
Dear reader,

I am delighted to present the first issue of the Central European Journal for Contemporary Religion (CEJCR), a new Czech academic periodical dedicated to current religion and spirituality as well as to contemporary theoretical scholarly discussion of related topics. Although there is no shortage of academic journals dedicated to the topics of Comparative Religion and History of Religion in our country, none of them is specifically focused on contemporary religious life and related issues, and we felt that a new scholarly journal that would address such topics is much needed. CEJCR's intent is to fill this void.

The Journal is issued semi-annually both in print and fully online (open access). We have decided to publish all texts in English in order to make Czech research available to our colleagues all over the world – and also to invite scholars from other countries to publish the results of their work in our periodical in the future. The Journal is issued under the auspices of the Hussite Theological Faculty of Charles University; the members of the editorial board are Czech Comparative Religions scholars from various Czech universities and academic institutions.

We hope you enjoy the first issue and, if you have any suggestions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact us on cejcr@htf.cuni.cz.

Sincerely,

prof. Pavel Hošek, Th.D.
Editor in Chief

Development of the Faith Movement in the Czech Republic

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Abstract: This article deals with the development of the Faith Movement in the Czech Republic. Firstly, the Pentecostal Movement will be introduced on a general level and further on the specifics of the teachings of the Faith Movement will be described. The main part of the paper examines the development of several independent fellowships in the Czech Republic that emerged through the mission of the Faith Movement. The following seven newly established free churches will be introduced: the Word of Life Church; the New Hope Church; the Church of Living God; the Faith Church; the New Life Church; the Oasis Church; and the Centre of Triumphal Faith. Some of these fellowships underwent significant changes and became closer to the Evangelical Movement. This paper will analyze the processes through which these fellowships have changed their attitudes, mainly through abandoning some of the more distinctive features of the Faith movement and through their willingness to cooperate with other Evangelical churches.

Keywords: Pentecostalism, Faith Movement, Free churches, development, ecumenism

Abstrakt: Tento článek se zabývá vývojem hnutí víry v České republice. Nejdříve čtenáře seznamuje s obecnou charakteristikou pentekostálního hnutí a se specifickými důrazy hnutí víry. Následující část je věnována popisu vývoje jednotlivých církevních společenství, která v České republice díky misii tohoto hnutí vznikla. Jedná se o Církev Slovo života, Církev Nová naděje, Církev živého Boha, Církev víry, Církev Nový život, Církev Oáza a Triumfální centrum víry. Některá z těchto společenství prošla významnou změnou a začala se více přibližovat křesťanským společenstvím evangelikálního typu. Tento posun je zřetelný zvláště v opouštění některých výrazných doktrín učení hnutí víry a ochotě ke spolupráci s jinými evangelikálními církvemi.

Klíčová slova: Pentekostální hnutí, hnutí víry, nezávislé církevní společenství, vývoj, ekumenická spolupráce

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Typically, the Faith Movement has strong objections to the ecumenical openness of Evangelical churches. However, some of these fellowships are obviously undergoing radical change and, as a result, they are endeavouring to conduct successful missions in their communities.

Firstly, the Pentecostal Movement will be introduced on a general level. Later, the Faith Movement will be classified.

(1) The Pentecostal Movement and its development and classification of the Faith Movement

The Pentecostal Movement is the fastest growing missionary movement in the world, with strong emphasis on the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, and his gifts.

This movement is unique in the history of Christianity because of its rapid growth in numbers since its founding at the beginning of the 20th century. Today the movement encompasses almost a hundred million followers.¹

One of the typical features of this movement is its remarkable adaptability to local conditions, which is why it is possible to find great diversity and a huge variety of branches within this movement. These branches may vary greatly, but they still have some features typical to the Pentecostal Movement, which is how they can easily be distinguished from other streams within the Christian tradition.

Walter Hollenweger, the founding father of academic research into Pentecostalism, mentions three distinct forms in global context:

1. Classical Pentecostals
2. Charismatic Renewal Movements
3. Pentecostal or “Pentecostal-like” independent churches in the Majority World.²

In the Czech Republic, the Apostolic Church represents Classical Pentecostals. The Charismatic Renewal Movement within traditional churches is represented by fellowships that are part of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. The fellowships emerging from, and developed in, traditional churches can also be counted in this category. They have often separated from traditional churches because they displayed features typical to the Charismatic Renewal Movement.³ Other Pentecostal fellowships belong to the third above-mentioned group – Pentecostal or “Pentecostal-like”

¹ A. ANDERSON, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2007, p. 1. More in: “Global Statistics”, in S. M. BURGESS and E. M. VAN DER MAAS (eds.), *The New Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, revised and expanded edition, Grand Rapids: Zondervan 2002, p. 284–302.

² WALTER J. HOLLENWEGER, *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide*, Peabody: Hendrickson 1997, p. 1; ANDERSON, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, p. 13.

³ In the Czech Republic, one of the churches that developed in this manner was for example the Christian Fellowship, whose founder Dan Drápal was a vicar of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren.

independent churches, sometimes called the Third wave.⁴ The features that distinguish them from the first two forms are as follows:

1. They are the biggest and most diverse group within the large Pentecostal family.
2. They have no traditional Pentecostal or Charismatic denominational connections, but they share the same experience attributed to the Holy Spirit.
3. Many of them have been influenced by the Faith Movement. That is why they have constituted themselves as independent churches, although they were originally traditional churches.

These churches are also called “post-denominationalist” and “neo-apostolic”.⁵ They are clearly distinct from the Classical Pentecostals and the Charismatic Renewal Movement, but they share with them an emphasis on the power of the Holy Spirit. These fellowships are also the most frequently criticized, usually for their questionable theological teachings, which is also the reason why Classical Pentecostal churches and fellowships, which developed from the Charismatic Renewal Movement, clearly dissociate themselves from them.⁶

(2) Characteristic features of the Faith Movement

The Faith Movement⁷ stresses the importance of uncompromising faith; of the power of this faith; of God’s faith; and of faith creating reality. It claims that every true Christian should have such faith. At the same time, it advertises the so-called Theology of Prosperity, which emphasizes the general, and in particular material, welfare of a true believer and his or her physical health. This teaching is also named the Prosperity Gospel or the Health and Wealth Gospel. Also typical of this movement is the importance of Positive Confession, through which the false, fraudulent reality of the Devil – for example, symptoms of a disease – should be overcome through a verbal proclamation of the reality of God’s kingdom, a wealthy, healthy and blessed life. Another characteristic feature is the movement’s teaching of the power of believers over the Devil and demons. This faith should lead to a victorious life.⁸

⁴ This term was coined in 1983 by Peter. C. Wagner, a professor of Church Growth at the Fuller Theological Seminary. In: BURGESS and VAN DER MAAS, *The New Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, p. 1141.

ANDERSON, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, p. 11.

⁶ See e.g. “Imparting of Spiritual Gifts” (online), *Assemblies of God*, 1995–2015, accessed November 2013, available online at http://www.ag.org/top/beliefs/topics/sptlissues_imparting_spiritual_gifts.cfm.

⁷ Kenneth E. Hagin, the leader of this movement, established the biblical school Rhema Bible Training Center in 1974 in Tulsa, OK. This school has dozens of subsidiaries in the whole world and prepares missionaries to carry the message of this faith across the whole world. See also “Hagin, Kenneth E.”, in BURGESS and VAN DER MAAS, *The New Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, p. 687.

⁸ “Positive Confession Theology”, in BURGESS and VAN DER MAAS, *The New Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, p. 992–994.

A fundamental part of the Positive Confession theology is the persuasive power of the spoken word. That means that the phrase “Positive Confession” refers, quite literally, to bringing what we say with our mouth into existence, since faith is a confession.⁹ Man can thus create reality by his word. According to the interpreters of this faith, salvation contains physical healing and universal, most importantly material, blessing. If someone believes that Jesus Christ died for him and rose from the dead, God will bless him not only with the guarantee of an eternal life, but also by healing all his diseases and by providing material welfare.

This teaching was formulated by Essek William Kenyon (1867–1948), the preacher of an independent Baptist church. He was influenced by the teachings of Christian Science, with its protagonist Mary Baker Eddy, and by the teachings of the New Thought Movement,¹⁰ which draws on the ideas of Phineas P. Quimby. Kenyon hoped that a new formulation of the Christian doctrine would bring a renewal of the Christian faith, since at the beginning of the century there was a substantial rise of movements using similar language in the USA and his chances of succeeding seemed very high.

However, the eventual expansion of this movement, called the Faith Movement, came with K. E. Hagin. It was through his involvement that the movement became Pentecostal in character. Essek William Kenyon himself was not Pentecostal; he even distanced himself from Pentecostalism with a slight disdain.

In 1973, Kenneth E. Hagin founded the biblical school ‘Rhema Bible Training College’ in Tulsa, Oklahoma. The college now has dozens of branches all over the world and it trains missionaries to bring the message of this faith to the entire world.

The movement itself is anti-ecumenical and anti-denominational in its character. Its aim is to awaken and revitalize faith in Christianity as such and the movement is strictly against the idea of establishing new churches. The goal of the Faith Movement is a revitalization of the church, but the actual result of their doctrines is often division and decline. Due to its criticism of the ecumenical efforts of protestant churches and its anti-denominational shape, it is characterized by a certain lack of unity, which in turn causes its missionary functioning to be somewhat problematic.

Another typical feature of the movement is the absence of a fixed structure. The movement only creates training centres, which serve as centres of distribution and as bases for travelling missionaries of the Faith Movement. That means that its goal is not to establish a new church, since the movement’s theology disapproves of church structures, official registration and the institutional shape of church organisations.

⁹ “Positive Confession Theology”, in BURGESS and VAN DER MAAS, *The New Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, p. 992–994.

¹⁰ The philosophy of New Thought has its roots in the teaching of Phineas P. Quimby (1802–1866), who worked with hypnosis and spiritualism. At the same time, he studied various aspects of parapsychology and paranormal phenomena. Mary Baker Patterson Eddy, who formulated the basics of Christian Science in 1862, was probably influenced by his teaching and legacy. See BURGESS and VAN DER MAAS, *The New Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, p. 992.

(3) Free churches, which have emerged through the mission of the Faith Movement

There are seven important free churches, which have emerged through the mission of the Faith Movement in the Czech Republic. Their importance can be determined by looking at factors such as how many members they have; how long they have been active; their impact on society; and/or whether they have obtained state registration. The only church to have refused state registration is the Centre of Triumphal Faith, while the other observed free churches have acquired it.¹¹ Further on, their characteristics will be described and their change of attitude towards the ecumenical movement will be examined.

These seven free churches are: the Word of Life Church (Církev Slovo života), the New Hope Church (Církev Nová naděje), the Church of Living God (Církev živého Boha), the Faith Church (Církev víry), the New Life Church (Církev Nový život), the Oasis Church (Církev Oáza), and the Centre of Triumphal Faith (Triumfální centrum víry).¹²

Some of these fellowships have undergone a gradual change of both teachings and structure, but the reasons for, and the manner of, these changes may differ considerably.

(3.1) The Word of Life Church and its typical denominalization¹³ development

This chapter will describe the transformation of a mission-based Faith Movement fellowship into a respected denomination, using the example of the development of the Word of Life Church in the Czech Republic.

In 1992, the Swedish Missionary Micael Lundin moved to the Moravia region. He was a follower of Ulf Ekman, the founder of the Word of Life Church in Sweden. Micael Lundin helped the Faith Movement in Brno create a member base. Their assembly was originally called the Heaven Station and it had about 70 people. It was due to Lundin that the main activities of the Faith Movement moved from the Prague Water

¹¹ Date of the registration: the Church of Living God (15. 12. 2007), the New Hope Church (3. 9. 2009), the Word of Life Church (6. 8. 2010), the Faith Church (22. 5. 2012), the New Life Church (25. 10. 2013), the Oasis Church (11. 10. 2014). See also "Data registrace církví a náboženských společností a svazů církví a náboženských společností" ["Data of the Registration of Churches and Religious Societies and Organizations of Churches and Religious Societies"], *Ministerstvo kultury [Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic]* 2007, Accessed November 2013, available online at <http://www.mkcr.cz/cz/cirkve-a-nabozenske-spolecnosti/registrace-a-evidence/data-registrace-cirkvi-a-nabozenskych-spolecnosti-a-svazu-cirkvi-a-nabozenskych-spolecnosti-11263/>.

¹² The names of the fellowships below have been translated from the Czech language into English. The exceptions are the Oasis Church and the New Life Church, because they do not have official English names on their websites.

¹³ During denominalisation, a new religious movement changes into a respected religious institution. The theory of denominalisation describes the typical features of these changes. See ZDENĚK VOJTÍŠEK, *Nová náboženská hnutí a kolektivní násilí [New Religious Movements and Collective Violence]*, Brno: L. Marek 2009, p. 326–363.

of Life fellowship to Brno's newly named Word of Life assembly. This fellowship had all the characteristic features of the Faith Movement.¹⁴

After Micael Lundin's departure in 1996, the assembly found a new leading pastor, Jíří Zdráhal. However, Zdráhal handed his office over to Michal Vaněk in 2003 and in 2006 went on to found the International Christian Fellowship¹⁵ in Prague. During his time in office, Michal Vaněk tried to strengthen relations with the mother assembly in Uppsala by mission activities through the Alpha Courses, by founding the Christian nursery school and Jan Hus primary school in Brno, by running the online programme TV7, by cooperating with the ICEJ¹⁶, and with other activities. In 2010, he successfully achieved state registration for the Word of Life fellowship.

All these activities of the present Word of Life show a noticeable shift away from the usual conduct of the Faith Movement, a shift both in doctrine and in practice. The Faith Movement does not usually use mission instruments such as the Alpha Course. It prefers healing campaigns and demonstrations of God's power at its assemblies, where the serving pastor or missionary "distributes" healing by means of holding their arms high or making other gestures towards the crowd. The Word of Life's membership in the Czech Evangelical Alliance and its general ecumenical openness do not fit the profile of the Faith Movement either. On the church's website, in the section "What we believe in"¹⁷, there are no elementary teaching articles of the Faith Movement to be found. These facts indicate a shift towards a stance which is acceptable to regular evangelical and Pentecostal teachings and conduct.

This development can also be seen in the life story of Ulf Ekman, the founder of the whole Swedish Faith mission in Europe.

(3.1.1) The life story of Ulf Ekman, the founder of the assembly of the Word of Life, and this mission in Uppsala

The life story of Ulf Ekman, with its rather surprising outcome, is at the same time a story of the denominationalization and institutionalization of the whole Faith Movement and its approach to the ecumenical movement.

Ulf Ekman was born in 1950 and converted to Christianity in 1970. After his studies he started his career as a school chaplain of the Swedish Lutheran Church at the University of Uppsala. Through recordings of Kenneth Copeland's sermons, he learned about the teachings of the Faith Movement, which made such a huge impact on him that he decided to study at Hagin's Rhema Bible School. After his return to Sweden, he left his traditional Lutheran mother church, started to preach the Faith Movement message, and founded the Word of Life assembly in Uppsala, as well as a Bible school

¹⁴ See ZDENĚK VOJTÍŠEK, "Cesta Slova života" ["Journey of Word of Life"], *Dingir* (2/2008): p. 56–59.

¹⁵ See also *ICF Praha* (online), accessed November 2013, available online at <http://www.icf-praha.cz>.

¹⁶ The International Christian Embassy. See also "Worldwide Branches: The ICEJ's Presence Around the Globe", *Icej.org*, accessed March 2016, available online at <http://int.icej.org/world/>.

¹⁷ See also "Čemu věříme" ["What do We Believe in"], *Slovozivot.cz*, accessed March 2015, available online at <http://www.slovozivot.cz/o-nas/cemu-verime/>.

and a publishing house. The assembly grew significantly in the following years, and in 1987, Ulf Ekman opened a new prayer room for 4,000 people.

However, the movement did not avoid controversies: they had to deal with the mistrust of state authorities and with scandalization of the new faith by the media, which pointed out its negative influence on the lives of believers. The criticism of the movement in the media grew weaker only in the second half of the 1990s, when the movement slowly began to abandon the radical doctrines of the Faith Movement. In 2000, Ulf Ekman insisted on the importance of good ecumenical relations, which noticeably shook various anti-Catholic and anti-ecumenical attitudes of this movement.

In the Czech Republic, the change of Ekman's views was reflected when the Word of Life declared its affiliation with the Classical Pentecostal Movement on its website¹⁸ and become a member of the Czech Evangelical Alliance.

Later on, Ulf Ekman shifted his attention to the importance of a good attitude towards Israel. He became a supporter of Christian Zionism, and through Operation Jabotinsky, an organisation that he set up, he helped Russian Jews return to Israel. He was also one of the founders of the study centre for mutual understanding of Jews and Christians in Israel. The biggest surprise for his followers, however, was to come in 2014. Only one year after leaving the pastoral service in his great assembly in Uppsala, he announced his and his wife's conversion to the Roman Catholic Church. In the context of the anti-Catholic and anti-denominational mood, which is more or less typical of the whole Faith Movement, Ekman's decision caused astonishment and turmoil among his followers. This was easily observable on social networks, despite his personal views moving towards such a decision for some time. To some of his followers, making a decision like that in his life was tantamount to denying all that he had built.

Nevertheless, the life story of the protagonist of this movement Ulf Ekman can be seen as a story of the whole Faith Movement. From the radicalism that made Ekman leave his traditional church, to his call for a reorganisation of the church and the foundation of a new, essentially mission-based movement, to a gradual loss of this radicalism, and in the end to a complete abandonment of all radical rhetoric and the problematic teaching articles. Furthermore, this example demonstrates a shift in the general perception of the church: now it is no longer seen as a radical movement that brings renewal through denying traditional values, but instead as an institution, indeed, an institution with a respected history. This has also resulted in the discovery and appreciation of its immensely valuable traditions and their diversity.

Further on, the text will present some similar features other examples of free churches, which emerged through the mission of the Faith Movement in the Czech Republic.

¹⁸ See also P. KOLENČÍK, *Pastorační pohled na hnutí víry* [*The Faith Movement: A Pastoral Perspective*], B.A. thesis, Prague: Catholic Theological Faculty, Charles University 2010, p. 18, note 41.

(3.2) **The New Hope Church and their quest for a new identity**

The New Hope Church consists of the former Reach Out for Christ (thereinafter referred to as R.O.F.C.) assemblies, which were founded by the Faith Movement missionary Steve Ryder in North Moravia, and the Prague assembly of New Beginnings led by Pastor Jerry Lillard. The R.O.F.C. assemblies had some features typical of the Faith Movement, with their emphasis on the spiritual, demonic nature of disease and on healing campaigns. For a long time, Jerry Lillard's assembly was a member of the international organisation of the Faith Christian Fellowship, set up by Kenneth E. Hagin's untimely deceased son-in-law, Buddy Harrison, one of the leading promoters of the Faith Movement.

Nonetheless, despite its obvious origin in the Faith Movement, the freshly established New Hope Church claimed allegiance to one of the oldest Pentecostal churches, the rather classical Church of God.¹⁹ It joined the Church of God back in 2007, and in an official letter from the 14th of January 2009, the Church of God confirmed that it had issued a pastoral certification to the leaders of the New Hope Church. However, the Basic Document of the New Hope Church states that the teaching doctrines and issues are within the authority of the Collegium of Pastors of the New Hope Church. The New Hope Church also asked the Czech Evangelical Alliance for membership on the 22nd of September 2009. This step is by no means typical for the branches of the Faith Movement. The New Hope Church assemblies do not claim allegiance to the Faith Movement; they make no reference to K. E. Hagin; they have no list of literature written by promoters or adherents of that movement to recommend to their believers; and the structure or designations of the executive functions do not reflect the movement's theology in anything. The New Hope Church does not require knowledge of any important doctrines of the Faith Movement and it declares its affiliation to the classical Pentecostal Movement.

The main reasons for establishing the new church by connecting diverse fellowships was, according to the specialist Mgr. František Fojtík,²⁰ a dissatisfaction with the legal form, in which the individual assemblies ran their religious activities, and a search for a wider background.

As was said before, this is how many Faith Movement fellowships work. Their typical feature is the absence of fixed structure: the movement only creates training centres, which act as centres for dissemination of knowledge and as base rooms for traveling missionaries. Its goal is not to establish a new church, since this movement's theology disapproves of church structures, official registrations and any institutional shape of church organisations.

¹⁹ The Church of God was founded in 1886 by several Christian fellowships in the v USA. Today it has more than 7 million believers in 170 countries. It is led by Raymond F. Culpepper and the organisation has its headquarters in Cleveland, TN. See also *Church of God* (online), 2013, accessed March 2015, available online at <http://www.churchofgod.org/>.

²⁰ See J. CÍRÁL, "Církev Nová naděje, stručná charakteristika", zpracováno pro odbor církví MK, ["The Church of New Hope: A Brief Characteristic", an expert report for the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic], 2009, p. 1.

That means that the fellowships that formed the New Hope Church were not satisfied with this system.

The existing system, typical for the Faith Movement, was not pragmatically convenient, since it hindered wider rooting.

As the fellowship that currently makes up the New Hope Church developed, it underwent a shift from theologically radical doctrines to generally more accepted evangelical and Pentecostal teaching and conducts, as well as a transformation of attitudes towards other churches, which is demonstrated, amongst other things, by the application for membership in the Czech Evangelical Alliance.²¹

(3.3) **The New Life Church and the founding personality of Mikuláš Török as a demonstration of the challenge of a single strong personality**

The beginnings of New Life date back to the mid-1980s. The core of the new fellowship consisted of charismatic-oriented members of the **Evangelical Brethren Church** in Ústí nad Labem in 1994. Under the leadership of Pastor Mikuláš Török, the assembly started to become similar to the Assembly of Faith in Budapest.

This large assembly is led by Pastor Sándor Németh, who has great influence both in Hungary and abroad. The two most important authorities for this assembly are Kenneth E. Hagin and Derek Prince. After Ulf Ekman's failure, Sándor Németh became a new apostle of the Faith Movement for Europe in the eyes of his followers.

However, the apprentice-based relationship of Pastor Mikuláš Török, and his New Life Church, with the Assembly of Faith in Budapest weakened significantly around 2005. The New Life Church even started to deny its origin in the missions of the Faith Movement, and declared itself to be a part of the Charismatic Movement.

There are two striking facts about the development of this fellowship. The first one is the deviation of the New Life Church from the European Faith Movement's Apostle Sándor Németh, and the second is that it has tried to join the churches that have emerged from the Charismatic Movement's ranks.²²

The church's theologically radical doctrines have been adjusted in favour of generally more accepted evangelical and Pentecostal ones, but any greater openness to other churches has been impeded by the centralist leadership, particularly the very strong leadership position of Pastor Mikuláš Török. Török is convinced that ecumenical activities are useless, and doesn't refer to the ecumenical movement at all.

²¹ The Evangelical Alliance is a Christian organisation representing evangelical Christians and works as a coordinator of common activity amongst co-operative evangelical churches.

²² See for example "Základní charakteristika Církve Nový život", Příloha č. 1 k Návrhu na registraci Církve Nový život ["The Church of New Hope: A Brief Characteristic", an expert report for the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic], p. 1.

(3.4) **The Church of Living God as an interesting example of the quest for a non-denominational ideal in the Faith Movement**

The Church of Living God sees itself as a part of the Faith Movement and, unlike the New Hope Church or the New Life Church, it openly claims allegiance to it. It refuses the denominational arrangement and it does not want to be presided over by one leading personality.²³

The bishops of this church²⁴ have only a representative function, without any spiritual significance. This is an interesting solution, considering the heroic character of the founder of the whole movement. The Church of Living God wants to fulfil the ideal of an organisation of the Faith Movement, which forbids the founding of a new denomination. Therefore, it seeks to be a federation-based church.

The Church of Living God openly refers to the legacy of K. E. Hagin, but it has formulated the teachings of the Faith Movement in its own way. In this case, it is not a question of a shift in conduct or an adaptation of the theologically radical doctrines in favour of generally more accepted evangelical and Pentecostal teachings, but instead a change of conduct and presentation of theologically radical doctrines in favour of the Faith Movement itself. Bishop Vít Dan Kolinger claims that the Faith Movement has not been presented in an unbiased way.²⁵

The Church also declares that it is not closed and that it develops relations with other churches, but in reality, it seems to only cooperate with assemblies that have close links to the Faith Movement.

Nevertheless, Paragraph 3 of Section 2 of the Articles of the Church of Living God states that the Church may cooperate with, or be incorporated into, another fellowship of churches, e.g. the Evangelical Alliance.²⁶

This paragraph serves as evidence of a certain shift and it indicates future possibilities for cooperation with evangelical churches.

²³ See also “Struktura a organizace církve ČŽB” [“Structure and organisation of the Church of Living God”], *Cirkevzivehoboha.cz*, 2009, accessed March 2015, available online at <http://www.cirkevzivehoboha.cz/o-nas/struktura-cirkve.html>.

²⁴ Vít Dan Kolinger comes from the Roman Catholic Church, where he served actively and which he left after reflecting on his work. He founded the fellowships in Hořovice, in Příbram and then in Plzeň and České Budějovice. These four fellowships became the foundation for the Church of Living God. The second bishop, Petr Szlaur, comes from the Silesian Evangelical Church of the A.C. After his graduation in evangelical theology in Bratislava he came back to Frýdek-Místek and joined the Apostolic Church. He left with his followers because of his preference for the Faith movement and the ideas of Pastor Miloš Kozohorský. In 2003, he founded an independent church El Šaddaj in Frýdek-Místek. This fellowship joined other fellowships of the Church of Living God in order to get state registration.

²⁵ See also M. KOŘÍNEK, “Cílem je rozpuštění. Rozhovor s biskupem Církve živého Boha Vítem D. Kolingerem” [“Interview with bishop Vít D. Kolinger of the Church of Living God”], *Dingir* (2, 2008), p. 58–60.

²⁶ See also “Církev živého Boha sbor Hradec Králové” [“The Church of Living God, local assembly in Hradec Králové”], *CirkevHK.cz*, accessed March 2015, available online at <http://www.cirkevkhk.cz/o-nas/>.

(3.5) The case of the Faith Church as a demonstration of a strong objection to the ecumenical movement

The Faith Church emerged from the Church of Christian Fellowship as a movement protesting against the rising ecumenical openness. It established itself as an independent fellowship of the Faith Movement after several assemblies had detached and founded their own mission stations. The Faith Church has an important relationship with Sándor Németh, Pastor of the Assembly of Faith in Budapest, and with the founding personality of Pastor Jaroslav Kříž from Banská Bystrica, Slovakia, who has significantly influenced the theology of the Christian Fellowship in Slovakia. As can be seen from the name, the Faith Church fully identified itself with the ideas of the Faith Movement, as well as the Assembly of Faith in Budapest, and with the teachings of Slovak fellowships.

The Faith Church does not show any interest in cooperation with other churches. It takes a suspicious approach to the ecumenical movement and its attitude to the Roman Catholic Church is filled with aversion. It does not show any interest in membership in the Czech Evangelical Alliance, either. The departure of the assemblies and the foundation of the Faith Church can be seen as a textbook example of radicalisation within an established church, in this case the already institutionalized Christian Fellowship, and, among other things, it shows the noticeable shift that the Church of Christian Fellowship has undergone.

(3.6) The apostle commissioning of Festus Nsoha and the Oasis Church as a case of disinterest, due to the strong position of the missionary leader

The Oasis Church was created by a Nigerian missionary, Festus Chikezie Nsoha. Since its very beginning this group has had the typical features of the Faith Movement, indicated by the emphasis on prosperity, success and good health as signs of God's blessing.

The church is an independently acting group and it is not a branch of any international organisation.²⁷ The personality of Festus Nsoha is crucial to the movement. The Oasis Church is not subject to any direct management from abroad, nor is it incorporated into any church structures beyond the Czech Republic.²⁸ To his followers, Festus Nsoha is an apostle who has received a direct mandate from God for his mission work in the Czech Republic. This leader shows contempt for any ecumenical activities and he makes no references to the ecumenical movement.

That is why, in the case of the Oasis Church, there are no doctrinal shifts coming from positions taken by the Faith Movement, and no changes of attitudes towards other churches. However, the state registration of the Oasis Church was an act of institutionalizing, and thus it may be a promise of its possible future stabilisation in society.

²⁷ See also D. LUŽNÝ, "Znalecký posudek č. 01/14 v řízení o návrhu na registraci Církve Oáza" [Expert report no. 01/14: Church Oasis expert report for Ministry of Culture], p. 5.

²⁸ LUŽNÝ, "Znalecký posudek...", p. 5.

(3.7) **Centre of Triumphal Faith as a case of strong objections to the ecumenical movement, which led to isolation**

The Centre of Triumphal Faith is connected with the activity of Pastor Miloš Kozohorský. This leading pastor founded a Christian Fellowship in Dobříš²⁹ in 1990. However, after seven years he handed over the pastorate to his colleague and left to study at Hagin's Rhema Bible School.

After his return to the Czech Republic, he started to preach the Faith Movement's message. He founded a new fellowship, namely the Centre of Triumphal Faith in Prague in 1999 and then in 2002 in Brno and Olomouc. His organisation, the Service of Triumphal Faith, founded in 2001, serves as a centre of distribution of Kenneth Hagin's materials (books, recordings...).³⁰ This fellowship is well known in the Czech Republic because of a documentary by Tereza Nvotová "Jesus is normal," which encourages extreme evangelisation on the street, manipulation, and odd religious practices (such as holy laughter, shaking during sermon and others) in this fellowship. The documentary was filmed in 2008 and met with a positive reaction from Czech society. There has been criticism of the movement in mass media.

The Centre of Triumphal Faith sees itself as part of the Faith Movement and K. E. Hagin has exceptional authority in this fellowship. It refuses the denominational arrangement and it is strictly against the idea of establishing new churches.

This fellowship has no interest in establishing ecumenical relationships with other churches; it wants to maintain its own religious practice and thus it has become more and more isolated. Its characterisation by the media also helped drive its isolationism.

(4) **Summary**

This paper introduced the diversity of the fellowships of the Faith Movement and offered some examples of the significant shift this movement has undergone. The emergence and development of the seven new free churches in the Czech Republic in the last two or three decades was described. The article has looked into the major features of the process of attitude shift, as well as the change of radical theological doctrine, their methods of mission activities, and the change of their attitude towards other churches and the ecumenical movement. This is also often connected with a change in the structure of these fellowships, which shifts from the leadership of one person to more congregational methods of church management.

Summarisation of the development of free churches:

The Word of Life Church, the New Hope Church, and the New Life Church do not claim any allegiance to the Faith Movement. The New Life Church has even started to

²⁹ This fellowship is led by pastor Tomáš Hrubý and his cooperate assistant Robert Klimt today.

³⁰ His organisation was renamed last year. It is called "Victorious Radio" (translated by author). See also *Rádío Vítězství* (online), accessed March 2016, available online at <http://www.radiovitezstvi.cz/>.

deny its origin in the missions of the Faith Movement. The New Hope Church does not deny the movement's influence as such, but it does not acknowledge the ideas of the Faith Church either.

The Word of Life Church has become open to the ecumenical movement, while the New Hope Church has moved significantly closer to ecumenical activities. There is an obstacle standing in the way of ecumenical activities in the case of the New Life Church, specifically their leading figure.

The Church of Living God, the Faith Church, the Oasis Church and the Centre of Triumphal Faith claim allegiance to the Faith Movement.

The Church of Living God has become partially open, more open than the other fellowships that claim to be part of the Faith Movement.

The Faith Church, the Oasis Church and the Centre of Triumphal Faith protest against ecumenical openness and disdain these activities.

This shift can be observed in some of these free churches – the Faith Movement itself is anti-ecumenical and anti-denominational in its character.

The change of attitude towards ecumenism in some of these free churches, which emerged through the mission of the Faith Movement, means a reconsideration, and possibly even a denial of one of the fundamental Faith Movement doctrines. A shift, which indicates viability and a level of adaptability in this movement in the light of changing conditions, has been described. As a result of abandoning their radical stand points, some of these free churches have been able to accept the ideas of ecumenism and the teaching of evangelical churches.

On the other hand, in the case of the Faith Church (and other small assemblies separated from the Christian Fellowship) the foundation and the growth of new fellowships were initiated through a return to the movement's more radical doctrines.

The Faith Movement aims for a revitalisation of the church, but often the actual result of their doctrines is division and decline. In cases where a stable theology emerges, it is possible to see an improvement in cooperation.

This paper has described a shift towards cooperation with evangelical churches. The article has presented some examples, and named some other fellowships, which have so far been this change and have therefore become increasingly isolated.

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Dane Rudhyar's concept of transpersonal life

Jindřich Veselý

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Abstract: Dane Rudhyar was a composer, theosophist, philosopher, artist and a significant astrologer. His conception of transpersonality is crucial in almost all of his works and ideas. The article presents this conception in the context of Rudhyar's transpersonal psychology, philosophy of history, cosmology, metaphysics and also his interpretation of the basic themes and ideas of H. P. Blavatsky's theosophy. Rudhyar's conception of transpersonality is based on an idea that through transpersonal individuality there is influence from higher forces or beings in the time and space of our world. The transpersonal life of a person like this has its cosmological and metaphysical aspects; it might be said that transpersonality means completion of individual existence, evolution of mankind and cosmos. This way of life also has a profound meaning for spirituality, ethics, esoteric initiation and sexuality. The article deals with Rudhyar's distinction between active and conscious transpersonality, and passive mediumity, too. We also consider connections between Rudhyar's ideas and similar or parallel movements, especially with theosophy, perennialism, transpersonal movement and New Age. Finally we briefly discuss strong and weak points of Rudhyar's conception, but also limitations of a strictly theoretical approach.

Keywords: Transpersonal movement, transpersonal psychology, cosmology, theosophy, perennialism, New Age

Abstrakt: Dane Rudhyar byl hudební skladatel, theosof, filosof, umělec a význačný astrolog, jehož pojetí transpersonality je klíčové prakticky pro celé jeho dílo i myšlenky. Článek toto pojetí představuje v kontextu Rudhyarovy transpersonální psychologie, filosofie dějin, kosmologie, metafyziky a rovněž jeho interpretace základních témat a idejí theosofie H. P. Blavatské. Rudhyarovo chápání transpersonality je založeno na myšlence, podle níž je transpersonální individualita vykonavatelem vlivu vyšších sil nebo bytostí, které se nacházejí časově či prostorově mimo tento svět. Transpersonální život takové osobnosti má své kosmologické a metafyzické aspekty; dá se říci, že transpersonalita představuje dovršení individuální existence i evoluce lidstva a kosmu. Tento způsob života má rovněž zásadní význam pro spiritualitu, etiku, esoterickou iniciaci a sexualitu. Článek se zabývá také Rudhyarovým odlišením aktivní a uvědomělé transpersonality od pasivní mediumity i souvislostmi Rudhyarových myšlenek s podobnými nebo paralelními hnutími, a to zvláště s theosofií, perennialismem, transpersonálním hnutím a hnutím nového věku. Na závěr krátce probereme silné a slabé stránky Rudhyarova pojetí, ale i omezení, s jakými se potýká přísné teoretický přístup k němu.

Klíčová slova: transpersonální hnutí, transpersonální psychologie, kosmologie, theosofie, perennialismus, new age

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An American composer, astrologer, philosopher, religious thinker and artist of French origin, Dane Rudhyar (1895–1985) is known even in the Czech Republic as a founding figure of contemporary humanistic and transpersonal astrology. Less known is the fact that this thinker was probably the first to employ the word “transpersonal”, at least in English,¹ and that the way he used it was very different from the current use, which is influenced by later transpersonalists. Rudhyar’s concept of transpersonality not only encompasses an exceptional outline of spiritual life, but it is also one of the central motifs of his entire spiritual heritage. This text intends to present an overview of Rudhyar’s view of transpersonality, its particular aspects and its role in the whole of his thought; the conclusion will try to put it in relation to other more or less related spiritual currents and reflect its strengths as well as problematic aspects.

(1) **Transpersonality in the context of Rudhyar’s work**

(1.1) **Neologism becomes a destiny**

Dane Rudhyar used the word “transpersonal” as early as 1929 in his article *On Personal and Impersonal*² which he wrote for *The Glass Hive* journal, which he was publishing in at that time. Here he says: “A transpersonal behavior is one starting from the universal unconditioned self in Man and using merely the personality as an instrument. Such a behavior will be colored obviously by the personality – but not so much the personality of the actor as the one toward whom the act is directed. It will be colored by the race, time and locality.”³ In all his work, Rudhyar will invariably hold on to this interpretation of transpersonality as a descent of spiritual influences from the higher levels of reality *by means of* a human individual, who thus becomes a mere tool or an intermediary for such influence. It is possible to say that in a way this English neologism became his creator’s destiny for the rest of his life that encompassed a whole half of the century. Transpersonal influences and the development of corresponding functions in human life occupy a prominent place in Rudhyar’s work – and probably in his life as well:⁴ it is possible to say that transpersonality represents a kind of completion or culmination of individual human existence, social development, and human evolution, at least on this planet; moreover, it has cosmic or even eschatological functions. It seems that the development of “transpersonal functions”, in Rudhyar’s interpretation, forms a kind of core of all his work and that according to him, they represent a spiritual movement of planetary importance, to which he dedicated his work.

¹ DANE RUDHYAR, *Rhythm of Wholeness: A Total Affirmation of Being* (online), *Khaldea.com*, 1995, accessed March 2016, available online at <http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/rw/>, part 1, chapter 1, page 1.

² DANE RUDHYAR, “On personal and impersonal” (online), *The Glass Hive* (November 1929), accessed March 2016, available online at http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/per_imper.shtml.

³ RUDHYAR, “On personal and impersonal”, http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/per_imper.shtml.

⁴ See especially RUDHYAR, *Rhythm of Wholeness*, <http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/rw/>, part 1, chapter 1, page 1.

(1.2) **Transpersonality in the individual existence, history, human evolution and the story of the cosmos**

First of all, we will take a closer look at how Rudhyar's transpersonality manifests itself in the individual human existence. In his main work dedicated to psychology, with a telling title *Beyond Individualism*,⁵ Rudhyar distinguishes four gradually developing orders of functions in human beings: biological, social, individual and transpersonal. Biological and social functions, mediated by sexuality and related phenomena such as kinship and social organization, are currently shared by all human beings. That applies also to individual functions, even though only in embryonic form – the full scale individual functions are shared only potentially. Access to growth of individual functions requires development of discursive intellect and its creation implies a painful process of the emergence of a fully developed individuality from the relative safety of wider society's collective matrix and determining forces of its own culture. The process of individualization is, probably inevitably, accompanied by egoism as its shadowy form, which, and that is also Rudhyar's main point, can be overcome only by transcending individualism. Through the rite of passage, in which one devotes his or her entire existence to a higher whole, the individuality reaches self-transcendence and fundamental transformation: becomes completely self-dedicated to larger whole. Thus transformed, the individual acquires on the sensual level compassion or love that Rudhyar connects to the bodhisattva ideal and the revelation of Christ, and on the mental level he develops a "cosmogenic mind" that is able to find cosmic order in chaos and perceive the beauty even in apparent ugliness. "Cosmogenic mind" also brings order to reality. Both compassion and holistic "cosmogenic" minds are transparent and open: they both stem from a principle of mutual interpenetration. Therefore, Agape is connected to cosmogony and vice versa. At the evolutionary point when this becomes more apparent, the existence of individuals fully devoted to the whole becomes univocal and mutually permeable; more importantly, they open themselves to the light of absolute future that Rudhyar, probably inspired by Teilhard de Chardin, describes as a shine emitted by the omega point of human evolution. This is supposed to lead to the transformation of the physical and material reality itself. To achieve final enlightenment means, to Rudhyar, quite literally to be transformed into light.⁶

It is apparent that transpersonality or "fourth order function" represents the fulfillment and transcendence of an individual existence, but not only that. In *The Planetaryization of Consciousness*,⁷ one of his main works, Rudhyar outlines the main phases through which he believes the human society goes. The first phase, the "thesis" of social evolution, is the compulsive and unconscious unanimity of a tribal organization. As its antithesis comes the individualistic and atomized society of today,

⁵ DANE RUDHYAR, *Beyond Individualism: The Psychology of Transformation*, Wheaton: Quest Book, 1979.

⁶ See RUDHYAR, *Beyond Individualism*, passim.

⁷ DANE RUDHYAR, *The Planetaryization of Consciousness*, New York: Harper, 1972, 343 p.

whose main characteristic is the conflict of competing individuals.⁸ The synthesis of both is the society of fullness,⁹ whose core traits will be voluntary and conscious unanimity and that, according to Rudhyar, will organically grow from the communities of individuals fully committed to serve the planetary whole. This society of beings fully committed to serve will form a “Pleroma”, a kind of collective being of higher order, that in conditions that can be hardly imagined will transcend both the individual and the collective, while at the same time transmuting the matter itself or the known world. This is how Rudhyar imagined the fulfillment of both social and human evolution.¹⁰

Nevertheless, this is not the only meaning of transpersonal functions: they also have a cosmogonic purpose. Rudhyar’s worldview, deeply influenced especially by Theosophy, is essentially cyclical. The existence of the cosmos is marked by the rhythm of the manifested and unmanifested being. The core archetype or idea that is both the plan of one whole cycle and the motif, which is supposed to undergo a hard and difficult evolution from potentiality to its full actualization, is the archetype of Man. In each cycle this archetype represents the way to resolve the problems and save the failures of the previous cycle. In each of the cycles the author of this archetype is the pleromatic mind that emerged from the previous cycle – and, at the same time, its full actualization is the Pleroma of the following cycle, in other words, the univocal community of transpersonal beings. In *The Planetarization of Consciousness*, Rudhyar describes this process in an almost Trinitarian way: the Pleroma of the old cycle is the “hidden father” of the new archetype of man or the “son”, while the origins of the archetype’s actualization or the growth of the divine child is made possible by the mysterious act, in which the Pleroma of the completed cosmic cycle is immersed in the “endless ocean of potentiality” or, figuratively speaking, in the womb of the “eternal virgin”,¹¹ which thus becomes pregnant and later gives birth to a new cycle, which will be the place of the gradual actualization and realization of the aspects of the archetype of man, until they reach synthesis in the following Pleroma.

In his main work *The Rhythm of Wholeness*, Rudhyar describes this cyclical movement as a rhythmical interaction of opposing and mutually irreducible principles of subjectivity and objectivity, alternatively called “Day” and “Night”. This cyclical movement has four focal points. The first of them is the “cosmic midnight” or the phase of the “divinity”, which represents almost full hegemony of the principle of unity. It is here that the Pleroma of the old cycle submerges to the endless potentiality and a new human archetype, the divine child, is born. Then follows the moment in which the opposing forces are of equal strength, but their equilibrium yields to the principle of diversity; this is the point in which the “cosmic egg hatches”, in other words the objective reality manifests itself and the material cosmos arises. The next

⁸ RUDHYAR, *The Planetarization of Consciousness*, p. 19.

⁹ RUDHYAR, *The Planetarization of Consciousness*, p. 257–259.

¹⁰ RUDHYAR, *The Planetarization of Consciousness*, p. 178.

¹¹ RUDHYAR, *The Planetarization of Consciousness*, p. 129–130.

point is the “midday” point, when the principle of diversity is at the peak of its powers and prevails almost fully. It is here that the human archetype begins to incarnate – its different aspects start to manifest themselves as avataric beings, creators of cultural and civilizational wholes. In the end comes the fourth point, “dusk”, when the opposing principles reach equilibrium again, which withdraws not to diversity, as it did during the “dawn”, but to the opposing force or the principle of unity, which rules the following period. During this phase the external, manifested world disappears and a sequence of gradually more and more subjective processes of the subjective mind starts to envelop, until another point of cosmic midnight is reached.

It is clear that, according to this cyclical cosmological pattern or myth, humankind is currently on its way to the “gates of the silence” or the point of “dusk”, in which the enlightened individuals give rise to a planetary Pleroma. Therefore, emergence of the transpersonal functions is not only a precursor of the fulfillment of the individual odyssey of human beings, social development and evolutionary pathway of the earthly humanity, but also – at least in this aeon – the tidings of the eschaton: the disappearance of the world as we know it and collective transition to a radically different way of being.

Apparently, Rudhyar was convinced that his philosophy is to become a catalyzer of this synthetic process, which will result in a new unity of all different spiritual traditions and their transformation into one primordial tradition, this time enriched by the result of the ending cycle. It will also mean transcendence of the individualistic humanity towards conscious and intentional unanimity of the Pleroma and, finally, also a radical transformation of the world at large.

It should be noted that the motif of transpersonality also has an important meaning in Rudhyar’s vast astrological work: the real fulfillment of individual existence symbolized by the cyclical movement of nativity potential development is possible only by the transition to transpersonal existence. This is closely related to the transformation of the nativity itself, which changes its quadripartite nature formed by the two main axis of the radix, into a hexagonal structure.¹² At the same time the importance of the components of nativity and astrological techniques changes – in the transpersonal sense Rudhyar sees secondary directions as more crucial than the transits, its importance being mainly individual and social.¹³

¹² These somehow cryptic passages probably refer to Theosophical tradition regarding the root races of humankind. See also DANE RUDHYAR, “Occult preparations for a New Age” (online), *Khaldea.com*, 1995, accessed March 2016, available online at http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/op/op_c6_p1.php, part 2, chapter 6, p. 1.

¹³ To assess Rudhyar’s astrological legacy and its relation to transpersonality see both DANE RUDHYAR, “From humanistic to transpersonal astrology” (online), *Khaldea.com*, 1995, accessed March 2016, available online at http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/fromtot_1.shtml, and especially his main astrological testament. DANE RUDHYAR, *The Astrology of Transformation, A Multilevel Approach* (online) *Khaldea.com*, 1995, accessed March 2016, available online at <http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/aoft/>, chapter 7, page 2.

(2) On transpersonal life

Probably the single most esoteric of Rudhyar's works is the book *Occult preparations for a New Age*,¹⁴ which is dedicated to the legacy of H. P. Blavatsky, and was published in 1975 on the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of the founding of the Theosophical Society. In this book Rudhyar largely elaborates on the different aspects of transpersonal existence that is already available for the vanguard of future humanity, those human "mutants",¹⁵ through which the new age will arrive. The next paragraphs summarize those aspects of transpersonal existence.

(2.1) Two polarities of spiritual life

In the first part of his treatise on important aspects of transpersonal life, Rudhyar distinguishes two main spiritual orientations, one of them being closely connected to his concept of transpersonality.

Rudhyar notes that the contemporary use of the word "transpersonal" refers more to transcending the level of experience that is generally understood as personal. According to him, the problem lies in the ambivalence of the word "transpersonal": the prefix "trans-" might mean both "out of" or "outside" and "through" or "by means of". As we already mentioned, Rudhyar already used this word in 1929;¹⁶ even by then he meant by it the influences of spiritual beings *through a person*. "The source of that power, consciousness, or activity could certainly be considered as existing beyond the realm of personality, but the activity itself is transpersonal because its most significant feature is its using a person as an instrumentality or agent through which the activity is released in a focused condition."¹⁷ Rudhyar insists that the meaning "beyond a person", more frequently used by other authors, is more acceptable for the average mentality formed by science – this kind of mind sees evolution as "ascendence" towards higher levels or transcendence of the borders of individuality. On the other hand, accepting the original interpretation means that the human being must accept "the world-outlook characterizing true Occultism,"¹⁸ according to which "the Universe is worked and guided from within outward, controlled and animated by almost endless series of Hierarchies of sentient Beings."¹⁹

Nevertheless, on this level the thing we usually call individuality does not exist, which also clearly means that when they want to exert influence on the human level of reality, these hierarchies of the level above individual choose their representatives

¹⁴ See note 12.

¹⁵ DANE RUDHYAR, "Human, all too human and beyond" (online), *Khaldea.com*, 1995, accessed March 2016, available online at <http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/toohuman.shtml>.

¹⁶ RUDHYAR, "On personal and impersonal", http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/per_imper.shtml.

¹⁷ RUDHYAR, "Occult Preparations for a New Age", http://khaldea.com/rudhyar/op/op_c8_p1.php, part 3, chapter 8, p. 1.

¹⁸ RUDHYAR, "Occult Preparations for a New Age", http://khaldea.com/rudhyar/op/op_c8_p1.php, part 3, chapter 8, p. 1.

¹⁹ HELENA PETROVNA BLAVATSKY, *The Secret Doctrine* (I:224), quoted in RUDHYAR, "Occult Preparations for a New Age", part 3, chapter 8, p. 1.

or ambassadors among people and they concentrate their energy in them – just like the sunlight needs an intermediary, such as the lens, that would concentrate it and by its means, for example, burn a paper. This is exactly the way transpersonal activity works in Rudhyar's concept.

Other representants of transpersonal psychology or transpersonal movement tend to describe the mystical way as inverse, i.e. ascending. Rudhyar's concept of transpersonality focuses on the opposite path of the avatar, cultural hero, or creative genius. It is through, and in, these beings that the transformative forces required by the current creative process work, and they work more or less consciously. Through them deeds then arise that become "symbols and examples for a whole culture or nation."²⁰

Rudhyar then proceeds to characterize the mystic as a person that "*deliberately* leads a life and tries to reach a mode of consciousness which separates him from what the society in which he is born considers 'normal'."²¹ Just as a true occultist (or a transpersonal agent of higher forces), the mystic represents a countercultural influence that polarizes the common society. "The true mystic also comes to experience a death of the natural person in him and a rebirth in a new state illumined by the memory [...] – an ecstatic condition of being and/or consciousness."²² This kind of experience can be a reflection of consciousness and of the activity of the transcending, transindividual field of consciousness that the mystic reaches and that can also be reached by chemical means. This transformation occurs mainly in the sphere of feelings, which is the reason why mystics from all times choose metaphors and symbols of love and physical union. Rudhyar calls this journey of human individuality development "anti-individual", as it goes straight against a thousand year long trend towards individualization, representing the intent to return back to a regressive oceanic experiencing of primordial unity. In contrast to this, from the "axial era" at the very latest, the progressive course of human consciousness has been directed towards assimilating quantity or diversity.

In contrast to this, the path of an avatar²³ progresses in the same direction as the movement of the evolution, while at the same time it defies the "inertia" of the wider society that is reflected in clinging to outdated institutions, dogmas, and structures.

²⁰ RUDHYAR, "Occult Preparations for a New Age", http://khaldea.com/rudhyar/op/op_c8_p1.php, part 3, chapter 8, p. 1.

²¹ RUDHYAR, "Occult Preparations for a New Age", http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/op/op_c8_p2.php, part 3, chapter 8, p. 2.

²² RUDHYAR, "Occult Preparations for a New Age", http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/op/op_c8_p2.php, part 3, chapter 8, p. 2. It is necessary to add that in the case of the mystic path, Rudhyar admits the possibility of "rebirth" or some other kind of transformation of the mystic's existence. However, probably in connection with his evolutionary concept of human history, he describes this kind of transformation as a matter of an individual level of existence, albeit an extreme one. That is to say, he does not consider it to be a transition towards a transpersonal level of existence. See also conclusion to this article.

²³ Rudhyar uses the term "avatar" for important transpersonal beings, from which stem different sacred traditions and whose influence shaped whole cultures. He considered Buddha and Jesus to be the two most important avatars of contemporary mankind. See also RUDHYAR, *Rhythm of Wholeness*, <http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/rw/>, part 1, chapter 5, page 3.

Therefore, the transpersonal being is a reformer, an “agent of destiny.”²⁴ Those prometheic spirits come when it is time for a culture or a civilization to change; their obliviousness in the face of the consequences their transformative acts of defiance against the inertia of the wider society might provoke changes them into “karmayogis”. They are the messengers of higher forces that act through them – and those forces do not have to be “good”, at least judging from the human point of view: “there are also avatars of Evil.”²⁵ We can conceive them as divine incarnations of the principles or personalities they embody, although Rudhyar would rather use the term “transcarnation”: “The fire of transformation burns through the flesh (carne) until its work is done or at least until the disciples attracted to the flame have exhausted their capacity to respond to the fire and the light it radiates.”²⁶

This path does not exclude mystical union; however, this union has a very different meaning: it does not consist of the ascension of the soul to god or a divine level but of descending influence of the higher forces through an individual, “an answer to a collective human need.”²⁷ It is possible to say that the avatar comes from up high as an answer to a more or less articulated need of the cultural whole or humanity. He accepts a historically conditioned form and he transforms it from within. “The avatic being can be considered as the earth terminal of a line of transmission of power. He is a magical instrumentality, a mask used in a collective ritual.”²⁸ The acts of this figure are impersonal – the avatar resembles more an execution of a spiritual quality that through him focuses into a historical situation, than a personality in the usual sense.

Not even important avatars need to be aware of their mission right from the start – the mission is reflected more in their apparently enlightened actions than in knowledge which depends on the situation they have been born into. It is possible to speak of their destiny in terms of reincarnation, but Rudhyar insists that it is not their concrete individual soul that acts, but the Man as himself, in other words, one of the aspects of the archetype of man, a kind of spiritual quality. “It is the performance of a role which releases the creative potentiality inherent in a specific moment in the great play of man’s evolution. In this performance the performer, having totally identified himself with the role, is pouring his life-substance into the action. He is the action as well as the actor; and he “is also, in a sense, that which is acted upon, because spiritually speaking the three are one”.²⁹ In the case of less important persons this

²⁴ RUDHYAR, “Occult Preparations for a New Age”, http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/op/op_c8_p3.php, part 3, chapter 8, p. 3.

²⁵ RUDHYAR, “Occult Preparations for a New Age”, http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/op/op_c8_p4.php, part 3, chapter 8, p. 4.

²⁶ RUDHYAR, “Occult Preparations for a New Age”, http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/op/op_c8_p4.php, part 3, chapter 8, p. 4.

²⁷ RUDHYAR, “Occult Preparations for a New Age”, http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/op/op_c8_p4.php, part 3, chapter 8, p. 4.

²⁸ RUDHYAR, “Occult Preparations for a New Age”, http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/op/op_c8_p4.php, part 3, chapter 8, p. 4.

²⁹ RUDHYAR, “Occult Preparations for a New Age”, http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/op/op_c8_p4.php, part 3, chapter 8, p. 4.

might lead to strong passions, sometimes even hubris, but the pride of great avatars is generally connected to inner humility in the face of the real source of their acts: "Reverence is the very soul of true heroism; reverence before the supreme and always mysterious Source of the power and the intensity that makes the actor vibrate often seemingly far beyond any conceivable natural strength."³⁰ Avatars are not mystics or saints in the usual sense: instead they form the connection between the human and the divine, representing utterances of destiny meant for wider masses.

(2.2) Greater faith

In this chapter Rudhyar proceeds to refine and specify his concept of transpersonality, focusing especially on a specific understanding of the term "law".

According to Rudhyar, law in the traditional sense is more or less a rule imposed from outside by an authority (in the most extreme case sanctioned by a god). He then interprets the idea of law, especially of the "divine plan of creation", from a metaphysical point of view: "The important point in any discussion of the concept of 'law' is whether or not the 'system of rules and regulations' is external to that which is being ruled, or inherent in whatever follows the rules. Unfortunately, in our misuse of words [...] we make no difference between a rule imposed from the outside and an inherent or instinctive compulsion to act according to a structural order."³¹ The true law is, according to Rudhyar, more of a "principle of organic order",³² an inherent order of reality – and losing the connection to this organic order creates a need for a law sanctioned by authority, whether human or divine. Nevertheless, when beings have a fully developed sense of basic character or nature of everything that exists, there is no need for an external authority that would establish and enforce laws. Rudhyar uses an example of a structure: "Let every worker be a true builder able to see or feel as an imminent compulsion the whole image of the building and particularly his place and his job in the building process – and there would be no need of rules and regulations by a managing boss."³³

For this kind of inherent principle of reality, Rudhyar employs a Sanskrit term, *dharma* – as he says, he uses it in a sense of the fundamental nature of anything that equals its function in a universal Whole or all-encompassing wholeness. A being, which follows its nature, does not have to obey an order – but if the being goes against its nature, it can betray it. Rudhyar adds that this inherent character of everything that exists is love or compassion.³⁴

³⁰ RUDHYAR, "Occult Preparations for a New Age", http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/op/op_c8_p4.php, part 3, chapter 8, p. 4.

³¹ RUDHYAR, "Occult Preparations for a New Age", http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/op/op_c9_p1.php, part 3, chapter 9, p. 1.

³² RUDHYAR, "Occult Preparations for a New Age", http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/op/op_c9_p1.php, part 3, chapter 9, p. 1.

³³ RUDHYAR, "Occult Preparations for a New Age", http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/op/op_c9_p2.php, part 3, chapter 9, p. 2.

³⁴ RUDHYAR, "Occult Preparations for a New Age", http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/op/op_c9_p2.php, part 3, chapter 9, p. 2.

Nevertheless, the ability to follow one's true nature is not reached through libertinism and excess, but by means of hard work, transformation of egoistic matter of the emerging individual into a "translucent lens" that focuses a transpersonal shine of compassion: "One overcomes the need for obedience only through implicit readiness to obey. Then, when there is no longer any ego-block against utter obedience – and against humility or even humiliation – what was ego within the mind becomes a clear lens focusing the quality of the Soul into acts of destiny in which the dharma-individuality radiates as a transforming and illumining power."³⁵ It means that true freedom is not an egoistic willfulness, but the adherence to the real truth of one's own being; while its certainty and unequivocal nature resembles instinct or an act determined by a tribal society, the transpersonal act is chosen consciously, since the person has already reached and transcended the state of developed ego or individuality. It is paradoxical that to reach this kind of spiritual transparency, a person needs to pass through a phase of spiritual blindness that is only characteristic of a seemingly free individual. Only a world where a transpersonal type of being has developed can exist without laws.

Rudhyar formulates one, and only one, Supreme Law as follows: "There is only one Supreme Law: Everything is as the need for harmony requires. Everything acts in order to satisfy what, at the time and to the best of its knowledge, it feels it needs. Everything seeks to act according to its fundamental nature."³⁶ Rephrasing Rudhyar's meaning: the core of every time cycle or space unit is a need that arises from the solutions of the past as well as a potential and archetypal solution that arises and actualizes itself in every cycle. This solution is a manifestation of a virginal ocean of infinite potentiality that serves as a source for openness to new possibilities – in other words, a future. This tendency to satisfy one's need for harmony seems to be the same principle that Rudhyar calls One³⁷ or Wholeness:³⁸ "Man's nature, however, is to be conscious of the meaning of the infinite and cyclic interaction of need and solution; for only thus can he be what he essentially is: a Localizing agent for the power of the metacosmic Principle of Individual Existence which I have called simply (in capital letters) ONE. This Principle or Essence (the words are most inadequate, alas!) is what is at the root of eternal, cyclic MOTION."³⁹

The trust in laws established by an external authority cannot be separated from an ego – but in this sense it is relative to a specific evolutionary stage of human development. It is to this development that Rudhyar's thinking was probably meant to

³⁵ RUDHYAR, "Occult Preparations for a New Age", http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/op/op_c9_p2.php, part 3, chapter 9, p. 2.

³⁶ RUDHYAR, "Occult Preparations for a New Age", http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/op/op_c9_p3.php, chapter 3, part 9, p. 3.

³⁷ RUDHYAR, "Occult Preparations for a New Age", http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/op/op_c9_p3.php, chapter 3, part 9, p. 3.

³⁸ RUDHYAR, "Occult Preparations for a New Age", http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/op/op_c9_p3.php, chapter 3, part 9, p. 3.

³⁹ RUDHYAR, "Occult Preparations for a New Age", http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/op/op_c9_p3.php, chapter 3, part 9, p. 3.

serve. This “greater faith” is the trust in “the inexhaustible potentiality of SPACE and in the omnipresence and all-harmonizing potency of spirit.”⁴⁰ This means an essential openness and a conscious acceptance of the role of focus of higher forces, where the subordination to external authority yields to an understanding of the inner sense of events – and to acceptance.

(2.3) Love on the transpersonal way

Another important aspect of Rudhyar’s concept of transpersonal life is love between man and woman. The importance of this motif lies in the fact that the overall state of the society is, according to Rudhyar, anchored in the quality of interpersonal relationship, especially in the relationships between men and women. Rudhyar distinguishes two basic levels on which a love affair might take place: “It may operate as an unconscious biological, social, and psychological compulsion, or else as a consciously acknowledged, polarized, and transfigured power, used by mature personalities, in the service of a freely accepted superpersonal purpose.”⁴¹

The basic level of sexual relationships is the mostly instinctive biological type that is rooted in community life and is almost completely subordinated to the dictate of biological or social dimension of existence. Sex is viewed here as a mere tool for procreation.

As the individual consciousness slowly emerges from the collective substrate, love begins to appear: it is love of a sublime kind, or Bhakti – and, as Rudhyar says, from it raises the “theotropic” religiosity of mystics. In the situation of strengthening individualism and atomization, another kind of love appears, only this time its source is the inner emptiness of unfulfilled individuality. This is romantic or “erototropic love” and its goal is the ardent eroticism itself. Both these types of love share the same trait: “In both cases, the purpose of the love is lost in the thrill or rapture of the experience of love. The participants are inwardly forced into the tormenting fire or the blinding light of such a love.”⁴² We might add that there is no freedom in the world of these passions, and sexuality becomes a mere tool of unconscious, self-forgetting unions, which is somehow similar to the states that Rudhyar attributes to the mystics.

The main function of this love lies in its ability to awaken consciousness – especially in contexts when it becomes a revolutionary force that transcends social barriers the aspect of fertility recedes to the background. Its power is more destructive than creative, a power that, by means of breaking and burning barriers, tends to adhere to one of the worlds.

Only a mature personality can stop trying to fill its own emptiness with a loved one and be able to strive for a deliberate and purposeful sharing of its own fullness.

⁴⁰ RUDHYAR, “Occult Preparations for a New Age”, http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/op/op_c9_p3.php, chapter 3, part 9, p. 3.

⁴¹ RUDHYAR, “Occult Preparations for a New Age”, http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/op/op_c10_p1.php, chapter 3, part 10, p. 1.

⁴² RUDHYAR, “Occult Preparations for a New Age”, http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/op/op_c10_p1.php, chapter 3, part 10, p. 1.

In this moment the love of two beings, who have decided to join forces and head towards a shared transpersonal goal, gains its creative character back. Here, in contrast to earthly fruit of fertile biological love, something else is born: “The type of ‘seed’ which this co-productivity seeks to increase through an earth-transcending kind of cultivation is an ideospiritual or, symbolically speaking, ‘celestial’ type of seed – the seed of man’s personal immortality, as well as the seed of a new culture established in the fullness of conscious human interchange.”⁴³ Nevertheless, individual human maturity is reached only at a point when the person is capable of letting go of his “cramps of the conscious” and start walking a transpersonal path: “As the man and woman unite their beings in the ritual of a consciously all-inclusive, transpersonal love, the bipolar emanation of the Divine becomes a concretely creative and transforming act of power. This is accomplished through the love of man and woman.”⁴⁴

In the union of man and a woman who have decided to devote themselves together to a higher whole and to the descent of spiritual energies through their persons, human love as well as transpersonal influence reaches a higher level. This type of spiritual influx is always a creative response to a concrete need that arises on higher levels of reality: “Creation is God’s answer to a world in chaos, to the need of that which has come to experience total disintegration and the atomizing of matter utterly unilluminated by spirit. Creation is a perpetual reestablishment of universal Harmony.”⁴⁵

Man is able to contribute to this kind of act – even more so when it comes to man and woman together. The definitive completion of this contribution is when they decide to enter into the pleromatic community of devoted beings that work together on the creation of a (probably somehow hermaphroditic) “Seed Man” that is the apex of the evolution of earthly humanity. “In that bipolar Man, the divine Word that was ‘in the beginning’ is made fully concrete, and the power of divine Nature is condensed; as in the seed, archetypal structure and potency of life are combined.”⁴⁶ This full actualization of the primordial potentiality of the archetype of man is meant to be a seed from which, so to say, a cosmic tree of the next cycle is supposed to grow: a new potentiality which, on its way to its new and full actualization, will be enriched by the things that happen on this way. In Teilhard’s symbolism, which Rudhyar frequently used, the fulfilled and whole “hermaphroditic” Omega of one cycle becomes an Alpha of the next, although in each cycle the basic tuning of this principal tone or melody is different, as it is always specifically colored by the harvested experiences of the previous cycle. This kind of perpetual renewal is made possible by the infinite potentiality, or virgin ocean, of the primeval space, that enables a specific manifestation of each and every cycle.

⁴³ RUDHYAR, “Occult Preparations for a New Age”, http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/op/op_c10_p2.php, part 3, chapter 10, p. 2.

⁴⁴ RUDHYAR, “Occult Preparations for a New Age”, http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/op/op_c10_p2.php, part 3, chapter 10, p. 2.

⁴⁵ RUDHYAR, “Occult Preparations for a New Age”, http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/op/op_c10_p2.php, part 3, chapter 10, p. 2.

⁴⁶ RUDHYAR, “Occult Preparations for a New Age”, http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/op/op_c10_p2.php, part 3, chapter 10, p. 2.

(2.4) **The repotentialization and the virgin state**

In the next part, Rudhyar puts his thoughts in a metaphysical context. He speculates about the only possible inception of what we know as the universe as being about the road from potentiality to actuality, specifically about the emergence of “cosmic actuality” from the “metacosmic potentiality”.⁴⁷ As could be easily guessed, instead of the idea of god as a personal initiator of this mysterious act, Rudhyar suggests an alternative: “This metacosmic reservoir of potential energy may be significantly symbolized as an infinite Ocean of Potentiality.”⁴⁸ This ocean of potentiality is hard to fathom – while it cannot be described as “existing” in the usual sense, it can hardly be characterized as nonexistent. Rudhyar therefore speaks about “insistence” (as opposed to existence) in the sense of a latent or unmanifest state.⁴⁹ This state, whose dominant traits are unity or subjectivity, is not absolute but temporary: the states of manifested and unmanifested being are always relative in some sense and the core of their being is their mutual cyclical interaction marked by a changing ratio of the opposing principles which never completely cease to operate. It is important not to mistake the One (in the sense of wholeness) with the principle of unity. Wholeness in this sense is non-dualistic and it encompasses and transcends the relativity of the opposing forces of unity and diversity.

That means that there are two different basic trends in existence: firstly, the trend towards actualization, realization of potentiality, and repotentialization, i.e. the second entry to the ocean of potentiality. The second trend can manifest itself existentially as deliberate refraining to identify oneself with anything from the revealed world, whereas the first may manifest as a compassionate acts.

The appearance of man, especially as a conscious individual, announces that in the cyclical movement of the reality we are again approaching the “equinox” or the point of balance between the principle of unity and the principle of diversity. Subsequently, a period of dominance of the principle of subjectivity is to come – just as, as Rudhyar says, a seed of the next existence is formed in the period between death and another incarnation.⁵⁰

Part of human existence is thus formed by the ability of repotentialization, “a conscious and deliberate self-renewal.”⁵¹ The first requirement to reach this ability is the belief that it can be reached: “The first condition is to believe in the possibility of it.”⁵²

Depending on religious or metaphysical convictions consciousness “attunes” to what it perceives as a symbol of never-ending potentiality. In a mind that is able

⁴⁷ RUDHYAR, “Occult Preparations for a New Age”, http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/op/op_c11_p1.php, part 3, chapter 11, p. 1.

⁴⁸ RUDHYAR, “Occult Preparations for a New Age”, http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/op/op_c11_p1.php, part 3, chapter 11, p. 1.

⁴⁹ RUDHYAR, *Rhythm of Wholeness*, <http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/rw/>, part 2, chapter 4, page 1.

⁵⁰ RUDHYAR, *The Planetaryization of Coinsciousness*, p. 175–188.

⁵¹ RUDHYAR, “Occult Preparations for a New Age”, http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/op/op_c11_p2.php, part 3, chapter 11, p. 2.

⁵² RUDHYAR, “Occult Preparations for a New Age”, http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/op/op_c11_p2.php, part 3, chapter 11, p. 2.

to overcome the limitations of its past, “the divine grace” can cause a rebirth. By this means, the “sixth root race” of the Theosophist might arise – and Rudhyar connects this new step on the evolutionary path of mankind with the activation of the archetype of “Eternal Virgin”: “To the Occultist, SPACE, abstractly considered as the infinite ocean of potentiality, takes the idealized and mythic character of the Eternal Virgin, for the virginal state symbolizes the possibility of any future manifestation.”⁵³ The “Eternal Virgin” represents a potentiality that is able to embrace and realize the divine “logos” – and, in the form of a Mother, it devours potentiality and enforces actuality. “The Virgin and the Mother represent therefore two fundamental images or archetypes of womanhood. They are two basic aspects of the Eternal Feminine – symbols of potentiality and actuality.”⁵⁴

Whole societies can be characterized according to the principle they emphasize. After the reign of the mother that took place in the U.S. of the fifties, Rudhyar sees the revolt of the sixties as, among other things, a less successful attempt to “repotentialize”, that nevertheless tended to potentiality, mostly in the sense of reverting to a chaotic state. Rudhyar suggests an integration of these symbols – on the one hand we have the virgin, which is fully concentrated on future things, on the other we have the mother, entirely consumed by actuality. The virginal state thus means “a state of being in which the natural condition of productivity for exclusivistic goals implying possessiveness is transcended.”⁵⁵ We can say that the symbol refers to creative potential free from attachment. This type of virginity is not limited to women, but acts as a symbol of creative transpersonal activity: “A creative process occurs through him, rather than from him. If he does not remain attached to it, and possessive of it, he remains virginal.”⁵⁶

A man that gravitates towards the past would tend to look for a motherly type of woman, a man of the future would prefer a virginal one. She can be an inspiring Muse and “a Holy Sister upon the mystical Path.”⁵⁷

In a relationship of this kind, sex should be free of biological compulsion and the flame of passion would be transmuted to a spiritual light. “Such an alchemical, deeply quiet and unemotional process is, however, most difficult to accept or even to understand for vitally exuberant persons avid for orgiastic release, or for individuals tense with frustrations, tragic hurts, and perhaps guilt complexes.”⁵⁸ This process might even be dangerous for people like this – thence the understandable emphasis

⁵³ RUDHYAR, “Occult Preparations for a New Age”, http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/op/op_c11_p3.php, part 3, chapter 11, p. 3.

⁵⁴ RUDHYAR, “Occult Preparations for a New Age”, http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/op/op_c11_p3.php, part 3, chapter 11, p. 3.

⁵⁵ RUDHYAR, “Occult Preparations for a New Age”, http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/op/op_c11_p3.php, part 3, chapter 11, p. 3.

⁵⁶ RUDHYAR, “Occult Preparations for a New Age”, http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/op/op_c11_p4.php, part 3, chapter 11, p. 4.

⁵⁷ RUDHYAR, “Occult Preparations for a New Age”, http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/op/op_c11_p4.php, part 3, chapter 11, p. 4.

⁵⁸ RUDHYAR, “Occult Preparations for a New Age”, http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/op/op_c11_p4.php, part 3, chapter 11, p. 4.

on a vote of chastity in those relationships, which can protect the couple against isolation that comes with the egoistic lingering on erotic happiness.⁵⁹

If this kind of isolation is reached, sooner or later the cycle closes on the same level as it began – and the next one must also begin on the same level. “This is Samsara, the ever-resurgent urge to repeat the past, whether individually as a separate individual self, or collectively as a generation compelling the following generation by unconscious pressures and semi-hypnotic example to repeat its patterns or to rush rebelliously to the exact opposite, which is as compulsive and binding a procedure as unconscious imitation.”⁶⁰

The only possible alternative is a refusal to close the cycle in exhaustion combined with relentless and persistent repotentialization. It is “a breakthrough into the realm of those who, as brothers and sisters, exist in a state of ever-renewed potentiality and essential virginity which is indeed Nirvana, the condition of infinite latency from which all is possible and nothing is ever final or finished.”⁶¹ Although this state does not equal timelessness, it still differs from time, or, better said, it penetrates its core and its source. “We are time. Consciousness is time, cyclic, rhythmic, harmonic, whole in its divine condition, as an Eon.”⁶² Human confusion arises from the erroneous identification of a human with only one of the phases and not with the entirety of time: “We potentially are the whole cycle; more still we have in us the potentiality of always breaking through the fulfillment of any cycle into the vast measureless Movement which unceasingly calls forth new potential out of the infinite expanse of Virgin SPACE, within and from which all is possible.”⁶³ According to Rudhyar, the intent to escape from this movement and reach some kind of timelessness is illusory. “The now, lived in full concentration on the potentiality it is called upon to release as one phase of a vast cycle, is one with the cycle — IF the wholeness of the cycle is evoked and focused in the act here and now. This is avatarhood, divine manifestation. This is the transpersonal way.”⁶⁴

(2.5) Through crises – new beginnings

Finally, the author contemplates the problem that getting on the transpersonal path means a deep crisis of the individuality that heads towards transformation. A relationship with a real guru, which is associated with this kind of path, leads the pupil into a crisis, in which he is confronted with the karmic remains of the past. The har-

⁵⁹ RUDHYAR, “Occult Preparations for a New Age”, http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/op/op_c11_p5.php, part 3, chapter 11, p. 5.

⁶⁰ RUDHYAR, “Occult Preparations for a New Age”, http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/op/op_c11_p5.php, part 3, chapter 11, p. 5.

⁶¹ RUDHYAR, “Occult Preparations for a New Age”, http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/op/op_c11_p5.php, part 3, chapter 11, p. 5.

⁶² RUDHYAR, “Occult Preparations for a New Age”, http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/op/op_c11_p5.php, part 3, chapter 11, p. 5.

⁶³ RUDHYAR, “Occult Preparations for a New Age”, http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/op/op_c11_p5.php, part 3, chapter 11, p. 5.

⁶⁴ RUDHYAR, “Occult Preparations for a New Age”, http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/op/op_c11_p5.php, part 3, chapter 11, p. 5.

vest of the karmic past is directed to the pupil through the guru: in a similar way, the presence of an avatar among the people brings about a crisis. In the case of a strong individual a guru is not needed, since the crisis is triggered by life itself – although the Master is always present behind the scenes. “As the ship is left loose to brace the currents and storms of the immense sea of an astral realm that one can only reach through as well as beyond the solid physicality of our everyday world, the life of the self-consecrated individual produces radical crises. Crises are thresholds which one must pass through; what counts is the essential quality of the movement through.”⁶⁵ The success or failure is measured by the quality of being: the final decision consists in the moment, in which all the energies of the personality concentrate in one basic act of affirmation or refusal. This process always contains suffering – either the negative type, in which the ego struggles to hold things together by force, or a suffering that arises from the struggle against supremacy of the ego. This suffering is not a typical kind of pain – it is pain that the person lives through consciously. “He who is following the transpersonal Way and is definitely ready and intent upon entering the Path – the path of total transformation – can expect to travel with suffering as his companion. He has deliberately entered a process of transition.”⁶⁶

Thus the transition between two levels invariably contains suffering. According to Rudhyar, in the current era we are experiencing a transition of culture – first from the tribal state to the individual, since, as we already know, Rudhyar insists that in the case of most of people, the individual functions are developed only partially and imperfectly. Even this transition is marked by considerable tension. At the same time we are going through another complicated process, which is the development of transpersonal functions in those people that were able to finish their individualization and managed to surface from the collective substrate of their own ethnicity and culture. A person that sets out on the transpersonal path is exposed to one more type of suffering – he or she has affiliated his or her existence to a different level of consciousness and being, nevertheless the person still lives on the biological, social and individual level. Until he or she fully reaches the other side, the transpersonal life, he or she will still be a carrier of the previous levels of functions and thus will suffer from inner conflicts. Even though the process would probably never be possible to finish without the help of those who have already gone through it, the main share of work is reserved for the aspirant. “Yet, helped as he undoubtedly is, he alone must do the crossing; he alone must fight against the powerful current of material entropy, against overwhelming weariness, loneliness, and an insidious sense of futility.”⁶⁷ These efforts to transform are necessarily repetitive – it is necessary to keep beginning from scratch and, while in contact with the infinite potentiality, struggle to

⁶⁵ RUDHYAR, “Occult Preparations for a New Age”, http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/op/op_c12_p1.php, part 3, chapter 12, p. 1.

⁶⁶ RUDHYAR, “Occult Preparations for a New Age”, http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/op/op_c12_p1.php, part 3, chapter 12, p. 1.

⁶⁷ RUDHYAR, “Occult Preparations for a New Age”, http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/op/op_c12_p2.php, part 3, chapter 12, p. 2.

transform the wheel of infinite repetition of previous mistakes into a spiral, a symbol of openness to transformation. “The new possibility is always present; but the individual has to be ready with his unsheathed will. His hand does hold the sword, but the spirit, God, will move the hand if the man’s consciousness is ready and willing to let go. Then the goal will be struck.”⁶⁸ It is necessary to stay open to the unexpected and miraculous: “We must dare to summon the potentiality of an essentially new and, for us, unprecedented beginning.”⁶⁹ Those crises thus stimulate our openness to a new beginning – and the real risk is not in experiencing them, but in resignation, refusing the offer of transformation and settling down in the comfort of the familiarity and numbness of a dead past. “Courage, faith, and throughout the whole way, love, and clarity of mind: these are the essential requirements for whoever dares to enter the Path, the path of ever-renewed transformation.”⁷⁰

(3) **Transpersonality and mediumity**

Our goal to present Rudhyar’s concept of transpersonal life would remain incomplete if we fail to point out one more important aspect of this understanding of existence – that is its difference from a seemingly akin concept of mediumity. The difference between transpersonality and mediumity⁷¹ might be residual remains of past quarrels between Theosophy and Spiritualism; nevertheless, Rudhyar attributes a wider and more general meaning to it.

A transpersonal being, through which flows an influence of higher or fuller wholes, energies, or consciousness fields, must have some dispositions and capacities to make this influences possible. As Rudhyar comments: “A ‘transpersonal action’ can refer to the release through a person of either a stream of transformative energy, perhaps able to produce seemingly miraculous results, or of information not normally available to the present-day mind. Nevertheless, the person **through** whom the power or the information is released cannot be merely **anyone**, any more than a lens can be any piece of glass.”⁷²

Conversely, a medium lacks these dispositions, since unlike a really transpersonal individual, the medium is not an accomplished individuality, resembling more its shadow – it is a mere “shard” of the transpersonal individual’s crystal-clear lens. Rudhyar warns against the influence of this kind of seemingly transpersonal individual:

⁶⁸ RUDHYAR, “Occult Preparations for a New Age”, http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/op/op_c12_p2.php, part 3, chapter 12, p. 2.

⁶⁹ RUDHYAR, “Occult Preparations for a New Age”, http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/op/op_c12_p2.php, part 3, chapter 12, p. 2.

⁷⁰ RUDHYAR, “Occult Preparations for a New Age”, http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/op/op_c12_p2.php, part 3, chapter 12, p. 2.

⁷¹ RUDHYAR, *Rhythm of Wholeness*, <http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/rw/>, part 4, chapter 13, page 1–4.

⁷² RUDHYAR, *Rhythm of Wholeness*, <http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/rw/>, part 4, chapter 13, page 1–4.

“Above all the distinction between mediumistic ‘communications’ and transpersonal transmission [...] must be made clear. If this distinction is not made, the ideal of transpersonal living may become negative and potentially dangerous.”⁷³

Transpersonality, as opposed to mediumity, is not only characterized by activity, but also by a specific, altruistic motivation: “Relatively exact transpersonal communications from a Pleroma being to a ‘disciple’ occur only to the extent the receiving human personality has made himself or herself steadily **attuned** to the vibration and power of the spiritual Source, and also to the extent the **motive for accepting** the role as intermediary has been entirely free from ego, pride, and subtle self-glorification.”⁷⁴

We can summarize that Rudhyar’s transpersonality represents a complex outline of a spiritual life formed by ethical, cosmic and existential aspects. Transpersonal influence is, or should be, characterized by an active participation in the world’s affairs, since its motive is always the fulfillment of an actual need of a greater whole, but also by a kind of resignation – it is less of a voluntarist shaping of the surrounding actions and more listening to the nature, “dharma”, and uninterested acting in harmony with it. It seems that this type of concept is a kind of synthesis of the eastern “passivity” and contemplative immersion with the western “activity” and interest in the outward reality; a synthesis that Rudhyar, who was then 35 years old, already outlined in his first bigger treatise on his “philosophy of operative Wholeness.”⁷⁵ It seems that his concept of transpersonal life had the ambition to become the ethos and spirituality of the future mankind – and that it possibly aimed even higher. We shouldn’t be surprised that both in his early and late texts Rudhyar speaks of his philosophy, cautiously but undeniably, as being about a revelation of a new referential framework of reality, which is created through his work – and, consequently, through the personality of its creator.⁷⁶ We may add that Rudhyar was probably not the only one who attributed these transpersonal qualities to his influence. Rudhyar’s old friend, and one of the few direct followers, Michael M. Meyer writes about his first meeting with him: “As he spoke his voice rolled like thunder through the hall. The Tone of a mighty gong seemed to sound through Rudhyar; and my mind, being and consciousness resonated to it. The air, and our minds, vibrated with the spiritual power that seemed to flow through Rudhyar like light through a window. Everyone in the hall seemed utterly fascinated with Rudhyar. I realized I was encountering a living representative of the Community of Seers and Sages.”⁷⁷

⁷³ RUDHYAR, *Rhythm of Wholeness*, <http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/rw/>, part 4, chapter 13, page 1.

⁷⁴ RUDHYAR, *Rhythm of Wholeness*, <http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/rw/>, part 4, chapter 13, p. 2.

⁷⁵ DANE RUDHYAR, “A Philosophy of operative Wholeness” (online), *Khaldea.com*, 1995, accessed March 2016, available online at http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/pow_1.shtml.

⁷⁶ RUDHYAR, *Rhythm of Wholeness*, <http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/rw/>, part 1, chapter 1, page 6.

⁷⁷ MICHAEL MEYER, “Rudhyar – Friend, Exemplar and Sage” (online), *Khaldea.com*, 1995, accessed March 2016, available online at http://www.khaldea.com/articles/dr_fes.shtml.

(4) **Rudhyar in context: predecessors, associates and heirs**

Rudhyar lived a seemingly rich social life and maintained contact with a great many important artistic and spiritual movements of his time; nevertheless, when reading his many works and studying his life one can hardly avoid the impression that regardless of it all he was a very lonely type of thinker. Even though, in many ways, he was certainly a pioneer, he would never have been credited, however cautiously, in his life had he not live to an advanced age.⁷⁸ If we take into consideration his philosophical or spiritual heritage, he was probably closest to Theosophy; however, he never became a member of the Theosophical society and his respectful but nevertheless critical interpretation of Theosophy is hardly possible to be deemed orthodox. He influenced – directly or indirectly and, we might add, admittedly or unadmittedly – many authors, but he never founded his own school and there are only a few direct followers.

In this context, at least an intention to place Rudhyar in the wider context of the spiritual currents of the era may throw some light on the heritage of this curious lone wolf and autodidact. We must examine only those connections that closely relate to his concept of transpersonality; in another context we would certainly have to mention Western Philosophy and Psychology of the 19th and 20th centuries, Eastern thought, and a few artistic currents that either influenced Rudhyar or were influenced by him.

The single most obvious connection is the link between Rudhyar's legacy and Theosophy. In his youth, the author used to spend hours every day studying theosophical literature and we must admit that its influence in his works is undeniable. Reading Rudhyar's works parallel to the books of H. P. Blavatsky, we soon realize that instead of searching for more and more infinite parallels we might ask in which points Rudhyar actually differs from the founding figure of the Theosophical movement. He answers this himself in the mentioned book he dedicated to Theosophy. He understands the movement as a historically limited tradition and merely one of many spiritual traditions (in other words, he does not see it as a full articulation of a universal, perennial tradition). He does not see Blavatsky's detailed descriptions of cosmic and historic events as a literal account of what really happened, but more as a symbolic articulations that serve to develop the reader's sense for a universal cyclical process of cosmic adventure. In our context it is important that the model examples of "pleromatic" beings that, according to Rudhyar, act through transpersonal individuals may have been Blavatsky's "Masters". However, even in this case Rudhyar tends to understand these figures not as personifications or limited persons, but more like fields of consciousness. Therefore Rudhyar, in his concept of transpersonality, can also be understood as an unorthodox Theosophist, who tends to interpret the basic texts in a processual, symbolic, and metaphoric way. Michael Meyer also suggests that we could understand Rudhyar's interpretation of Theosophy as the "new, more inclusive message and world-

⁷⁸ Rudhyar lived to 90 years old and created his most famous works in his last years – his philosophical summa *Rhythm of Wholeness* was written in 1983, while the author died in 1985.

view would be needed, released and formulated during the last quarter of the 20th century,” that Blavatsky spoke about in the late years of her career.⁷⁹

In our context we can hardly avoid Rudhyar’s relationship to the later transpersonal movement. Rudhyar himself leaves little room to doubt that he somehow distanced himself from this movement and that his concept of the “transpersonal” (which is a neologism of his own, as he, perhaps without bitterness, but nevertheless emphatically and frequently reminds his readers)⁸⁰ is virtually the opposite of its later version. It seems that “transpersonality” in the sense of altered states of consciousness or a widening of the mind was for Rudhyar merely a part of “Mysticism”, which he sees as appropriate for some historical eras but in present times he finds it more or less obsolete, if not contrary to the current trend of evolution.⁸¹ This kind of disparity seems to be a common denominator that rules the relationship of Rudhyar and the authors of the transpersonal movement: if we consider the “Paths Beyond Ego: The Transpersonal Vision”⁸² as a typical representative of the movement, the reading confirms Rudhyar’s conviction that except for the term itself that the authors used, perhaps unknowingly, but in most cases certainly without quoting the source, his concept of transpersonality is entirely different from theirs. It is symptomatic that the mentioned book not only does not contain any of Rudhyar’s text or a mention of it, but that it fails to mention any of it in the extensive bibliography. As far as we know, this situation often repeats itself in the works of later transpersonalists.⁸³

On the contrary, there is a considerable and surprising likeness between Rudhyar’s concept of transpersonality and the idea of sacred tradition among his contemporaries – sometimes also his compatriots – from the Perennialism movement. The single most typical trait of this group of thinkers, which Rudhyar shares with them, is probably their belief that there is a universal sacred tradition.⁸⁴ This analogy is even more remarkable, since neither the traditionalists’ nor Rudhyar’s works show evidence they knew about each other. However, this interesting parallel in the key motif of sacred tradition is not to be overestimated: radical cultural pessimism and shared

⁷⁹ MEYER, “Rudhyar – Friend, Exemplar and Sage”, http://www.khaldea.com/articles/dr_fes.shtml.

⁸⁰ Rudhyar comments on this in his main work: “To my knowledge I was the first to use the term — though C. G. Jung may already have used it in German without my being aware of it — in an article in the magazine *The Glass Hive* (1930) edited by Will Levington Comfort. The word came into wider use in 1968 when Abraham Maslow, Anthony Sutich, and other psychologists started the Association for Transpersonal Psychology in Palo Alto, California.” RUDHYAR, *Rhythm of Wholeness*, <http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/rw/>, part 1, chapter 2, page 2.

⁸¹ RUDHYAR, “Human.All Too Human – And Beyond”, <http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/toohuman.shtml>.

⁸² ROGER WALSCH and FRANCES VAUGHAN (eds.), *Paths Beyond Ego: The Transpersonal Vision*, Los Angeles: J. P. Tarcher/Perigee, 1993, 293 p.

⁸³ This is seemingly confirmed by the program of the last Czech transpersonal conference (23th–24th April 2016 in Prague), which can still be accessed on the webpage <http://www.ctk2016.cz/> [29. 4. 2016]. The question of the relation between Rudhyar and those authors that use astrology and at the same self-identify as a part of the complex transpersonal movement of today (such as Richard Tarnas) is very complex and cannot be addressed in this article.

⁸⁴ WOUTER J. HANEGRAAFF (ed.), *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, Leiden, Boston: Brill 2006, p. 1132.

conviction, according to which the modern world is not a manifestation of evolutionary progress of humankind, but instead an abomination and a monstrous falling off the traditional character of human society, another core trait of the traditionalists, was shared by Rudhyar only in a limited manner.⁸⁵ Unlike the main representatives of traditionalism, he remained a historical optimist all his life, evolutionist – and, last but not least, also an essential democrat.

It seems Rudhyar could be also listed among the predecessors (and to some extent also associates) of the New Age movement. Although Rudhyar himself uttered some skeptical remarks towards the milieu and he is rarely counted among its representatives,⁸⁶ he could be linked to the movement as a successor of Theosophy, which is undoubtedly one of the main sources of the New Age movement, as an important co-creator of contemporary Astrology and a devotee of the holistic approach to reality and a herald of an upcoming “new age”. Even though we do find some important New Age motifs in Rudhyar’s works, it is notable that, for example, his concept of transpersonality as opposed to mediumity is possibly more directed against channeling, which is one of the core characteristics of the New Age,⁸⁷ than to the older Spiritualism. Rudhyar’s late works, in particular, might be interpreted in New Age terms – not as favorable towards the movement, but contrasting with it. Rudhyar’s relationship to the milieu is a paradox, since as a Theosophy-inspired author and an important Astrologer he somehow contributed to the origins and development of the movement. On the other hand, he might have tried to influence and cultivate it with his works.

This short and hardly comprehensive intent to put Rudhyar’s work and his concept of transpersonality at least in a basic context seems nevertheless to underscore the originality of our thinker and emphasize the impossibility to attribute him to some movement or other. Nevertheless, it may serve to indicate Rudhyar’s place on the spiritual map of the 20th century, which is, to a great extent, marked by his closer or more remote connections. If we stick to the metaphor, Rudhyar’s work more resembles an independent island that actively pursues contacts with its many neighbors than a single state in a large federative whole.

(5) Conclusion

As we have seen, Rudhyar’s concept of transpersonality represents a specific project of spiritual life, which is unrelated to later transpersonalism and which represents a core motif of his understanding of the existence of individuals, society, and hu-

⁸⁵ Nevertheless, Rudhyar sees this society as a failure too; see RUDHYAR, *Beyond Individualism*.

⁸⁶ In Wouter J. Hanegraaff’s vast monograph dedicated to the New Age movement there is, as far as I know, no mention of Rudhyar whatsoever. WOUTER J. HANEGRAAFF, *New Age religion and western culture in the mirror of secular thought*, New York: Brill 1996, 580 p.

⁸⁷ HANEGRAAFF, *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, p. 857; see also RUDHYAR, *Rhythm of Wholeness*, <http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/rw/>, part 4, chapter 13, page 1–4.

mankind as a biological species, but also of the cosmos as a conscious, alive, and organically interconnected whole, in which the evolution of both the individual and humanity as a whole has its irreplaceable function. If we see the history of thought and religious creativity of the past century as a quest for a new meaning of life and ontological security in a context of the disintegration of traditional religious world-views and the “disenchantment” of the world, we could understand Rudhyar’s concept of transpersonality precisely as the author’s intent to overcome the existential frustration of the late Modern society. This intent is essentially a very traditional or even somehow conservative concept of cosmically situated and ethically binding spirituality. The single most specific trait of this spirituality is the fact that, since he is largely (albeit critically) inspired by Theosophy, Rudhyar also includes in his thoughts ideas about the evolution of both humanity and the cosmos, while in his case an important role is played here by modern art.⁸⁸ This point shows probably the biggest tension in his thought: he sees transpersonality, which he describes with language pertaining to a supreme esoteric initiation, as the future of humanity itself. Esoteric initiation, which is traditionally reserved only for a few,⁸⁹ becomes a rite of passage, by means of which the future humanity – and contemporary vanguard – shall enter a new age. This represents a radical transformation, hard to imagine for a common mind, during which the earthly matter changes to light and the objective outside world disappears; this gives Rudhyar’s legacy a distinctly utopian or even apocalyptic feel. Transhistorical spiritual hierarchy of beings becomes in his works, such as in the writings of Blavatsky, an avant-garde of the forthcoming *historical* transformation.⁹⁰

However, Rudhyar’s concept of transpersonality also has its complications. The first question is how we are supposed to reach the goal Rudhyar speaks about; what are the means by which the man is transformed into a light and how the pleromatic communities are established. It is not clear how the step from the complicated and noble ethos of a “devoted service” to a completion of alchemical work or reaching Vajrayana’s diamond body should look like. We can learn from Rudhyar’s works that this is what is supposed to happen, nevertheless if we are to take Rudhyar’s program as seriously as he apparently did himself and if we are to try to reach somehow transpersonality itself, we find only a little inspiration in Rudhyar’s books for a project like this. It seems that the author supposed some kind of a spontaneous planetary mutation, which would happen who knows when – Rudhyar’s prognoses for the im-

⁸⁸ RUDHYAR, *The Planetarization of Consciousness*, p. 250.

⁸⁹ The meaning of “initiation” here equals René Guénon’s concept as presented, for example, in his work dedicated to this topic: RENÉ GUÉNON, *Aperçus sur l’Initiation*, Paris: Éditions Traditionnelles 1946, 303 p.

⁹⁰ Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke mentions analogical tension in H. P. Blavatsky’s work in his study of the concept of sacred tradition in Theosophical movement. See NICHOLAS GOODRICK-CLARKE, “The Coming of the Masters: The Evolutionary Reformulation of Spiritual Intermediaries in Modern Theosophy”, in ANDREAS B. KILCHER (ed.), *Constructing Tradition*, New York: Brill 2010, p. 113–160.

mediate future were mostly pessimistic.⁹¹ Rudhyar does not point the way towards how we are supposed to reach this both collective and individual necessary transformation – unless we count Astrology as a tool for transformation or transmutation. However, considering Astrology a sufficient tool to create results such as finishing the alchemical *opus magnum* or obtaining an indestructible body is very far-fetched even if we deem such radical transcendence of a profane human existence possible; in any case, no relevant tradition supports this claim.

Similarly problematic is Rudhyar's radical distinction between transpersonality and mediumity, which plays prominent role especially in his late works. The difficulty of distinguishing between the "crystal-clear ens" of a fully developed personality and a mere "shard" of the medium is well illustrated in H. P. Blavatsky's case. As it seems, Rudhyar took her unquestionably as an emissary of a "transhimalayan" occult brotherhood⁹² and a transpersonal being, and this distinction was probably inspired by the quarrels between Theosophy and Spiritualism anyway. On the other hand, even though H. P. Blavatsky was undoubtedly an inspiring personality, her teachings and inspirational sources may provoke some doubts and unease. In her case, to separate transpersonal influences from mediumity, or even fraud, if even possible, is hardly an easy task. A question arises as to whether it is even possible to recognize authenticity that stems from higher levels of existence (if, of course, we agree that it exists) without a connection to a specific spiritual tradition; similarly, it seems to be difficult to recognize the authenticity of an esoteric initiation without a proper and reliable succession of initiates. The history of the Theosophical movement and, on a larger scale, of Western Occultism as such, offers a great number of examples of how difficult this question may be.

The most problematic point of Rudhyar's thought is the meeting, or closest approach, point of the transhistorical verticality of esoteric tradition and the horizontality of history and evolution. In the case of Rudhyar's legacy, we not only face the question of to what extent his utopian, and at the same time eschatological, visions are even believable and how probable or even possible is their accomplishment, which, from the perspective of humanity of the third millennium BC, is just as hard to prove as to disprove. It seems that more important question relates to the coherence of Rudhyar's worldview as such. He spent most of his life trying to reestablish a sense for a cyclical nature of time and to replace the religiousness related to a transcendent personal god with different, cosmic, impersonal or transpersonal spirituality. The question is whether his intent to integrate evolution theory and the idea of some kind of progress apparent in the history of mankind did not allow his biggest enemy – linear time, finite or at least directed towards some kind of end – to creep up stealthily into his concept of cyclical time. It is possible that the idea of transpersonality as a *future of mankind* (and not as an initiatory transcendence of historical spatiotemporality

⁹¹ DANE RUDHYAR, "A Seed" (online), *Khaldea.com*, 1995, accessed March 2016, available online at <http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/seed.shtml/>.

⁹² RUDHYAR, "Occult Preparations for a New Age", http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/op/op_c6_p1.php, part 1, chapter 3, p. 1.

and transition to a radically different level of existence) is both the key to Rudhyar's system and its biggest weakness.

On the other hand, it is possible to approach not only these aspects of Rudhyar's legacy, but also the legacy itself, in the same manner as he himself approached the works of H. P. Blavatsky. It is possible that, just like her (at least in Rudhyar's interpretation), he also spoke particularly and deliberately to people with a specific mindset and worldview in order to change it – and after the transformation, the literal sense of his teachings would cease to be relevant. Rudhyar's philosophy of operative wholeness might have been conceived by its author as a phase which is necessary to pass through – and not as a rigid unchangeable system, but as one which would retain its validity even after it has been existentially adopted. The possibility of this interpretation seems to be suggested by Rudhyar himself at the very end of his *opus magnum*. He speaks about a long and difficult path of transformation, which questions the absolute truth of all the certainties and worldviews and on the top of which even the all-encompassing and universal infinite flow of transformations becomes relative.⁹³ If, despite the fact that his experience of incessant transformation was frequently the foundation of his thought, Rudhyar relativizes in his greatest work the transformation itself, it seems to point out that we should take seriously his statements that his writings should not serve as a source of information about the cosmos and mankind, but primarily as a matrix for an emergence of a new type of mind.⁹⁴ In other words: although it is certainly possible to analyze and interpret Rudhyar's concept of transpersonality, due to its nature any strictly theoretical approach necessarily fails to grasp it in its entirety.

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⁹³ RUDHYAR, *Rhythm of Wholeness*, <http://www.khaldea.com/rudhyar/rw/>, epilogue, page 1–2.

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Advertising and Methodology

What advertising has to teach us about (the study of) Thai Buddhism

Part one

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Abstract: In this paper I make proposals regarding further advances in the studies of Theravada Buddhism along the lines suggested by Justin McDaniel in his *The Lovelorn Ghost and the Magical Monk* (2011). The benefits of McDaniel's approach lie in his de-emphasis of doctrinal tradition and his focus on local frames of reference in explaining Thai Buddhism. Its faults lie in a disregard for the developments outside the socio-cultural paradigm. I argue for the integration of socio-cultural and naturalist approaches to the study of religion. Balancing the over-accentuation of the explanatory power of either socio-cultural or cognitive concepts, such integration would also permit a move from the socio-cultural metaphorical models to causal and more controlled explanations of religious phenomena.

I illustrate my suggestions through an example of a Thai *wat* (shrine/monastery). One of these suggestions, implied by the de-emphasis of the doctrinal tradition, is to recognize the predominantly advertising and ritualistic function of wats' visuals, effigies, and architecture rather than reading them as symbolic expressions of doctrinal tenets.

Keywords: Thailand, Buddhism, Theravada, Advertising, Wat, Shrine, Cognitive Science of Religion

Abstrakt: Ve svém článku se pokouším o další rozvinutí metodologie studia thajského buddhismu navrhnuté Justinem McDanielem v jeho knize *The Lovelorn Ghost and the Magical Monk* (2011). Pozitivem přístupu vypracovaného McDanielem je, že ve snaze osvětlit charakter thajského buddhismu přesouvá důraz ze studia doktrinální tradice na prvky lokálního kontextu. Negativem pak je opomíjení výsledků bádání a teoretických postupů souvisejících bezprostředně s jím navrhovanými řešeními, formulovanými však mimo standardní socio-kulturní paradigma. Na příkladu situace v thajském *watu* (klášter/svatyně) Thámai ilustruji možnou integraci socio-kulturních a naturalistických přístupů, která umožňuje postup od užitečných metafor socio-kulturních modelů ke kauzálním a více kontrolovatelným vysvětlením náboženských fenoménů a vyvažuje překentování explanační síly jak sociokulturních, tak kognitivních konceptů. Jedním z důležitých motivů, které bezprostředně vycházejí z metodologického odklonu od důrazu na doktrinální stránku při vysvětlování „žitě“ náboženské tradice, je potřeba rozoznat primárně reklamní a rituální charakter thajských buddhistických vizuálů, architektury a podobizen, které tradičnější přístup interpretuje jako symbolické vyjádření článků doktríny.

Klíčová slova: Thajsko, buddhismus, theravada, reklama, wat, svatyně, kognitivní religionistika

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Ludwig Wittgenstein once likened Philosophers to “little children, who first scribble random lines on a piece of paper with their pencils, and now ask an adult ‘What is that?’”¹ Anthropology involves similar scribbling of random lines, naming them “Buddhism”, “Animism”, “Christianity”, and the like and asking “WHERE is that?”

“Where” asks mostly about geographical and historical locations but sometimes it also has a conceptual dimension, an inquiry about the level of abstraction at which these concepts have meaning and explanatory power. Scholars of Theravāda Buddhism find the core of the tradition in its scriptural articulation of soteriology and ontology² which, as they believe, can be determined with reasonable precision; the canon’s ambiguity and traces of historical developments notwithstanding. Associated belief often holds that the doctrinal view is, in the real world, entertained by a “reflective few” and this “great tradition” serves scholars as a backdrop for an analysis of derivative forms of the “folk” or the “little” tradition.³ This view still dominates studies of Theravāda Buddhism. Indeed, there have always been disconcerting voices. Many of them, however, implicitly endorsed the model. When the late Thomas Kirsch complained about the clarity of employed definitions, he didn’t think that the criticism should also involve the concept of Buddhism. He maintained that scholars “recognize a degree of internal complexity in each of the two components [Buddhism, Animism], apparently the Buddhist one has been identified through a number of unambiguous criteria, while the non-Buddhist one seems to have a residual character. That is, any religious element not identifiable as Buddhist is classed as ‘non-Buddhist’ or ‘Animist’.”⁴ When Obeyesekere⁵ equated great tradition with canonical texts and idealized *sangha*, denying at the same time its social embodiment, he has attributed the two an unrealistic level of homogeneity creating thus a comparative background for the local “little traditions”. Tambiah, panning the concept of great tradition as “static and profoundly *a-historical*”,⁶ still mapped selected Buddhist texts on contingent historical, political, and social

¹ LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN, *Philosophical Occasions 1912–1951*, edited by JAMES KLAGGE and ALFRED NORDMAN, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing 1993, p. 193.

² BRIAN MORRIS, *Religion and Anthropology*, New York: Cambridge University Press 2006, 350 p.; RICHARD GOMBRICH, *How Buddhism Began: The Conditioned Genesis of the Early Teachings*, London, New York: Routledge 2006 (first published 1996), 180 p.; BAREND J. TERWIEL, *Monks and Magic: An Analysis of Religious Ceremonies in Central Thailand*, Third Revised edition, Bangkok: White Lotus 1994 (first published 1975), 302 p.; MELFORD E. SPIRO, *Buddhism and Society: A Great Tradition and its Burmese Vicissitudes*, Second expanded edition, Berkeley: University of California 1982 (first published 1970), 510 p.

³ Little traditions, as well as the processes through which they have evolved, have received various appellations (“syncretism”, “inspiring”, “localization”, “decentralization”, “hybridization”, etc.). When not synonymic the terms intend to capture cultural differences between these developments insignificant to this paper. I will therefore use the term “syncretism” throughout this text. “Hybridization”, as will be discussed later, is the only concept that cannot be substituted by “syncretism” as it is intended to limit the applicability of the two-traditions model.

⁴ THOMAS A. KIRSCH, “Complexity of Thai Religious System”, *The Journal of Asian Studies* 36 (2, 1977): p. 241–266.

⁵ GANANATH OBEYSEKERE, “The Great Tradition and the Little”, *The Journal of Asian Studies* 22 (2, 1963): p. 139–153.

⁶ STANLEY J. TAMBIAH, *Buddhism and the Spirit Cults in North-east Thailand*, Cambridge University Press 1970, p. 370. Emphasis original.

realities, assigning the texts the paradigmatic role of great tradition. As scholars have noted, Tambiah understood Buddhism as a “culturally sophisticated force impacting through time on local animistic worlds”,⁷ a view fully compatible with Thomas Kirsch’s metaphor of “upgrading”⁸ and revealing Tambiah’s vertical outlook: social reality produces texts reflective of their historical origins but when these conditions have faded over time the texts remain, as ideals looked up to by the little tradition.

Even more radical critics shy away from questioning the model’s theoretical feasibility and only claim that “social reality has *outgrown* this proposed model.”⁹ The proposed alternative to the outgrown model recognizes that the religious dynamic is no more fully describable in terms of “vertical” interactions between Theravāda institutions and doctrines on the one hand and folk religious practices on the other. It introduces a “third place” or “hybrid”, irreducible to any of the two components of the outdated syncretistic model. Quoting Bhaba, Kitiarsa explains:

“Here the transformational value of change lies in the re-articulation, or translation, of elements that are neither the One [...] nor the Other [...] but something else besides which contests the terms and territories of both’.¹⁰ In the third space, ‘something else besides’ is formed out of various components and elements with specific new sets of different meanings and connotations.”¹¹ As a new cultural reality the third space invalidates the preterit speculations about the eventual prevalence of one or the other component of the old model.¹² In the real world it represents a diversified market of religious practices which cannot be classified as “corrupted Buddhism” or “indigenous tradition”. However, here we also find “conventional Theravada Buddhism, state, and *Sangha* authorities” and “multi-original religious beliefs”¹³ as two separable, albeit not dominant, forces governing the religious dynamics.

The “WHERE”, in socio-culturally oriented Buddhist studies, thus doesn’t insinuate a doubting of “whether”. It fully affirms the existence, and only asks about spatio-temporal localizations. “Buddhism” is regarded a real category definable on the basis of doctrinal tenets. Exceptions to this view are very few.¹⁴ The most recent refusal

⁷ JAMES TAYLOR, “Cyber-Buddhism and Changing Urban Space in Thailand” (online), *Space and Culture* 6 (3, 2003; accessed May 2016): p. 292–308, available online at <http://sac.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/6/3/292>, p. 53.

⁸ TAYLOR, “Cyber-Buddhism and Changing Urban Space in Thailand”, p. 265. See also note 12.

⁹ PATTANA KITIARSA, “Beyond Syncretism: Hybridization of Popular Religion in Contemporary Thailand”, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 36 (3, 2005): p. 466. Emphasis mine.

¹⁰ HOMI K. BHABHA, “The commitment to theory”, *New Formations* 5 (1988): p. 13.

¹¹ KITIARSA, “Beyond Syncretism”, p. 468.

¹² “Kirsch once predicted that ‘the Buddhaization process’ would ‘upgrade’ Thai religion, facilitate the spread of Buddhism among Thai peoples and transform their religious and social system. Modernization in Thailand, he argued, served to emphasize ‘the central position of Buddhism in Thai religion and society and to elevate the level of religious sophistication within the *Sangha*’. However, this type of prophetic prediction is far from the reality. Since the 1990s, the *Sangha* has no longer been the sole authoritative force monitoring and handling Buddhist affairs.” KITIARSA, “Beyond Syncretism”, p. 464–465.

¹³ KITIARSA, “Beyond Syncretism”, p. 468.

¹⁴ For an exception see, for example, Rita Langer: “It seems to me that the Buddhist texts are as varied and rich as the practice: reaching from doctrinal lists to anecdotes and stories. They incor-

of the “old model” causing a splash in the field of studies of Thai Buddhism is Justin McDaniel’s book *The Lovelorn Ghost and the Magical Monk*¹⁵ which I will discuss in some detail presently.

A consistent criticism making an explicit claim that “‘Buddhism’ is not an essentialist category, and we cannot hope to reconstruct a coherent ‘Buddhist doctrine’ on the basis of literary documents,”¹⁶ however, has come from the cognitive studies of religion. Two issues are crucial to this argument:

First, that the high degree of religious canons’ interpretive flexibility prevents an unequivocal identification of traditions on the basis of their doctrinal tenets. As Scott Atran¹⁷ has pointed out, this view goes as back as to early rational and empirical philosophers such as Descartes (*Les Principes de la Philosophie*, 1681) and Hume (*An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, 1758). But it was Dan Sperber who revived the idea. Since his famous argument¹⁸ for the semi-propositional character of religious beliefs wherein the content is not always clearly understood but is believed to be true under a correct interpretation, many scholars have argued to the effect that religious representations include “complex concepts with no one clear representation, and involve inferential gaps, which means that people are often uncertain about the propositions that can be directly derived from religious statements they regard as being true,”¹⁹ it is therefore always possible to find radically new interpretations for religious beliefs which are challenged by some piece of evidence.”²⁰

Secondly, it has been pointed out that ethnography evidences only an insignificant interest of believers in doctrinal tenets.²¹ Without motivational impact the doctrine has little relevance in explaining actual religious views and practices.

As a result, “Buddhism”, “Hinduism”, “Christianity” and similar concepts can only be ascribed a taxonomical function. They are not concepts to explain anything. While it is legitimate to enlist “*paticcasamuppāda*”, “*anattā*”, “*sūnyatā*”, “*kamma*”, “*nibbāna*”,

porate ghosts, demons and other supernatural beings; they record the performance of miracles, the display of supernatural powers, and very moving stories. They give advice on how to reach meditational achievements as well as how to deal with everyday problems.” RITA LANGER, *Buddhist Rituals of Death and Rebirth: Contemporary Sri Lankan Practice and its Origins*, London, New York: Routledge 2007, p. 4–5.

¹⁵ JUSTIN T. MCDANIEL, *The Lovelorn Ghost and the Magical Monk*, New York: Columbia University Press 2011, 327 p.

¹⁶ ILKA PYYSÄINEN, *Supernatural Agents: Why We Believe in Souls, Gods, and Buddhas*, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press 2009, p. 137.

¹⁷ SCOTT ATRAN, *In Gods We Trust: The Evolutionary Landscape of Religion*, New York: Oxford University Press 2004, p. 94.

¹⁸ DAN SPERBER, *Rethinking Symbolism*, Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press 1975, 153 p.; DAN SPERBER, “Apparently Irrational Beliefs”, in MARTIN HOLLIS and STEVEN LUKES (eds.), *Rationality and Relativism*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers 1993 (first published 1983), p. 149–180.

¹⁹ PASCAL BOYER, *The Naturalness of Religious Ideas: A Cognitive Theory of Religion*, Berkeley: University of California Press 1994, p. 42–49.

²⁰ ILKA PYYSÄINEN, *How Religion Works. Towards and New Cognitive Science of Religion*, Brill 2003, p. 69–70.

²¹ See PASCAL BOYER, *Religion Explained: The Evolutionary Origins of Religious Thought*, New York: Basic Books 2001, 375 p.

and some other terms as pertaining to Buddhist doctrinal narrative it would be incorrect to claim that they define “Buddhism” as concepts with meaning unequivocally encoded in canonical texts and with direct impact on peoples’ lives.

The Pāli canon, works of art, or Buddhist philosophy play a marginal role in the lives of the Thais. Scholars approaching buildings, effigies, and visuals of Thai *wats* (shrine/monastery) as expressions of doctrinal tenets, a subject-matters of art-history or iconography capture only an extremely tiny fragment of their actual function.²² I will illustrate, through a case study of wat Thāmai (วัดท่าไผ่) in Samut Sakhon province, that tiny objects like car-stickers, billboards, banners, signs on the walls, “un-canonical” representations of the Buddha, and doctrinally unapproved practices are more potent sources for understanding Thai Buddhism than their frequent derogatory labelling as hapless symptoms of commercialism and commodification suggest. This is also an approach McDaniel advocates in his book.

In his *The Lovelorn Ghost* McDaniel has outlined a program for study of Thai Buddhism divorced from the assumptions of pure Buddhism, Hinduism, Animism or considerations of canonical traditions. Instead, he concentrates on local structures, emphasizing that the religious phenomena typically marginalized as unorthodox, commerce-driven or residual may in fact define mainstream religious tradition. Given the feeble presence of the Pāli canon in Thai religious history²³ this is a right move. Turning away from doctrinal tenets, McDaniel suggests reading religious phenomena as expressions of a system of local values or, as he calls it, “repertoire”. In his own words:

“Local repertoires are characterized, but not defined, by their emphasis on security, heritage, graciousness, and abundance (*khwaṃ plotphai* or *kan pongkan*, *moradok*, *udom sombun* [sic],²⁴ *khwaṃ sawatdiphap* or *kreng chai*). I do not see these as universal or static Thai values or traits, but they are relatively useful technologies of enactment or perhaps axiomatic modes of articulation that characterize the motivation of stagers, performers, fans, experts, and devotees of Thai Buddhist religions. They are heuristic categories that we should not assume participants in Thai Buddhist culture

²² There are exceptions but the described tendency is overwhelming. Even monks praised for their knowledge are usually approached for reasons other than clarification of philosophical intricacies, most often for the sake of a meritorious act.

²³ “There is little evidence that the Pali Canon was available to and accessible by the majority of Thais in, or previous to, 1902. The canon was rarely found as a set in one monastery, and the authoritative parts of the canon were not commonly agreed on at any time in Thai history.” JUSTIN T. MCDANIEL, “Buddhism in Thailand. Negotiating the Modern Age”, in STEPHEN C. BERKWITZ (ed.), *Buddhism in World Cultures: Comparative Perspectives*, Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO 2006, p. 103. See also JUSTIN T. MCDANIEL, *Gathering Leaves & Lifting Words: Histories of Buddhist Monastic Education in Laos and Thailand*, Seattle: University of Washington Press 2008, p. 102–103. Concerning the utilization of the available canonical text McDaniel argues that “Lao and Northern Thai teachers were not primarily concerned with transmitting whole canonical Pali Buddhist texts; rather, they drew Pali terms and phrases from a wide selection of canonical and extra-canonical texts in order to teach their own idea of Buddhism. Instead of transmitting an integral and received tradition, they took bits and pieces of the received tradition in service of their own local rituals, ethics, and social norms.” MCDANIEL, *Gathering Leaves & Lifting Words*, p. 121.

²⁴ McDaniel switches the Thai words for “graciousness” and “abundance” here.

necessarily would use to describe their own values but ones with which most would certainly agree. They are not foreign concepts but demotic modifiers. They might not be the ideal Buddhist values in which they are supposed to believe, but they help give shape and significance to what many Thais cherish and honor.”²⁵

He further proposes that the differential popularity of *wats*, monks and religious objects positively correlates with the degree to which they exhibit these values.²⁶

I agree that mapping religious representations and practices on the system of local values and cultural patterns is a more productive strategy than tracing their deviations from, or compliance with, authoritative but protean norms the believers have never heard of or attempted to understand. Thai *wats*, monks, lineages, religious objects, and sites are typically renowned for their idiosyncratic features, rituals, and powers advertised by variety of signifiers, and surely not for their ingenuity in representing doctrinal tenets. A casual glance at the doctrinal literacy of Thai Buddhists (laypeople or monastics) also indicates against interpreting all these objects and people as efficacious didactic symbols and agents. Yet, I also believe that McDaniel, locked in the socio-cultural methodological framework, misses an opportunity to articulate the new directions in the study of Thai Buddhism with force and clarity.

Neglecting independent anthropological and psychological studies, he derives the list of values from *his interpretation* of Thai texts, stories, gossips, and cultural habits which makes his argument overly subjective and, since most of his illustrations come from religious context, even circular. Discussing a famous monk’s choice of a protective chant he, for example, argues:

“We don’t know why Somdet To thought this particular text was so important. He could have picked a chant from the canonical *suttas* or even an Abhidhamma text. There is not a clear reason why he simply did not elevate a well-known protective (*paritta*) incantation like the *Rattana*, *Mora*, or *Maṅgala suttas*. It could have been that *Jinapañjara* mentions the seven most famous *paritta* texts. It could have been seen by him as superior because it invokes these texts, as well as the power of the Buddha, his eighty major disciples, and the total power of the *Dhamma* and the sangha. Here we certainly see the Thai values of abundance, security, and heritage. Perhaps he saw the *Jinapañjarai* as powerful because of its all-encompassing message.”²⁷

In fact, we don’t see any of that, let alone *certainly*, since McDaniel fails to provide indicators of the values. Not all instances of valuing a high quantity reflect the “value of abundance”. A student’s wish to obtain maximum points and score high on the final exam are hardly motivated by the “value of abundance”. Is the doctrine of the Trinity, postulating three persons instead of one an expression of the value of abundance? Or is it rather the Hindu pantheon with its uncounted number of deities? Its shrines housing a plethora of effigies? And how about the sober mosque with no effigies but “abundant” space? Do they all express the same value? How do we know?

²⁵ MCDANIEL, *The Lovelorn Ghost and the Magical Monk*, p. 13–14.

²⁶ MCDANIEL, *The Lovelorn Ghost and the Magical Monk*, p. 13.

²⁷ MCDANIEL, *The Lovelorn Ghost and the Magical Monk*, p. 88.

None of McDaniel's proposals is falsifiable. If he uses the fact that Somdet To was a vigorous producer of magical amulets to support his thesis,²⁸ should we count amulets other monks produce to compare them with their popularity? I know of too many largely unknown monks producing amounts of amulets to bother. For a large production and distribution of amulets to be even noted the monk has to be famous in the first place.

Similarly, pointing out that "Somdet To is described as handsome and physically impressive"²⁹ to illustrate the causal function of the value of "graciousness" amounts to determining arbitrarily the cause and effect. The characteristic of physical attractiveness could have been attributed to the elderly monk *because* he was famous and venerated rather than other way round.

Much of McDaniel's argument is plainly circular. He derives most of the values from religious context and then uses them to explain religious phenomena. Other statements are just truisms or tautologies as when he says that reciting protective verses reflects the value of security.

Certainly, in a good habit of many socio-cultural or "postmodern" writers, he hedges himself against criticism by declaring that "readers of the following chapters may see my evidence as invoking other values. Indeed, I hope that readers will take the evidence I provide as a platform on which to debate the nature of Thai Buddhist ethics or even the very idea that there is a 'Thai way' of being Buddhist."³⁰

Since McDaniel doesn't spell out the circumstances under which an alternative reading of the evidence is possible, it amounts to "anything goes". And there where anything goes can be many voices but surely no discussion.

As key explanatory concepts, the "values" to be convincingly asserted require more than a "reading of [...] idiosyncratic narratives."³¹

In the light of the Thais' preoccupation with their own "nature" and the system of values McDaniel's neglect of independent researches on the Thais' value system is particularly conspicuous. A vast amount of studies and comments on "Thainess", scholarly, professional, and amateurish, has sprouted out of this concern. Constructing a national identity, "Thaification", has figured high on the political agenda since the early twentieth century. Also in this context, the National Identity Board was established in 1980 and as Simpson and Thammasathien observe, "the level of concern about Thai national identity remains very high and there is constant public discussion of the identity issues".³²

²⁸ MCDANIEL, *The Lovelorn Ghost and the Magical Monk*, p. 67.

²⁹ MCDANIEL, *The Lovelorn Ghost and the Magical Monk*, p. 68.

³⁰ MCDANIEL, *The Lovelorn Ghost and the Magical Monk*, p. 14.

³¹ MCDANIEL, *The Lovelorn Ghost and the Magical Monk*, p. 15.

³² ANDREW SIMPSON and NOI THAMMASATHIEN, "Laos and Thailand", in ANDREW SIMPSON (ed.), *Language and National Identity in Asia*, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press 2007, p. 406.

The second problem with McDaniel's interpretation is that while he sets out to answer the questions "Why are some monasteries much busier than others? Why are some monks much more famous than others? Why did certain liturgies, rituals, texts, images, amulets persist and other disappear? [...] What do most Buddhists do?"³³ McDaniel fails to take into account the general cognitive constraints on transmission of cultural representations.

Three basic corrections thus follow from these observations if we are to advance along the suggested line of analysis: 1. placing socio-cultural explanations of cultural representations into a broader cognitive framework, 2. triangulating postulated cultural values and patterns,³⁴ and 3. since the structural correlations between cultural values and the studied religious phenomena do not *explain* these phenomena, a formulation of a causal theory explaining the correlations. As Melford Spiro summarized the last point some time ago, "[t]hose structural accounts that delineate the configuration in, or relationships among, a set of sociocultural variables are essentially descriptive rather than explanatory – unless of course some theory, causal or functional, is offered to explain the configuration."³⁵

To illustrate this point: socio-cultural accounts typically operate on an abstract "Buddhism – animism" level of analysis. Terwiel³⁶ thus, for example, explains Thai "syncretistic" or "magico-animistic" Buddhism as a result of filtering Buddhist tenets through the selective matrix of "magico-animism". This, obviously, is not an explanation but a metaphor and whatever epistemic importance of metaphors, nothing in how "Buddhism" or "magico-animism" are, or can be, defined suggests *how* "animism" executes this power and why "those aspects of religious culture that have been the *least* publicly institutionalized or supported, those that are the least modern and rational, are those that seem most capable surviving radical social and political change?"³⁷

If institutionalization is supposed to stabilize mental and public religious representations and still it is the least institutionalized traditions that survive social and political changes, Holt's question – saved from its trivial rendering "why are social

³³ MCDANIEL, *The Lovelorn Ghost and the Magical Monk*, p. 6.

³⁴ Values will be understood throughout the text as "choice preference and conception of the desirable" (SUNTAREE KOMIN, *Psychology of Thai People: Values and Behavioral Patterns*, Bangkok: NIDA 1990, p. 21) and patterns as behavioral habits unrelated to any specific, consciously held value system.

³⁵ MELFORD E. SPIRO, "Religion: Problems of definition and Explanation", in MICHAEL BANTON (ed.), *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion*. London, New York: Routledge 2004 (first published 1966), p. 100.

³⁶ BARENDT J. TERWIEL, "A Model for the Study of Thai Buddhism", *The Journal of Asian Studies* 35 (3, 1976): p. 391–403; TERWIEL, *Monks and Magic*, 302 p.

³⁷ CLIFFORD HOLT, *Spirits of Place: Buddhism and Lao Religious Culture*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii 2009, p. 16; emphasis original. Some scholars, e.g., Holt, explain these interactions in more concrete socio-political terms. Holt identifies the Buddhist resistance to corrosive influence of animism with the power of the monarchy – the main vehicle of Buddhism in Theravāda countries. But he doesn't explain the mechanisms through which "animism" constantly threatens the "purity" of Buddhism.

institutions threatened by abrupt social changes?” – indicates cognitive and other psychological structures underlying socio-cultural stabilizing dints. Separating culture from its psychological and biological embedding prevents the step from metaphorical to real causal explanation of religious dynamics.³⁸ The cognitive science of religion can equip socio-cultural models with an important set of causal explanations³⁹ though, of course, a cultural-level analysis of concepts and cultural model’s mutual reinforcing and immunization against these general cognitive constraints is possible and much desired. But it requires much subtler than the Buddhism-Animism conceptual schema.⁴⁰ More refined conceptual analysis may permit linking specific cultural representations with more fundamental general psychological drives and thus explain the former’s motivational function.⁴¹

Attempts at integrating general cognitive and culture specific explanations have mostly been made by cognitive scientists.⁴² Socio-cultural scholarship remains adamant in its paradoxical “anti-reductionist’ methodological exclusivism”, particularly for studies of Theravāda, but I believe we can generalize this to a much wider area.

I am not going to argue from the perspective of cognitive science of religion; indeed, there is not a universal consensus and the cognitive science of religion is a complex and constantly evolving field.⁴³ However, I want seriously consider its “basic claim about the constraining influence of everyday cognitive functioning upon religion”.⁴⁴ What I am going to say will resonate with ideas variously articulated by scholars such as Sorensen, Barrett, Barrett, Talmont-Kaminski, Jensen,

³⁸ See also PASCAL BOYER, “Cognitive Aspects of Religious Symbolism”, in PASCAL BOYER (ed.), *Cognitive Aspects of Religious Symbolism*, Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press 1993, p. 4–47.

³⁹ While historical studies of religion can, in turn, supply material for testing and refining cognitive theories. See e.g., THOMAS LAWSON, “Explanatory Pluralism and the Cognitive Science of Religion”, in DMITRIS XYGALATAS and WILLIAM W. McCORKLE JR. (eds.) *Mental Culture. Classical Social Theory and the Cognitive Science of Religion*, Durham: Acumen 2013, p. 11–32; or DAVID SLOAN WILSON, *Darwin’s Cathedral: Evolution, Religion, and the Nature of Society*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 2002, 268 p.

⁴⁰ See e.g. JESPER SØRENSEN, “Religion, Evolution, and the Immunology of Cultural Systems”, *Evolution and Cognition* 2 10 (1, 2004): p. 61–73.

⁴¹ See ROY G. D’ANDRADE, “Schemas and Motivations”, in ROY G. D’ANDRADE and CLAUDIA STRAUSS (eds.), *Human motives and Cultural Models*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1997 (first published 1992), p. 23–44.

⁴² William Paden is one of a very few notable exceptions here. WILLIAM E. PADEN, “Connecting with Evolutionary Models”, in VILLI BRAUN and RUSSELL T. MCCUTCHEON (eds.), *Introducing Religion. Essays in Honor of Jonathan Z. Smith*, London, Oakville: Equinox Publishing 2008, p. 416–417; WILLIAM E. PADEN, “The Prestige of the Gods: Evolutionary Continuities in the Formation of Sacred Objects”, in ARMIN W. GEERTZ (ed.), *Origins of Religion, Cognition and Culture*, Durham: Acumen 2013, p. 82–97; WILLIAM E. PADEN, *New Patterns for Comparative Religion: Passages to an Evolutionary Perspective*, London, New York: Bloomsbury Academic 2016, 253 p.

⁴³ LÉON TURNER, “Introduction: Pluralism and Complexity in the Evolutionary Cognitive Science of Religion”, in FRASER WATTS and LÉON TURNER, *Evolution Religion and Cognitive Science. Critical and Constrictive Essays*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2014, p. 12.

⁴⁴ TURNER, “Introduction”, p. 2.

Sloane Wilson and other cognitive scientists⁴⁵ who recognize culture's causal value.⁴⁶ My proposals are informed by a general idea that three interacting domains: external environment, innate cognitive schemes, and learned cultural patterns form a 'multilayered adaptive landscape'⁴⁷ which determines the cultural success of novel religious phenomena. Novel religious practices that resonate to elements of these domains, such as established religious practices, conceptual structures, cultural patterns, general cognitive constraints, environmental and economic needs, etc., are, *ceteris paribus*, better equipped for surviving the process of cultural transmission than others. In other words, novel cultural practices can be "stabilized by dint of cultural mechanisms and cognitive by-products."⁴⁸ An advantage of this model is that by placing cultural elements among two other components of the "adaptive landscape" it moderates the scholar's tendency to over-emphasize their explanatory force. Otherwise it is a very general and, indeed, unsurprising idea. Its more interesting development is investigating what precisely "to resonate" means, what these structures are, and how exactly they influence the stability of religious phenomena. This is a grand interdisciplinary enterprise, only starting to assume its shape. The project involves a scale of complex issues ranging from, "nature-nurture" relationship, maturationally and practiced natural cognitions, culture-specific behavioral patterns and values, dynamics of concepts and conceptual systems' coalescing and many others. I am able to touch upon this issue only in a rather unsystematic way, after making two pragmatic decisions.

Research indicates a relatively stable influence of cognitive constraints on religious representations across local contexts.⁴⁹ In this light I will understand the constraints

⁴⁵ SORENSEN, *Religion, Evolution and the Immunology of Cultural Systems*, p. 61–73; JUSTIN L. BARRETT, "Theological Correctness: Cognitive Constraints and the Study of Religion", *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 11 (4, 1999): p. 325–339; NATHANIEL F. BARRETT, "Toward an Alternative Evolutionary Theory of Religion: Looking Past Computational Evolutionary Psychology to a Wider Field of Possibilities", *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 78 (3, 2010): p. 583–621; KONRAD TALMONT-KAMINSKI, *Religion as Magical Ideology: How the Supernatural Reflects Rationality*, Durham: Acumen 2013, 160 p.; JEPPE S. JENSEN, "Framing Religious Narrative: Cognition and Culture Theoretically", in ARMIN W. GEERTZ and JEPPE S. JENSEN (eds.), *Religious Narrative, Cognition and Culture: Image and Word in the Mind of Narrative*, London, Oakville: Equinox 2011, 336 p.; SLOAN WILSON, *Darwin's Cathedral*, 268 p.

⁴⁶ Culture will be understood here as "information capable of affecting individuals' behavior that they acquire from other members of their species throughout teaching, imitation, and other forms of social transmission." PETER J. RICHERSON and ROBERT BOYD, *Not by Genes Alone: How Culture Transforms Human Evolution*, The University of Chicago Press 2006 (first published 2005), 332 p.

⁴⁷ "The term 'multilayered adaptive landscape' is used here to capture both the massive evolutionary background of human experience and its constant fluidity. On the one hand it is intended to convey the vast depths of inorganic, organic, cultural, social, and semiotic structures that underlie and shape the contours of experience. On the other hand, it is intended to convey the interactive nature of experience as a dynamic process[.]" BARRETT, "Toward an Alternative Evolutionary Theory of Religion", p. 603.

⁴⁸ TALMONT-KAMINSKI, *Religion as Magical Ideology*, p. 8.

⁴⁹ BOYER, *The Naturalness of Religious Ideas*, 324 p.; BOYER, *Religion Explained*, 375 p.; PASCAL BOYER, *The Fracture of an Illusion: Science and the Dissolution of Religion*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2011, 112 p.; PASCAL BOYER and CHARLES RAMBLE: "Cognitive Templates for Reli-

as a broad frame embedding and interacting with specific cultural determinants. I believe that by specification of various cultural frameworks, with an eye on limitations posed by cognitive constraints,⁵⁰ it can be possible to describe, with reasonable precision, complex causal embedding of particular religious phenomena.

Secondly, since McDaniel's study develops around isomorphism between cultural values and characters of religious objects, practices, and personages, I will also focus on isomorphism between religious phenomena and the adaptive landscape as one possible stabilizing principle. The decision, however, is not merely pragmatic. It is feasible that similarity with established cultural patterns makes a religious practice or idea seem familiar, feel natural, and thus increase its chances at recall, perpetuation, and attribution of efficacy. Besides, *if* these patterns are adaptations, the novel practice reinforces them and increases thus the host culture and its own chances to survive.⁵¹

Seeing the wat

A Thai *wat* is usually a vivid compound bursting with buildings, effigies, structures, visuals, natural objects, and signs untamed by official rules of arrangement. Scholars typically divide this multitude into two basic areas – the “monks’ place” (P. *sanghāvāsa*; T. *sanghāvāt*, สังฆาวาส) and “the Buddha’s place” (P. *buddhāvāsa*; T. *phutthāvāt*, พุทธาวาส). The former consists primarily of monks’ dormitories and the *uposatha* hall (T. *bōt*, โบสถ์) – the place where the ordination ceremony and fortnightly recitation of monastic rules (P. *pātimokkha*, T. *pāthimōk*, ปาฏิโมกข์) takes place. It also marks the difference between the regular *wat* and a monastic residence – T. *sammak song* (สำนักสงฆ์).

Buddhāvāsa, on the other hand, is dedicated to public ceremonies.⁵² It comprises the main *stūpa* and *vihāra* – the building typically housing the principal Buddha image. Swearer, noting that the above division is not universal, highlights the structural relationship between the *stūpa* enshrining relics and the main Buddha image, which

religious Concepts: Cross-cultural Evidence for Recall of Counter-intuitive Representations”, *Cognitive Science* 25 (2001): p. 535–564.

⁵⁰ It means that if, for example, a phenomenon is explainable on the level of cognitive determinants, a cultural explanation will relate only to its particular form, not its occurrence and persistence. In principle cultural forces can offset the cognitive constraints, such as when extra-cranial media can store and transmit cognitively costly concepts unfit for successful transmission. But these cases must be compatible with general cognitive theories.

⁵¹ In principle every anthropological theory proposes a wider “background” which stabilizes studied phenomena. In Terwiel’s account discussed above the similarity with “animistic” beliefs makes certain aspects of Theravāda Buddhism more stable. However, the character of these backgrounds may differ dramatically with regard to their actual explanatory power.

⁵² See PIERRE RICHARD, “The Thai Monastery”, in PIERRE PICHARD and FRANÇOIS LAGIRARDE (eds.), *The Buddhist Monastery: A Cross-Cultural Survey*, Paris: École française d’extrême-orient 2003, p. 105–110; DONALD K. SWEARER, *Becoming the Buddha: The ritual of Image Consecration in Thailand*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass 2004, p. 32.

in some Thai *wats* stand next to each other as “correlative signs of the Buddha’s presence”.⁵³ As he explains:

“In Thai *wats* a mutually symbiotic relationship pertains between reliquary and image, although the close association between *stūpa* enshrined relics and temple images is not unique to Thailand.”⁵⁴ “Architecturally, *chedī* and image hall within the Thai Buddhist *wat* share an axial proximity.”⁵⁵ Since the *stūpa* enshrines relics its primary function is to make the Buddha indexically present through physical connection with the historical Buddha. This re-presenting function of the *stūpa* is strengthened by its spatial proximity to the main visual representation of the Buddha – the principal Buddha statue. Also O’Connor, as quoted in Pichard,⁵⁶ reports that it is prevailingly the principal Buddha’s image that monks consider the most sacred place in the *wat*, though some of them give as the holiest place the *stūpa* (T. *chedī*, เจดีย์).

Two ripples spoil the clear account. The first one is doubtful claim of the universal centrality of the Buddha image and “Buddhist” ritual practices. McDaniel notes, with regard to the *wat* he had studied, that “it is becoming hard to tell if Buddha images in *wat* Mahabbut are drawing legitimacy from Mae Nak or vice versa”.⁵⁷

Secondly, it is not clear where, given the absence of an officially sanctioned or universally accepted layout of Thai *wat*, these arrangements are encoded. Who, apart from scholars, sees them in the described way? Only a few of my informants knew, or recognized in any practical sense, the distinction between *sanghāwāt* and *phutthāwāt*, and I have met no one aware of the structural relation between the *stūpa* and the principal statue of the Buddha described by Swearer.

The belief in a stable meaning behind the standardized religious behavior has been misdirecting studies of religion for long decades. Ritual is probably the most telling example⁵⁸ but the same holds true for other facets of religion. Take for example the Buddhist soteriology. Buddhist texts provide a mass of intricate ontological rationales for the soteric value of meditation by describing how the “outside” world depends on our epistemic structures. But these conceptions are totally ignored in actual meditative practice. Virtually no Thai monastic or lay meditators are familiar with this conceptual underpinning of meditation, and the practice is being perpetuated without its help. Buddhist philosophy, simply, is more “philosophy” than “Buddhist” and the doctrinal *meaning* is not where the believers’ acts make the best *sense*.⁵⁹

⁵³ SWEARER, *Becoming the Buddha*, p. 35–45.

⁵⁴ SWEARER, *Becoming the Buddha*, p. 35.

⁵⁵ SWEARER, *Becoming the Buddha*, p. 38.

⁵⁶ PICHARD, “The Thai Monastery”, p. 103.

⁵⁷ JUSTIN M. MCDANIEL, “The Agency between Images: The Relationship among Ghosts, Corpses, Monks, and Deities at a Buddhist Monastery in Thailand”, a talk given at the *International Conference: Buddhist Narrative in Asia and Beyond*. 9–11 August 2010, Bangkok Thailand (transcript), p. 4. Mae Nāk (แม่มนาค) is a famous Thai ghost believed to be buried in the *wat*, and worshiped there.

⁵⁸ BOYER, *The Fracture of an Illusion*, 112 p.

⁵⁹ I am not suggesting that ritual doesn’t evoke any “reading” from part of the participants. Only that this reading is not necessarily identical with its doctrinal explanation.

Visitors come to a wat to participate in this or that ritual and/or to find “peace of mind”. Altogether these are activities revolving around objects other than those studied by art historians, theologians, or students of Buddhist philosophy. Except for great annual festivals such visits are irregular and a matter of immediate needs. Since neither the ritual complexes nor the institution of the wat itself imply a regular attendance it becomes understandable that creating and advertising opportunities to fulfill these needs will stay higher on *wats*’ agenda than doctrinal education.

Advertising versus propaganda

The distinction between advertising and propaganda which I will keep throughout the text reflects the difference between universal and local frames of reference. Propaganda, concerned with conversion and reinforcing ideology promotes abstract ideas while advertising, highlighting the local opportunities to act within these established systems, points to local objects and events.

Let’s take an example. The large billboard by the road from the Suvarnabhumi airport in Bangkok, a product of the “5000s” organization, reads “To use Buddha as a decoration or tattoo means no respect. Don’t sell or buy Buddha” and “It is wrong to use Buddha as decoration or tattoo”, illustrates propaganda. The billboard states what is right and wrong and attempts to change people’s attitude towards Buddha images. Monks’ appearance falls into the same category. Seemingly a trifling matter has persistently been a key concern of the Buddhist sangha. As a scholar has noted “This issue is essential because the dignity and aloofness of the monk is linked to how he looks and how he behaves.”⁶⁰ Economic dependency of the *sangha* on laity had made it imperative that “the monks had to be, or at least appear as, pure and distinguished individuals.”⁶¹ With growing extrinsic motivations for entering the *sangha* the importance of monks’ appearance has also increased. As it is specific values – unity, trustfulness, moderation, peacefulness, non-confrontation – that the monks’ appearance promotes it also represents propaganda. A nun (T. *maechi*, แม่ชี) explaining the importance of the monks and nuns’ proper comportment expresses the same idea: “We have to think about society because many of them come and stay here. So we must be careful in order to give them faith in Buddhism. Suppose they think that *phra* [monks] and *mae chee* sitting like this is not good then we’ll have been the cause of them losing faith in Buddhism. If we stay in the monastery we can relax a bit because we know that there is no danger, but if a lay person is watching we must be careful because of them.”⁶²

⁶⁰ TORSEL BREKKE, *Religious Motivation and the Origins of Buddhism: A Social-Psychological Exploration of the Origins of a World Religion*, London, New York: Routledge 2002, p. 39.

⁶¹ BREKKE, *Religious Motivation and the Origins of Buddhism*, p. 26.

⁶² JOANNA COOK, *Meditation in Modern Buddhism: Renunciation and Change in Thai Monastic Life*, Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press 2010, p. 131.

That advertising, as defined here, enjoys a much stronger presence in the Thai religious context than propaganda underlies the primarily local focus of Thai Buddhism and underscores the importance of the local frame of reference for understanding this “universal religion”. Here are a few examples of public religious representations highlighting “transitory locals” rather than “enduring ultimates”: the images of the Buddha on billboards, posters or banners are virtually always photographs or pictures of particular Buddha statues, not representations of the Buddha as a historical or mythological figure. These visuals remind us primarily of the places where the statues reside and the powers they inhere. The principal Buddha statues at *wats* are often individualized by some visual detail by which they are often known (red lips, sunglasses),⁶³ likings for a specific kind of offering (boiled eggs, small dancing figures), stories of their origin or installation, and specific powers they wield. Famous Buddha statues are replicated over and over again, thus representing across time and space not the Buddha himself but the particular effigy. McDaniel also notes that “people are so dedicated to certain images that they actually sacrifice themselves or harm themselves to honor the image.”⁶⁴

Not only Buddha statues, but also pictures of famous Thai monks outstrip the representations of the Buddha in terms of their presence across the Thai visual landscape.

The universal symbolic codes studied by the Iconography “identifying types of visual motifs and attributing particular meanings to them”⁶⁵ are in practical context offset by the objects’ idiosyncratic features. The legitimacy of these effigies, the fact that they are installed, worshiped, or even noted, may depend on very local conditions, their associations with other effigies or sources of supernatural powers.⁶⁶

With this distinction in mind we can have a look at some specific examples of Thai religious advertising.

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⁶³ Thus for example wat Phrāmani (วัดพราหมณ์) is better known as wat Luangpō Pākdaeng (หลวงพ่อบ้าแดง) due to the red-painted lips (*pākdaeng*) of its principal Buddha statue.

⁶⁴ MCDANIEL, *The Lovelorn Ghost and the Magical Monk*, p. 167. McDaniel doesn’t explain what kind of self-sacrifice he has in mind. I am unfamiliar with human self-sacrifice in honor of the statue of Buddha in the contemporary history though royal chronicles and decrees of King Mongkut (r. 1851–1868) record such acts.

⁶⁵ MARION G. MÜLLER, “Iconography and Iconology as a Visual Method and Approach”, in ERIC MARGOLIS and LUC PAUWELS (eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Visual Research Methods*, Los Angeles: Sage Publications Ltd. 2011, p. 288.

⁶⁶ See MCDANIEL, *The Lovelorn Ghost and the Magical Monk*, esp. chapter 4.

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Zdeněk R. Nešpor, Zdeněk Vojtíšek: Encyklopedie menších křesťanských církví v České republice, Karolinum, Praha, 2015

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The Encyclopaedia of Smaller Christian Churches in the Czech Republic is a very unique book. In fact, it is a library in one volume. The authors gathered a rather impressive amount of very detailed data documenting the history, theological profiles, church buildings and contemporary life of all 27 accredited smaller Christian ecclesial bodies present in the Czech Republic: Adventists, Apostolic Church, Armenian Apostolic Church, Baptists, Church of Brethren, Church of Faith, Church of the Living God, Church of New Hope, Church of New Life, Christian Assemblies, Christian Community, Congregations of Brethren, Jehovah's Witnesses, Latter Day Saints, Lutheran Church, Lutheran Protestant Church, Methodists, New Apostolic Church, Oasis Church, Old Catholic Church, Orthodox Church, Russian Orthodox Church, Salvation Army, Unitarians, Unity of Brethren, Unity of Brethren within the Protestant Church of Czech Brethren, and Word of Life. There are only four churches missing from the group of all Christian denominations officially recognized by the state – the four most 'established' ones: Roman Catholic Church, Protestant Church of Czech Brethren, Czechoslovak Hussite Church and Silesian Lutheran Church.

The encyclopaedia is the first comprehensive compendium of information on this particular sphere of religious life in the Czech Republic. The authors used all the available scholarly literature, but they also conducted their own archive research and interacted intensely with the representatives of all the mentioned churches. They also took photos of church buildings and gathering places of all the denominations. Apart from the encyclopaedic presentation of all the churches in alphabetical order, the book also contains extensive topical chapters on the major streams of Christianity (Z. R. Nešpor), the Evangelical Movement (Z. Vojtíšek), the historical development of small size churches over the last hundred years (Z. R. Nešpor), and sacred architecture of small size churches in the Czech Republic (B. Altová).

Alongside the data provided in the encyclopaedic part of the volume, there are also surveys of statistical results concerning ecclesial affiliations in specific districts, covering the period of time between 1880 and 2011. The structure of all the encyclopaedic entries follows the following pattern: they begin with general information about the history of the given church, always with regard to its international context. The following part of each entry offers an analysis of the theological profile of the church and the characteristic features of its religious life. The last section provides statistical, geographical and historical data concerning all existing local congregations

and other organisational units. Each entry comes with a list of relevant literature for further study.

The great strengths of this encyclopaedia may also be viewed as its potential weaknesses. The impressive scope of the book brings together a large number of religious entities, some of which do not have much in common. Since the main criterion for inclusion has been a very vague attribute of size (besides the two other criteria: being officially registered by the state and belonging somehow to the “family” of Christian churches), the 27 ecclesial bodies included in the encyclopaedia comprise a very heterogeneous group. Alongside denominations with many centuries of rich history, we find new religious movements, which have emerged relatively recently. Alongside standard Christian denominations, there are also groups such as the Latter Day Saints or the Jehovah’s Witnesses – and whether these belong to the Christian ecumenical movement is a matter of considerable dispute. Alongside ecclesial bodies which came into existence as splinter groups leaving their parental denomination (sometimes due to religiously irrelevant organisational tensions), we find churches of an autonomous origin and relatively independent history. Alongside Czech branches of large international movements, we find uniquely Czech ecclesial bodies. Alongside traditional churches preserving and cultivating ancient forms of liturgy and spirituality, we find outreach oriented conversionist groups with virtually no concern for liturgy or tradition. The “family resemblance” of the 27 churches included in the encyclopaedia, which would justify their presentation as entities belonging to the same general category, is therefore somewhat questionable.

Another methodological decision made by the authors may be a matter of dispute. The length of each entry is, as they say, “proportionate” to the denomination’s “significance”. What exactly they meant by significance (besides the sheer factual number of people, who claim their affiliation to a given church) remains a bit ambiguous.

At the same time, one has to admit that the authors naturally had to make some methodological choices and (although some of their decisions remain open to critical questioning), the result of their effort is convincing and quite impressive. The Encyclopaedia of Smaller Christian Churches in the Czech Republic, which they put together and published last year, has already become an indispensable and reliable reference tool for scholars, students and lay readers interested in religious and ecclesial life of the Czech society.