wider range of religious voices to the fore and to foster meaningful, respectful, and constructive dialogue between them. We have much work to do.

Thank you very much for the interview.

Petra Tlčimuková

Czech and Slovak Journal of Humanities

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